

Transit 2000

American Public Transit Association

The American Public Transit Association (APTA) represents the \$16 billion a year public transit industry. The following perspectives on the future of transportation, with emphasis on the growing importance of public transit in the years ahead, are drawn from the recent *Interim Report of APTA's Transit 2000 Task Force*, a 45-member group including representatives of large and small transit systems and executives of private transit supply and advisory businesses.

No threat to the quality of life in U.S. communities is greater than the continuing decline of mobility. Explosive growth in travel demand, inattention to investment needs, the harmful consequences of land use decisions, and our insatiable appetite for automobile use are overwhelming our transportation systems and facilities. In turn, the increasing inability of those transportation systems to handle the efficient movement of people and goods is threatening to diminish dramatically the quality of our environment and strangle our regional economies.

In the face of these mounting challenges, it has become apparent that policies and practices that have guided transportation investment of past decades are inadequate to meet the needs of a new century. We have reached a point when a bold new

vision and new directions for national transportation investment are vitally needed.

At the same time, we are confronted with a rare opportunity to fashion a new generation of national transportation policies, as current programs expire and new national leaders come into office.

In response to these challenges and opportunities, the APTA Transit 2000 Task Force was formed to explore how we can create more productive and livable communities, and to outline the major contribution that public transportation can make in that effort. Its interim principles and perspectives serve to reinforce the growing importance of public transit in the years ahead, and they represent a guide by which to formulate a new generation of policies and programs to move us wisely into the 21st century.

THE FORCES

In communities across the United States, we currently are faced with a daunting array of forces that are growing to crisis proportions. Our shared experience now includes:

- Intolerable and costly congestion on urban and suburban roads;
- Increasing isolation of rural residents, the poor, the elderly, and the disabled; and the isolation of willing workers from job opportunities;
- Poisoned air that already threatens the health of 100 million people;
- Mounting dependence on foreign oil, which has become a threat to national security and a major factor in our trade deficit;
- Burgeoning development that has overwhelmed our ability to provide public facilities and services; and
- Failure of our existing infrastructure, resulting from 20 years of chronic underinvestment.

MOBILITY: THE MISSION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The mission of public transportation in the years ahead is to enhance



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personal mobility and, in the process, contribute in a major way to the solution of problems that threaten our economy and our quality of life. In pursuing this mission, transit agencies and professionals will be faced with

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new and difficult challenges that will require often significant adaptations.

Diversification of Services. To promote enhanced mobility and to increase transit use, the definition of transit must be broadened to include a wider range of services tailored to particular markets and drawing in all available resources. High-occupancy and share-ride services of all types must be incorporated into our concept of public transportation.

Managing Mobility: Transit as a Catalyst. Transit agencies and professionals also must be prepared to act aggressively as catalysts in the community and play a broader role as "managers of mobility." Coordinating, advising, educating, and promoting public transportation services are all part of this larger responsibility, along with active participation in economic development and land use decisions.

Quality and Performance. The commitment to improved quality of service and increased performance must be intensified and expanded and the success of public transit measured in terms that reflect the variety of local circumstances and goals that guide the provision of public transit services.

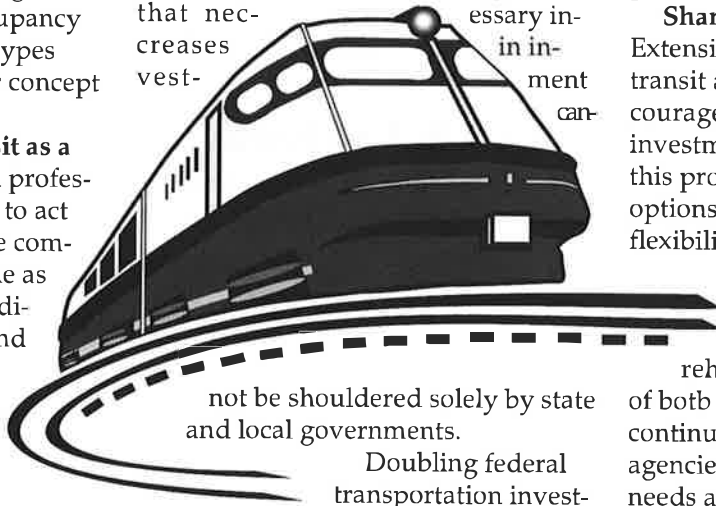
ELEMENTS OF A NEW NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

Transit and highway investments represent a fundamental tool of public policy, and we must design new

national programs that not only facilitate personal mobility, but that also are more effective in conserving energy, reducing air pollution, and promoting efficient and livable patterns of development.

Increased levels of investment and more flexibility in the use of transportation resources are essential in a future national program.

Increasing the Investment. Federal investment in transportation should be doubled in the coming years. This is consistent with recommendations that overall infrastructure spending be doubled, as well as with independent estimates of future investment requirements from various transportation sectors. The proposal also recognizes that necessary increases in investment can-



not be shouldered solely by state and local governments.

Doubling federal transportation investment to \$40 to \$45 billion per year also would restore U.S. Department of Transportation spending, as a percent of gross national product, to levels that existed in the mid- 1960s.

For public transportation, the equivalent of \$0.05 on the federal gasoline tax, or \$5 to \$6 billion per year, is necessary at the federal level to support existing transit services and programs currently contemplated around the country.

Beyond the \$5 to \$6 billion currently needed for existing systems and programs, an additional \$0.02, or the equivalent, of federal gas tax revenues

is needed now to put the federal transit program on a fully dedicated basis. As a result, federal general funds for transit could be relinquished, with an equivalent reduction in the federal budget deficit.

The challenges we face, however, require that we greatly expand the role of public transit in the future. Meeting today's needs alone is not enough. To support the goal of substantial increases in public transit ridership and to ensure that our transit systems fully serve our broader community needs, we must prepare now to make investments and commitments far above those necessary simply to accomplish our current plans and programs.

Shared Funding for New Capacity. Extensive categorization of current transit and highway programs discourages effective and coordinated investments. One approach to solving this problem is to explore program options that promote both greater flexibility and pooling of transit and highway funds.

Under such a concept, funds for replacement, rehabilitation, and modernization of both transit and highways should continue to flow directly to operating agencies to ensure that basic system needs are met.

To support major projects that would add significant new transit or highway capacity, however, additional funds could be combined and provided to metropolitan areas, with local officials deciding how to allocate them. Pooling resources for major capacity expansion could provide an incentive for more collaborative decisions, more productive intergovernmental relationships, and more effective improvements in regional mobility. In the long term, it may be appropriate to expand the concept of shared resources and more collabora-

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tive decision making through the formation of a fully consolidated transportation trust fund at the federal level.

Additional Program Concepts. To ensure the effective use of transit and transportation resources, new federal programs and policies should incorporate a number of additional features:

- The intergovernmental partnership in transit must be maintained and enhanced.
- Direct dollar investment by state and local government and by the private sector must be increased.
- Greater collaboration and joint decision making among transit and highway interests, business, and community leaders must be encouraged.
- Barriers to enhanced operational performance must be relaxed and incentives provided for improved performance based on local goals.
- Greater local flexibility and less categorization in funding is needed.
- Regulatory and procedural barriers that limit the ability of transit agencies to raise, retain, or use revenues should be relaxed and incentives provided to broaden transit's funding base.
- Transit and highway investment should be premised on effective land use plans and development controls that ensure greater efficiency and increased use of transit services.
- The federal tax code should be revised, particularly provisions that make it more difficult and costly for local governments to borrow and invest in transit, as well as provisions that unfairly tax transit users subsidized by their employers while employer subsidies to automobile users go untaxed.

In addition, it will continue to consider more specific proposals for the next generation of national programs and policies, as well as recommendations on how the transit industry itself can more effectively pursue its mission.

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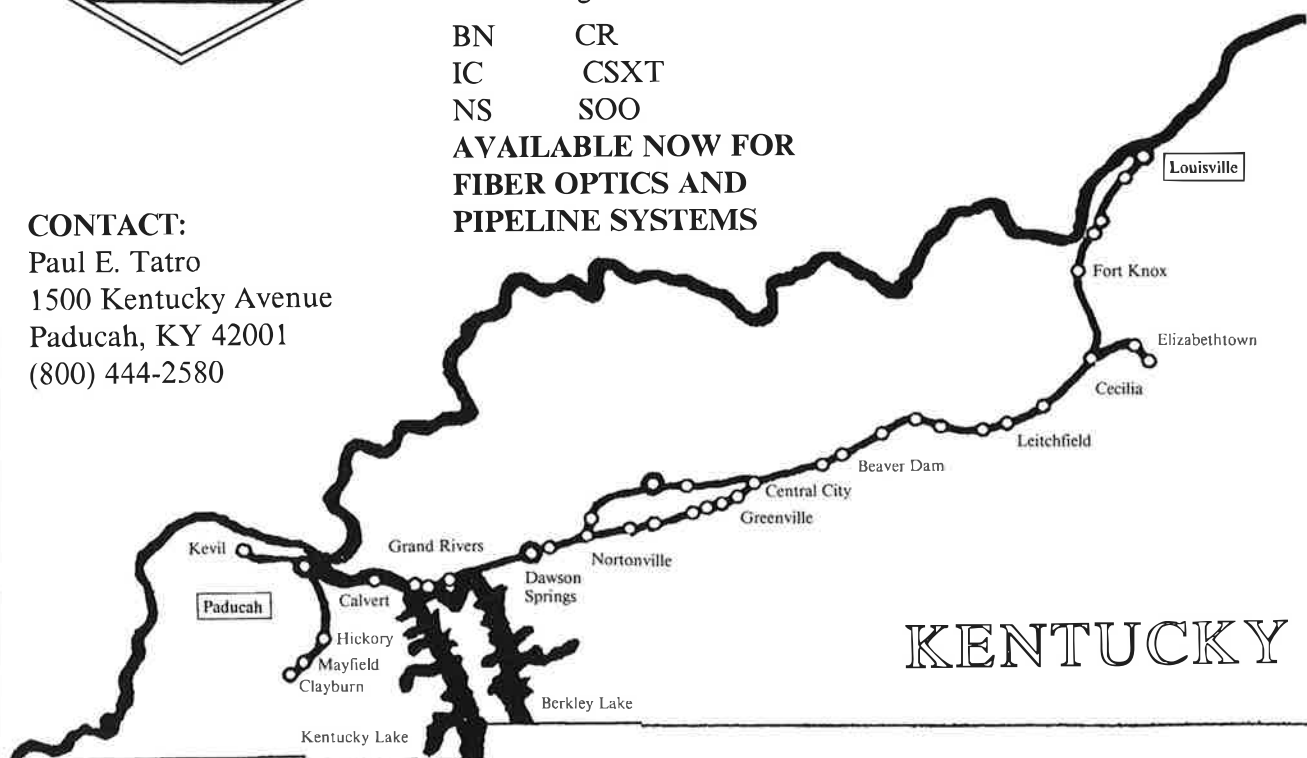
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