Critical Issues in Surface Transportation

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ABSTRACT

The surface transportation system is a major factor in the United States’ economic health, domestically and globally, and in the quality of life of its citizens. The lives of hundreds of millions of people are affected daily. There are major issues affecting surface transportation that must be recognized and addressed to ensure a prosperous future and way of life.

The improvement of transportation safety and increased mobility for all users are common goals and are expressed as determinants of a successful surface transportation system, though the two goals are frequently conflicting. It is necessary to ask: How can we resolve this conflict of goals? Or is such a resolution possible? If the antagonist to mobility is congestion, and it is said that we cannot build our way out of it, what can we do?

Along with these seemingly insurmountable issues are the constraints of funding, energy, and institutional arrangements: what new funding mechanisms are needed, what sources of energy will be available, and how must institutions adapt to be successful? With all these challenges, we must also continue to safeguard the environment for future generations.

This presentation will offer some ideas to address these critical issues.

Key words: critical issues—economic concerns—surface transportation system