

STATEMENT OF GALEN RESER

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES,
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

**COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**CONCERNING NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS AND
S. 2046 - NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE COUNCIL ACT OF 1990**

JULY 17, 1990

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee.

I am Galen Reser, Assistant Secretary for Governmental Affairs for the Department of Transportation. I appreciate this opportunity to appear before you today and share the views of the Department on legislation pending before your Subcommittee dealing with National Infrastructure.

We heard a message loud and clear last year when we went out to the American people to develop the National Transportation Policy. Over and over again we were told of the importance of our transportation infrastructure. In ten months, we held 117 public events in 43 towns and cities all over the country. We listened to the American people from every sector and from all walks of life.

There's no question that the state of our transportation system is important to our future. The same holds true for America's competitive standing in the global economy.

At the Department of Transportation, we are addressing the question of infrastructure. We are acting on what we heard

throughout the country and from our sister Federal agencies -- both in our National Transportation Policy and through subsequent initiatives to implement that Policy.

Number one, our proposed five-year aviation package addresses the need to expand capacity to match demand and provide for growth. We call for a 78 percent increase in Federal aviation capital programs for the next 5 years compared to the last 5 years. We want to continue modernizing our air traffic control system -- already the best in the world. We want to increase federal aviation user fees to meet spending needs and spend down the balance in the aviation trust fund.

Number two, we are in developing our highway and transit package that we'll send to Congress next year. We will propose programs designed specifically to meet the demands of the 21st century. We're in the process of developing a new National Highway System that might constitute the interstate and interregional network of the future, serving both urban and rural areas.

Number three, we support providing state and local authorities with more flexibility to meet local transportation needs. That's why we're asking Congress to allow local airports to levy passenger facility charges as a way to generate more funds for airport investment.

The recent passage of Proposition 111 in California shows that people are willing to support higher transportation user fees when they know the money will be targeted to identified needs.

Number four, we're encouraging greater private sector participation across the board. This means resisting attempts to overturn deregulation. And it means eliminating barriers to the private building and financing of highways and transit, and possibly expanding the use of toll roads. We're supporting public/private partnerships in development of new technology, such as magnetically levitated trains and intelligent vehicles and highways.

Those are just a few of the ways we are putting our words into action to restore America's transportation infrastructure. Our main challenge is to elevate the importance of infrastructure investment to the level it deserves.

What gains will we see as a result of the initiatives described above? First, they will significantly enhance the nation's long term productivity and global competitiveness by increasing the efficiency of the movement of goods and services. And second, the development of transportation technologies will lead to great improvements in the way we live. Historically, we've seen this time and time again. Just think of how the steamboat, the locomotive, the automobile, and the airplane have changed the way of life in different generations.

Let me address specifically the legislative proposal currently being considered by this Subcommittee, S. 2046, entitled the "National Infrastructure Council Act of 1990." S. 2046 would establish a permanent National Infrastructure Council. The Council would be responsible for developing infrastructure policy and proposing implementing actions, preparing needs assessments

and setting priorities, and establishing guidelines and procedures for Federal assistance programs.

In light of the initiatives already under way , we do not believe that the Infrastructure Council that S. 2046 would establish is necessary. It is not clear what would be gained through such an expenditure of time and money, and many of the proposed actions are duplicative of existing organizations and activities being conducted by the Department and other Federal agencies.

For example, the bill calls for an annual assessment of needs and priorities. The objective is already being met by various DOT reports and studies, such as: the biennial report on the Status of the Nation's Highways and Bridges: Conditions and Performance; the National Airspace System Plan; the State of the Nation's Transit; and the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems. Many of the needs that were reported remain to be addressed in the coming years. The estimates themselves, however, do not require annual updating. The proposed technical assistance, technical transfer assistance, and research and development programs in the legislation are duplicative of programs carried out by a number of offices in the Department of Transportation. These programs have been tailored to the specific needs of State and local agencies and the transportation problems that they face.

In addition, the bill charges the National Infrastructure Council with developing and coordinating Federal infrastructure policy, evaluating roles for public and private entities in implementing this policy, and proposing actions necessary to carry out this policy. This duplicates responsibilities given to the

Secretary of Transportation in the transportation area, which are coordinated through existing interdepartmental and other Executive Branch mechanisms. Further, as I noted earlier, we have undertaken activities, as part of the National Transportation Policy, to address transportation needs for infrastructure across the various modes.

Although we do not presume to speak for other Federal agencies, we know that similar activities are being pursued by many departments and agencies throughout the Federal government. Moreover, where there is a legitimate reason for more formal program coordination, much of that communication is already being done. That is not to say that coordination cannot be improved, but we believe that it should be done based on real program considerations and not by overlaying a general requirement with little real program benefit. Therefore, we believe that, on balance, this legislation is not needed.

In closing, I would like to state that although we oppose S. 2046, the Department is fully committed to addressing the needs of the nation's infrastructure and will cooperate fully with this subcommittee toward this goal.

This concludes my prepared statement, I will be pleased to answer your questions at this time.