Transportation Reform and Smart Growth: A Nation at the Tipping Point

This paper was written by Don Chen of Smart Growth America* and Nancy Jakowitsch of the Surface Transportation Policy Project** in collaboration with the Funders’ Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities. It is the sixth in a series of translation papers published by the Funders’ Network to translate the impact of suburban sprawl and urban disinvestment on issues of importance to America’s communities and to suggest opportunities for progress that would be created by smarter growth policies and practices. Other issues addressed in the series of translation papers include social equity, workforce development, parks and open space, civic engagement, agriculture, education, aging, public health, the environment, arts, and community organizing.

Abstract

Current transportation policies are not moving our nation toward improved community outcomes. In light of this reality, implementing transportation reform at the national, state, and metropolitan levels is fundamental to making progress toward smarter and more livable communities. This paper discusses the origins and achievements of the transportation reform movement, argues that we find ourselves in an unprecedented climate for positive change, and recommends steps that can translate this tremendous potential into action.

Moreover, the paper posits that our country is on the verge of a “tipping point” for transportation reform and smarter growth. The transportation reform movement faces a set of converging circumstances that can catapult efforts to a whole new level—not incremental as some have predicted, but instead monumental change.

Embracing this new vision for our transportation system – where everyone has real transportation choices – is essential to the full realization of our nation’s societal, economic and environmental goals.
Introduction

Since the 1950s, America's surface transportation policy has focused on easing mobility for motor vehicles, originally to "get farmers out of the mud" and move goods to market. This policy has produced an interstate highway system that has delivered impressive economic productivity gains by providing basic linkages between towns and cities, and from coast to coast.

But along the way, the goal of providing transportation accessibility has been eclipsed by a narrower focus on boosting vehicle speeds, which has permeated transportation policies all the way down to the neighborhood level. We have planned and built our streets and roads to function like our highways—straight, wide and fast. The building blocks of our regions—residential neighborhoods, shopping and commercial areas, and recreational facilities—have been reorganized around motor vehicle traffic. And many industry practices—retail, insurance, and real estate finance—have been developed to support automobile-oriented communities.

Today, people are starting to realize that a one-size-fits-all policy to build big roads and boost vehicle speeds conflicts with many local priorities. For example, cars kill over 5,000 pedestrians and cyclists every year, largely because of the lack of safe places to walk and ride.1 The overemphasis on road construction has led to a neglect of public transportation, not only in investment but also because we have not designed neighborhoods to take advantage of transit services. Large highways and roads have also facilitated sprawl, leading households, businesses and public services to move out of older communities. In too many cities, lower-income families have been left behind without adequate transportation access to jobs-rich suburban areas.

We are also finding evidence that the benefits of highway construction are diminishing. Though the economic gains from building the Interstate Highway System were initially substantial, adding more capacity to today's mature highway network generates negligible productivity benefits.2 Traffic managers long ago discovered that regions can't build their way out of congestion, and that building more road capacity typically begets additional traffic.3 Safety officials are now questioning whether "highway improvements" that widen and straighten roads decrease vehicle crashes and fatalities.4 New research on vehicle emissions and traffic congestion also is debunking the long-standing belief that building new highways can clean up the air by increasing travel speeds.5

These are signs that the nation's transportation policies are failing to deliver what people want. Our tolerance for such shortcomings is waning. Increasingly, Americans want transportation policies to deliver improved community outcomes, such as a more equitable society, stronger communities, better air quality, a healthier population, improved public safety, and a more robust economy. To meet these challenges, a growing advocacy movement is starting to reform the transportation sector to produce better results.
Today’s transportation paradigm can be traced back to the enactment of the National Interstate Highway and National Defense System Act in 1956. There is much to praise about the Interstate System, which immediately set an international standard for the engineering and financing of highways. But it also established the practice of closed-door, engineering-driven decision making by bureaucrats who lacked familiarity with community transportation needs. In creating the Interstate System, the federal Bureau of Public Roads did not consult with cities and communities and finalized the design of the entire 44,000-mile network in eight months—in fact, only three months after design criteria were developed. They accomplished their feat by merely drawing lines on a map to show members of Congress where new highways were to be built, thus garnering their support. Most federal and state transportation decision-making has reflected this absence of community input ever since.

In large part, the transportation reform movement has been a reaction against this legacy of top-down transportation planning. Instead of prioritizing vehicular movement, advocates have worked to ensure that transportation policies and practices serve the needs of people and communities. In the decades since 1956, there have been many attempts to accomplish this goal. Chief among them were the highway fights of the 1960s and 1970s which featured civil rights groups, downtown business associations and environmentalists working to save neighborhoods and open space from being destroyed by roadway construction. While these battles sometimes succeeded, they were typically reactions to misguided policies—often driven by “not in my backyard” (NIMBY) concerns—and did not seek to set a new agenda.

In 1990, this started to change. Thanks to dedicated foundation support, a number of transportation reform advocates were able to form an unprecedented national coalition to set a new course for American transportation policy. This coalition, the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP), was created as an alliance of environmentalists, social equity activists, bicycling advocates, transit supporters, architects, planners, community groups, the elderly, and others who have spent many frustrating years watching their interests get undermined by poorly conceived transportation policies.

Why did such an assortment of groups come together to form this coalition? It depends on whom you talk to. Environmentalists, for example, cared about the impacts that cars and highways have on everything from habitats to air quality. Labor activists demanded better transit service for low-wage workers who otherwise have little access to regional job centers. Community development groups understood the need for high-quality transportation access but also knew the impacts bad highway projects can have on viable neighborhoods. Bicyclists and pedestrians wanted to be able to get about in a manner that is safe, convenient and efficient. Others simply wanted more transportation choices. Each of these groups had separate motivations, but in coalition they all sought a fundamental paradigm shift in U.S. transportation policy: more equitable transportation outcomes, better environmental quality, improved public health and safety, stronger communities, and a thriving economy.

The coalition’s plan was to influence the federal transportation law that was to be reauthorized in 1991 because it represented the most powerful way to restructure the financing of transporta-

ISTEA has resulted in a shift of roughly $20 billion from federal highway programs to support non-highway transportation since 1991, with transit spending increasing 5.6 percent annually and bicycle and pedestrian spending growing to be thirty times what it was in 1990.
tion projects, reestablish national goals, and create a new process by which priorities would be set. With better community outcomes in mind, STPP crafted and successfully advocated for a new law titled the "Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991" (ISTEA), which provided unprecedented amounts of funding to support public transit, walking and cycling, and gave states and regions the discretion to transfer even more of their highway dollars to these needs. ISTEA also included public involvement requirements, called for regional planning, and created dedicated funding programs to improve air quality, reduce congestion, support community economic development, build new transit systems, and maintain existing infrastructure.

The funder investment in this coalition has generated promising returns. ISTEA has resulted in a shift of roughly $20 billion from federal highway programs to support non-highway transportation since 1991, with transit spending increasing 5.6 percent annually and bicycle and pedestrian spending growing to be thirty times what it was in 1990. At the state and local levels, the investment shift was $5-to-$10 billion. Also, when ISTEA was reauthorized in 1998 (as the "Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century" or "TEA-21"), an STPP-led coalition helped Congress create a $750 million federal program to help lower-income workers gain access to job centers, and a $150 million pilot program that encourages communities to link transportation and land use planning.

During the last decade, transportation reform groups have demonstrated bold leadership at the regional and state levels, generating a string of successes and tremendous opportunities to learn from one another.

The Growing Transportation Reform Movement

Since the passage of ISTEA, there has been tremendous growth in the movement. There are now over 800 groups that have an interest in transportation reform nationwide, and the number keeps growing. Allied coalitions have also strengthened, including the Environmental Justice Networks, the Thunderhead Alliance (bicyclists), the Transportation Equity Network, Smart Growth America, the Community Builders network, the Growth Management Leadership Alliance, and the National Neighborhood Coalition.

During the past decade, these groups have demonstrated bold leadership at the regional and state levels, generating a string of successes and tremendous opportunities to learn from one another. For example, several groups have had great success with state campaigns:

- In New Jersey, the Tri-State Transportation Campaign convinced the Legislature to enact an unprecedented "Fix-It-First" transportation law that prioritizes the maintenance of transportation infrastructure over new highway capacity projects.
- STPP's California office got its Legislature to pass the nation's first Safe Routes to School law, which provides communities with grants to make it easier and safer for kids to walk to school.
- In North Carolina, a watchdog group called Democracy South worked with local media to unmask an illicit quid-pro-quo system in which major state campaign contributors (mostly developers and contractors) were rewarded with a seat on the state DOT's powerful Board of Transportation—the body responsible for highway routing, construction priorities, and other factors that affect growth.

At the regional level, many groups have been able to convince their Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and local transit agencies to change their funding priorities and their decision-making processes to better serve communities:

- In Austin, Texas, the environmental justice organization PODER convinced
The Linkages that Will Motivate Transportation Reform Advocates

If current efforts and trends persist, the next wave of growth will come from the entrance of new interest groups into the transportation reform movement and the perseverance of existing stakeholders. Emerging evidence linking their issues to harmful transportation policies has motivated many of these groups. Others are stepping up their involvement through better organizing and communications. The following paragraphs outline some of these key linkages.

Transportation Reform Can Help Fight Poverty

Civil rights, community development and social equity groups have always been involved in shaping the goals of transportation reform. But the number of groups focused on these issues has grown dramatically, sparking the formation of new networks like the Transportation Equity Network and stimulating more coordination among existing networks, like the Environmental Justice Networks.

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Transit riders unions are spreading across the country, first in Los Angeles and now emerging in Boston, Oakland and other cities. And new groups are calling for the disclosure of state and regional transportation spending data—a "right-to-know" movement that calls for the fair distribution of public funds.

Many of these groups are starting to make transportation a higher priority as sprawl development weakens vital links to social services, job opportunities and other basic needs. An early victory was the creation of the $750 million Access to Jobs Program within TEA-21. This program funds transit lifeline services for lower-wage workers and is designed to help welfare recipients and lower-income people gain access to long-term employment. It has also given social equity advocates an attainable goal and will likely motivate more groups to get involved during TEA-21 reauthorization in the next two years.

But transit access is just part of the solution to alleviating poverty. Many community groups are using transportation investments to stimulate economic development in their neighborhoods. For example, Bethel New Life, a community development corporation (CDC) in Chicago, is implementing a transit-oriented development plan that includes 200 units of affordable housing. The effort has not only revitalized the neighborhood, but has also helped prevent the displacement of existing residents.10

Others are embracing transit advocacy because public transportation access also represents a ladder to greater economic independence. The poorest fifth of America’s families currently spends nearly 40 percent of their disposable income on transportation (nearly all for automobile ownership and operation).11 Developing cost-effective ways for them to gain access to opportunities is as important as any other measure to alleviate poverty.

According to the AAA, the average cost of automobile ownership is roughly $6,000 per car. Avoiding these costs by relying more on public transit, cycling, walking and other modes of access could provide substantial savings that can then be devoted to other pressing household needs, including transitioning to homeownership.

**Transportation Reform Can Improve Public Health**

Another indicator of a stronger movement is growing interest among public health groups. Perhaps the hottest emerging issue is the link between obesity and sprawl. In the past decade, obesity rates have skyrocketed nationwide, and health advocates increasingly argue that a broad decline in physical activity is largely to blame. Many contend that getting people to walk more is the first step in addressing this problem, and several institutions—the Surgeon General’s Office, the Centers for Disease Control, university research centers and foundations—have launched major public education and research initiatives to further explore these linkages.12

Public health officials also continue to be concerned about transportation’s contribution to lung disease, especially the exponential increase of asthma cases among African-American children.13 A recent paper published in the Journal of the American Medical Association reported powerful evidence that acute asthma attacks among children plummeted—as much as 42 percent—during the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, when traffic counts dropped by 22 percent due to public education to reduce traffic on area highways.14 New evidence is also emerging on other criteria pollutants, especially fine particulate matter which can lodge into sensitive lung tissue and lead to a range of respiratory illnesses. In New York City, West Harlem Environmental Action (WE ACT) is waging an effective air quality improvement campaign by linking credible epidemiological research (through

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the Columbia University School of Medicine) with a sophisticated media and organizing strategy which features print ads and posters on bus shelters and other highly visible places. Specifically, WE ACT is trying to get the New York City MTA to mitigate the impact of the four diesel bus depots that the agency has located in Harlem (there are only five depots in all of Manhattan).15

Transportation Reform Can Improve Public Safety

Public safety advocates are stepping up efforts to protect pedestrians from getting killed or injured by cars. This is a particularly severe concern for children, who get killed at a much higher rate than adults. Since 1995, roughly 5,000 child pedestrians have been killed by automobiles—30 times the number of children killed in school shootings during the same period. According to analyses in a number of states, children in Latino and African-American neighborhoods are at greatest risk.16 Despite these problems, federal spending on pedestrian safety tends to hover around one percent of total safety spending, even though pedestrian fatalities accounted for over 16 percent of traffic deaths in the 1990s.17

Another entrenched problem is the fact that transportation officials continue to believe that widening and straightening roads makes them safer. In fact, recent research examining data from 1984 to 1997 suggests that such "highway improvements" have encouraged motorists to travel at higher speeds, generating roughly 2,000 additional fatalities during the study period, many of them pedestrians.18

Transportation Reform Can Foster Smarter Growth and More Livable Communities

Smart growth advocates prioritize the creation of convenient, walkable neighborhoods that are well served by public transit. Such places enable people to rely less on cars, and a spate of recent studies quantifies the air pollution, traffic, infrastructure and other benefits these places exhibit.19 In fact, projects that link basic services with transit facilities are starting to appear in many cities. For example:

- The Metro rail system in the Washington, DC region has child care facilities at two of its train stations.
- In San Jose, California, the Tamien Child Care Center is located at a light rail stop, which also offers family dinners to go, dry cleaning, and haircuts.
- In Chicago, local activists convinced transportation authorities to use federal funds to finance the location of a day care center near an urban rail station.

Industry groups increasingly recognize the monetary value of less automobile use. Fannie Mae, for example, is offering an innovative program called the "Location-Efficient Mortgage" (LEM), which calculates the savings that households can gain if they are located in transit-rich, walkable neighborhoods. By being less reliant on expensive cars, these families can apply their savings to qualify for a larger mortgage, bringing home ownership within reach of lower-income households.20 Fannie Mae is currently offers the LEM in four places: Seattle, Chicago, Atlanta and California, and has committed to investing $100 million in LEMs nationwide.

Some projects are trying to integrate transit-oriented development to redevelop vacant industrial land ("brownfields"). In Atlanta, the redevelopment of the abandoned 138-acre Atlantic Steel site is being regarded as not just an economic development initiative, but also as a strategy to clean up
the region’s heavily polluted air. This parcel is destined to become a transit-oriented mixed-use community in mid-town Atlanta. After conducting a state-of-the-art travel modeling study, analysts convinced the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that the project would reduce annual automobile travel by 50 million miles because it would capture a significant amount of growth that would otherwise have gone to outlying suburbs. These environmental benefits were instrumental in winning EPA approval for local street improvements needed to make the project viable. In fact, they formed the basis for a new EPA guidance that allows regions to gain air quality credits in their State Implementation Plans via land use projects.

Transportation Reform Can Improve Environmental Quality

Environmentalists continue to promote the benefits of transportation reform. For example, walking, cycling and taking public transit generate less air pollution and fewer greenhouse gas emissions than driving. For the first time, transportation reform can be seen as a significant ally in the fight against global warming. By reducing the demand for sprawl development, transportation reform measures also contribute to open space conservation, the protection of scenic areas, and farmland preservation. Reducing the amount of paved surface area also reduces levels of polluted runoff that can harm water supplies and aquatic ecosystems. New roads tend to disrupt habitats as well, and reducing the need for them can help ensure that wildlife populations are not displaced.

Many community groups are using transportation reform campaigns to improve local environmental quality and increase neighborhood livability. One initiative, launched by three South Bronx organizations (Nos Quedamos, the Point CDC and Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice), calls for the decommissioning of the barely-used Sheridan Expressway. They have developed a plan to replace it with a 28-acre greenway, complete with waterfront access, bicycle and pedestrian paths, and links to other regional parks. The New York Department of Transportation currently proposes to spend $420 million to refurbish the lightly traveled 1.25-mile stretch of highway. The community groups have partnered with coalitions like the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance and the Tri-State Transportation Campaign to get authorities to consider their plan as an alternative within the project’s Environmental Impact Statement.

Public Attitudes and Behavior are Changing

With deepening ranks and better information, the transportation reform movement is changing peoples’ attitudes. Years of engaging the media with analysis, commentary and critiques of transportation policy has generated hundreds of unique media hits for transportation reform groups nationwide. Advocates also have managed to get once obscure transportation concerns into the mainstream, such as induced traffic ("if you build it, they will come"), pedestrian safety, and the rising consumer costs of automobile dependence.

Polling data also reflect these changes. Dozens of opinion surveys indicate severe concern about traffic and sprawl. A 2000 poll about local problems conducted by the Pew Center for Civic Journalism found that Americans were most concerned about sprawl and traffic—more than crime, education or jobs.
Subsequent polls have identified growing support for tighter coordination between transportation and land use, increased transit investment, funding for walking and cycling facilities and more road repair. Road construction appears to be losing favor in nearly every region in the country. A recent poll by Smart Growth America found that 60 percent of respondents indicated support for the following statement: "[Do you favor having] your state government use more of its transportation budget for improvements to public transportation, such as trains, buses and light rail, even if this means less money to build new highways." Also, survey findings have been consistent despite the diversity of sponsoring organizations, which include the Federal Highway Administration, the National Association of Realtors, and the Atlanta Regional Commission.

These demands are getting noticed. Political leaders are becoming more responsive to calls for smarter growth and less traffic. In 2001, twenty-five governors vowed to confront these challenges. National associations of public officials are also officially expressing support for more sensible growth, including the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National League of Cities, the National Governors’ Association, the International City/County Management Association, the National Association of Counties, and many others. In Washington, DC, the U.S. Congress has an active Senate Smart Growth Task Force and House Livable Communities Task Force, both of which host regular briefings and other events for lawmakers and staff.

### Americans’ Attitudes Are Changing

**Most Important Local Issue**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transportation/ Sprawl/ Traffic/ Roads</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crime/ Violence</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Issues/ The Economy</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>Child and Teen Issues</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problems with Politics/ Politicians</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moral Decline/ Decline of Family Values</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racism/ Discrimination/ Intolerance</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problems with Immigrants</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Law Enforcement/ Justice/ Court System</td>
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<td>Health Medicine</td>
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<td>Poverty/ Hunger/ Homelessness</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Disasters/ Hurricanes/ Floods</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Citizen Issues/ Care of the Elderly</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<td>Things Are Good Here/ Don’t Know</td>
<td>16%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Pew Center for Civic Journalism, January 2000
In many regions, business associations are developing a keen interest in smarter growth, led by groups like the Commercial Club of Chicago, the Sierra Business Council (CA), the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group, Bluegrass Tomorrow (KY), and Envision Utah. They tend to regard haphazard sprawl as a drag on the regional economy and a detriment to community livability. The real estate industry has also started to take an active role in championing smart growth. In the annual industry-leading publication Recent Trends in Real Estate, the authors have for years advised real estate investors against putting their money behind sprawl, and have instead urged them to invest in well-planned communities in or near thriving urban centers (“24-hour cities”) with good public transit service and access to open space.

Along with attitudes, behavior is changing as well. Many urban areas and older suburbs are experiencing a rebirth as growing numbers of families rediscover the convenience and appeal of living in neighborhoods with transportation choices and urban amenities. The use of public transit is skyrocketing, growing nearly 20 percent over the past four years—more than double the growth in driving during the same period.
Since 1997, hundreds of ballot measures supporting open space preservation, transit funding, water quality improvements, economic development and affordable housing have been approved by voters in communities nationwide.

These trends are even reaching into the research sector. In the past few years, many new research centers have been created to study transportation and land use linkages, smart growth, and the design of new infrastructure. These include the new University of Maryland Smart Growth Center, the Rutgers Voorhees Transportation Institute, new endowed Chairs and programs at Georgia Tech, George Washington University, the University of Miami, the University of California at Berkeley, and Harvard University. Government research institutions such as the National Research Council, the General Accounting Office, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Millennium Housing Commission have all started tackling the causes and costs of sprawl.

Academic interest is not only a barometer for the growing national interest in transportation reform and smarter growth, but it is also an indicator of the rising credibility of the movement, which needs solid research, data, new models, and analytical tools to gain mainstream professional acceptance. As new efforts to combat haphazard sprawl and traffic are launched, demand for credible evaluation and research will only grow.

Opportunities for Funders:
An Agenda for Transportation Reform and Smart Growth

How can funders best support the coming transportation revolution? It is essential for foundations to recognize that our nation is at a critical period for transportation reform—perhaps more so than in 1990. The passage of ISTEA set the stage. Now public opinion, support for smart growth, a growing movement, more research, better tools, and innovative ideas are all converging to offer an unprecedented opportunity to tip the scales towards reform. To make it happen, transportation reform advocates need a substantial boost in support from foundations at all levels, from community foundations to large national foundations.

Combating the Forces of Rollback

Part of the need for greater funder commitment is the continuing threat of rollback. The highway and sprawl lobbies have not conceded the ground they lost when ISTEA's reforms were enacted. They are actively organizing to influence everyone from public officials to the media, launching many attacks on public transit, community revitalization, and environmental goals. A recent Georgia Highway Builders television spot even goes so far as to equate efforts to fight highways with Communism in North Korea.

The road builders are also organizing new coalitions. One effort is the Quality Growth coalition (quality-growth.org), which is designed to exploit the public's frustration over sprawl to build support for increased highway construction. The Quality Growth website, which prominently displays the logos of thirteen road indus-
In recent years, highway builders have gained another set of allies: libertarian activists. Dubbed "The Boys of Sprawl" by Governing Magazine, these individuals have made disparaging smart growth, public transit, community reinvestment and other transportation reform goals a cottage industry. While their numbers are small, they crisscross the nation giving presentations, participating in debates, landing op-eds and other media hits, and delivering flawed analysis and data to poorly informed and credulous audiences.27

Institutional resistance also thwarts transportation reform. Despite gains in federal policies, state and local authorities still control four-fifths of all government spending on transportation, and most have been reluctant to change their priorities. During the 1998 reauthorization of ISTEA, for example, state officials recommended rolling back many of ISTEA's key reforms, including public involvement, funding for non-highway modes, the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program, and a variety of other measures. Many continue to oppose measures to support environmental justice, carefully evaluate environmental impacts, and make state transportation spending data available for public scrutiny.28

Part of this resistance is the result of age-old political expectations. In many states transportation officials are more eager to serve land development and highway construction priorities, and continue to champion highway projects that fail to relieve congestion, improve regional economies, boost safety, or reduce air pollution. Many states also have their hands tied; in over thirty of them, transportation agencies cannot fund non-highway transportation projects with state gas tax receipts because of state constitutional requirements restricting the use of those revenues.

At the staff level, the challenges are also formidable. For decades, transportation planners and engineers have relied on technical manuals to guide their decision-making. Getting a mostly engineering-oriented workforce to focus on outcomes like "livable communities" will be difficult because such objectives have been difficult to define, especially in the technical language of transportation where people are more accustomed to talking about volume-to-capacity ratios than about helping welfare recipients gain access to jobs. Many regard such goals as too "fuzzy" or believe that the connections are too tenuous to pursue in a responsible fashion. Now that concerns about sprawl have emerged, transportation planners and engineers feel even more overwhelmed by the growing demands on their profession.

As a result, gains in transportation reform can never be taken for granted. In fact, a recent analysis of federal transportation spending found that federal spending on highway construction, which declined during 1992-1998, has risen 21 percent in the past two years while spending on other modes has fallen by 19 percent.29 According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, a significant portion of this includes new sprawl-inducing highways (they call it "infrastructure for metropolitan expansion") which costs taxpayers roughly $10 billion per year.30 During this period, the bulk of states' discretionary or "flexible" funds have been spent on highways, with only 6.5 percent of a total of $50 billion supporting non-roadway modes.

Even in states that claim to be showcases of smarter growth, highway construction continues unabated. Utah, for example, is often acclaimed for the innovative Envision Utah project, in which state agencies and non-profit organizations have conducted sophisti-
In the past decade, most states and regions have not fully taken advantage of the reforms offered by ISTEA and TEA21. Without complementary reforms at the state and metropolitan levels, federal reforms are much less meaningful. Transportation reform advocates have been enormously successful in getting their point of view, analyses and vision into the media. Reformers have changed hearts and minds, and now need to leverage these gains into action, developing model campaigns to promote legislative reforms, tools for practitioners, alliances with private sector groups, and regional organizing.

Launch Legislative Campaigns

Enacting legislative reforms can reinvent the mission of state DOTs and regional agencies. For example, New Jersey's Fix-It-First legislation requires state agencies to maintain transportation infrastructure before building new road capacity. California's Safe Routes to School program now requires agencies to provide grants to localities to make it safer and easier for kids to walk to school. Other state and regional campaign ideas, such as "Free the Gas Tax" (enabling state gas tax dollars to be spent on non-highway transportation investments) and "right-to-know" campaigns to disclose transportation spending data, would also help transform the goals and culture of these agencies.

Develop Tools for Practitioners

As practitioners are asked to do new things like "transit-oriented development," "traffic calming," "context-sensitive roadway design," and consider "induced traffic" in travel modeling, many are poorly equipped to do a good job. They need tools to help them be responsive to these new demands. The transportation reform advocates should help produce manuals on an array of new topics to support the work of transportation practitioners. In addition to addressing design standards and improved modeling, advocates could generate examples of best practices and success stories to inspire and inform practitioners who can deliver the goods.

This is a huge opportunity for transportation reform. Industry analysts contend that the transportation workforce is in crisis because so many planners and engineers are leaving the profession. The Federal Highway Administration estimates that 45 percent of its employees will be eligible for retirement by 2010. The Rockefeller Institute of Government has found similar figures for state and local governments. Within a decade, the transportation profession will look radically different from today's ranks. And it is well known that the next generation of transportation professionals care a great deal more about environmental issues, land use and non-highway modes.

Influence Federal Policy

Though the transportation reform movement should concentrate efforts beyond the Beltway, federal policy is still critical to success. Efforts to roll back innovative transportation measures were only narrowly defeated during ISTEA reauthorization, and they will certainly return when Congress starts TEA-21 reauthorization hearings in
Our nation is on the verge of a “tipping point” for transportation reform and smarter growth. The term comes from a recent book by writer Malcolm Gladwell, who contends that there are numerous examples of social change occurring in a dramatic, rapid manner, much in the way that medical epidemics sweep across continents. The transportation reform movement faces a set of converging circumstances that can catapult efforts to a whole new level—not incremental steps as some have predicted, but monumental change.

For inspiration, reformers should remind themselves of the last time when transportation, land use, development financing, design and professional standards all pointed in the same direction to fulfill the conventional vision of livable communities—the early Post-War period when highways, sprawl and speed were primary national goals. Our vision for the future has changed. But there is no doubt that we can once again productively harness this alignment to provide real transportation choices for everyone.
Endnotes

3. This phenomenon is called "induced traffic." See Don Chen, "If You Build It, They Will Come," Progress, March 1997.
5. According to Michael Replogle of Environmental Defense, the optimal travel speed for reduced emissions is roughly 30 miles per hour, a realistic speed to maintain for local arterials and streets.
7. For more discussion on transportation reform in the 1990s, see "Ten Years of Transportation Reform: What Have We Accomplished," Surface Transportation Policy Project, December 2000. Contact Barbara McCann at 202.974.5134.
8. For more information, see STPP's ISTE A Planners' Workbook and its Blueprint for ISTE A Reauthorization. Call 202.466.2636 to order.
9. These programs are called the Access to Jobs Program and the Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot Program, respectively. They are described in STPP's TEA-21 User's Guide, which covers the changes brought by ISTE A reauthorization and the enactment of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). See www.tea21.org/guide/guideonline.htm for the online version.
18. The overall decrease in roadway fatalities was found to more strongly associated with demographic changes, increased seat-belt use, and advances in medical technology. See Noland, op. cit.
20. The LEM was created by three transportation reform groups: the Center for Neighborhood Technology, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Surface Transportation Policy Project. For more information, see www.locationefficiency.com.
21. See the guidance at www.epa.gov/oms/transp/traqusd.htm.
23. These were made during governors' "State of the State" addresses. Source: US Environmental Protection Agency.
24. For more examples, see Profiles of Business Leadership on Smart Growth, National Association of Local Government Environmental Professionals, 1999.
26. Transit figures from the American Public Transit Association. VMT figures from the Federal Highway Administration. Ridership is increasing on all forms of transit, including buses, subway systems, commuter trains and trolleys. Bus systems with strong growth in ridership included Lansing, MI (up 19.3 percent), Raleigh, NC (up 24.7 percent), Washington, DC (up 8.4 percent), and Gainesville, FL (up 18.4 percent). Train systems with strong ridership growth included BART in San Francisco (up 12.8 percent), New York City's subways (up 7.6 percent) and the Washington, DC Metro (up 7.7 percent).
27. For a listing of their publications, see the Smart Growth Network's web site at http://www.smartgrowth.org/information/aboutsg_counter.html.
28. Specifically, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials proposed the rollback measures during ISTEA reauthorization, and they (together with the road building lobby) opposed the adoption of a set of regulations proposed in 2000 by the Clinton Administration governing environmental justice, environmental review and other matters.
31. The Legacy Highway was identified as one of the nation's most wasteful highway projects by Taxpayers for Common Sense and Friends of the Earth in their 1999 report, Road to Ruin. See http://www.foe.org/ebb/transportation/.

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Working to strengthen funders’ individual and collective abilities to support organizations promoting smart growth and creating livable communities

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