

**TRANSPORTATION
In the Northeast
The Key to Quality Renewal**

Executive Summary

**A Report Prepared by
The Coalition of Northeastern Governors Policy Research Center, Inc.
for the
U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration**

December 1997

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Coalition of Northeastern Governors

Through the Coalition of Northeastern Governors (CONEG), the Governors of the Northeast states collaborate as partners to develop positive and constructive responses to current and emerging issues affecting the region. Using its networking and analytic resources, CONEG identifies issues that impact the region, and then harnesses expertise within and outside government to assist the Governors in developing appropriate responses to those issues. CONEG is also a forum which enables the Northeast Governors to exchange information on current and emerging issues, develop innovative solutions to those issues, and undertake cooperative actions that benefit the individual states and the region.

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Governor Howard Dean, M.D.



December, 1997

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Governors in the Northeast have always recognized the link between transportation and economic development. Passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) confirmed that relationship and also established other equally important bonds. For example, transportation infrastructure investments are now firmly associated with broadened employment opportunities, increased efficiency in the movement of goods and services, a rededication to safety and mobility, historic preservation, a more diverse set of transportation modes, and the rebuilding of vital transportation assets such as the region's bridges. These new links will contribute to a cleaner environment and more prudent use of energy and other resources. These laudable goals are being accomplished by a strengthened planning process at all levels of government, increased citizen participation, and a strong federal-state-local partnership.

The strength of the Northeast has always been its people. ISTEA works only to the extent that the quality of life of the region's people is improved. Successful efforts to provide highway and bridge construction skills to women in Maine and "reverse commute" opportunities in Connecticut are two examples of the human face of ISTEA. The preservation and enhancement of the 1912 Italiante-design rail station in Westerly, Rhode Island is another important example of the impact of ISTEA programs. The station, designed to reflect the cultural heritage of its immigrant builders, is being preserved to provide improved passenger rail service. Not only are we keeping faith with the turn-of-the-century masons, we are working to provide future citizens with an attractive and efficient means of transportation.

ISTEA helped provide the financial resources to maintain and improve the Northeast's very valuable transportation assets. More importantly, ISTEA programs have, on balance, improved the lives of the region's most priceless asset, its people.

We recommend this report for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lincoln Almond
Governor of Rhode Island

Angus King
Governor of Maine

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Preface

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) brought valued resources and new perspectives to the relationship between transportation and economic development. Understanding these dynamic relationships and the contribution of ISTEA to them is important to the region's decision-makers. *Transportation in the Northeast: The Key to Quality Renewal* provides a review of the impacts of ISTEA on the social and economic fabric of the Northeast.

The report was prepared by the Coalition of Northeastern Governors' CONEG Policy Research Center, Inc. (Center), with assistance of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). It notes the issues raised by transportation and economic changes underway in the Northeast, and illustrates the impacts of ISTEA through a series of state case studies. The report's findings include a set of public policy findings that contribute to the debate surrounding the future of surface transportation public policy.

This report results from a collaborative effort among state policy and transportation officials, FHWA officials, private sector representatives, transportation consultants and Center staff.

- Background and factual information on transportation trends in the Northeast was provided by Jeffrey M. Zupan, a transportation consultant retained by the FHWA to provide an array of data to complement this report. Mr. Zupan's work is incorporated throughout the report and published in its entirety as a separate volume.
- The context of issues illustrated by the case studies is provided in the thoughtful introduction prepared by Dr. Robert E. Paaswell, Director of the Region III University Transportation Research Center.
- To ensure a balanced perspective, a Review Committee organized by the Center assessed and provided comments on a preliminary draft. Meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, the Committee had detailed discussions, followed by substantive contributions of time and effort by individual members. Members of the Committee were: Sam Reid, Rhode Island Governor's Office, chair; Martin Weiss, Federal Highway Administration; Stephanie Nellons, Ryder; Nancy Ross, New York Department of Transportation; Alan Stearns, Maine Department of Transportation; and Marianne Stock, New Jersey Transit.
- In preparing the report, Center staff conducted a number of site visits and interviews with state and regional transportation officials. Consultants assisted in drafting several case studies. Much of the detail and local information on the case studies came from a wealth of sources. While it is impossible to list all of those who contributed, we would like to acknowledge the contributions of: Christy Cross, Paul Giguere, Tracy C. Perez, Jane Gilbert, Ron Roy of the Maine Department of Transportation; Harry Kowalchuk of the National Tractor Trailer School; Dennis Lebo of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation; Ed Roach, Historian, and Richard Schmoyer, Office of Planning and Development in Adams County, Pennsylvania; Maribeth M. Demma of the Connecticut Department of Transportation; Katherine Trapani and Michael Walker of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation; Thomas P. Levins of the New Hampshire

Department of Transportation; Barry Driscoll of the Vermont Agency of Transportation; Tom Batz of Transcom; and Astrid Glynn of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation.

- Special recognition goes to individuals who contributed various case studies, including Stephan Blake, transportation consultant; Earl Eisenhart of Government Relations Services.
- Finally, this report could not have been prepared without three individuals who provided resources and nurtured the report throughout the collaborative process: Martin Weiss of the Federal Highway Administration and David Ewing and Jennifer Stoner of the CONEG Policy Research Center, Inc. A very special thanks to them, and to Margery B. Vaill, Frances Henderson, and Sharon Galperin, who assisted in the report production.

Executive Summary

The crucial link among transportation, economic development and the quality of life is the cornerstone of the Northeast's regional identity. As the region and the nation increasingly become part of a global economy, a deeper understanding of the complex inter-relationship among infrastructure investments, competitiveness, and productivity is vital. With the region's long-standing federal-state partnership in transportation investment on the verge of change, a clear understanding of this relationship and associated policy options is even more critical.

This report, *Transportation in the Northeast: The Key to Quality Renewal*, begins with a summary of important regional trends affecting transportation, and then continues with a set of individual stories which link those trends to infrastructure needs and investments. It concludes with a set of policy findings accepted by the Coalition of Northeastern Governors in October, 1997--findings which reflect the Governors' spirit and intent in particular areas of transportation policy.

These stories capture the reality of transportation today--that any investment is a partnership, starting with the customer. Significant funding comes from the federal government through programs of the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. Increasingly, planning and implementation takes place at the state and local levels, and in many cases noted, together with private firms, companies and organizations. The resulting projects reflect a more active and involved public--a public that wants solutions to problems of mobility, but wants them to be environmentally sensitive.

Our People

The stories look at the people themselves and their involvement in planning and building a new generation of infrastructure. Getting a job; holding a job; working with dignity. This is at the heart of quality of life. These stories tell the success of ISTEA and people.

- How Maine ensured that women could work on transportation projects by providing day care for workers' children near the project site.
- How public-private cooperation is enabling unemployed and underemployed workers to receive training in truck driving--helping them find meaningful jobs and helping the region meet a growing demand for freight movement.
- How Hartford, Connecticut is using paratransit to allow people from low income neighborhoods to reach jobs in suburban areas--a capability that will prove critical in achieving the objectives of welfare to work.

Our Projects

The stories examine infrastructure projects, often multi-modal in dimension and designed to capture the uniqueness of a particular location.

- How Pennsylvania and New Hampshire worked creatively with local citizens to incorporate public perspectives and concerns with engineering needs when preserving and restoring historic bridges which serve the community.

- How station redevelopment projects in Massachusetts and New Jersey have maintained the historic face of the community, while providing enhanced mobility and urban economic development.
- How New Jersey is using a unique approach for a unique situation--adding connections, extensions, and new light rail lines--to strengthen the urban core of the state's commuter rail network.

Our Changing Culture

Looking ahead, the stories also involve new perspectives in the region's transportation planning culture, as well as the Northeast's leadership role in deploying new technologies to help ease costly travel problems and enhance safety.

- How Vermont has redesigned the transportation planning process to incorporate citizen concerns and, in turn, identifies projects which meet the specific needs of a rural state and small communities.
- How Rhode Island crafted a multi-modal transportation facility from former defense bases and is turning it into a regional transportation asset.
- How Maine improved mobility without highway expansion by using a Strategic Passenger Plan to look at ways to link air travel, rail, ferry and other non-auto based means to move people to more locations throughout the state.
- How TRANSCOM, a multi-agency and multi-state organization in the New York/New Jersey area, teamed with the Federal Highway Administration to provide real time solutions to problems such as accidents, weather and bridge/tunnel closings which contribute to congestion.
- How New York is using the E-ZPass technology to simplify toll collection--by reducing delays and congestions at toll plazas, lowering the operating costs of toll collection, and lessening the environmental impacts of growing travel demand.

The experience of using the financial resources and management creativity afforded by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) has provided valuable lessons for Northeastern states and communities. The policy findings which emerge from these experiences capture a range of actions which states, individually or collectively, can consider as they seek to maintain and strengthen transportation's role in regional economic development. Accepted by the CONEG Governors, they also reflect the intent of ISTEA as it redirects transportation policy.

Findings

1. Continue to actively pursue a better understanding of the link between transportation investments and a broad array of public policy goals; quality of life, energy conservation, environmental enhancement, and economic growth.
2. Recommit to a strong working relationship with federal and local partners to achieve a

shared set of goals; conduct research, development and deployment in order to achieve a seamless transportation system.

3. Array these goals in the context of a national, intermodal transportation system, with the CONEG transportation system an integral part of a national and international system.
4. Identify new, equitable, and innovative means of financing such a system while stressing local financial level of effort, needs and overall user fee and tax contributions.
5. Harness technological innovation to provide greater transportation capacity in urban areas and overcome isolation in rural areas.
6. Invest more human and financial resources in safety.
7. Investigate thoroughly the public-private sector link to provide traveler services and information.
8. Direct transportation officials, to the extent applicable, to consider and utilize land use and pricing strategies to achieve public policy goals.
9. Preserve existing transportation assets--the region's transit systems, as well as its roads and bridges.
10. Seek to transfer knowledge and good practices for developing human services.
11. Remember that transportation investments work best when they contribute to the social and economic well-being of an increasingly diverse group of citizens they serve.