



BROOKINGS INSTITUTION METROPOLITAN POLICY PROGRAM

Roads, rails, and beyond:
Implications and opportunities for metropolitan America

Fellowship for Regionalism and Sustainable Development
On-line DIALogue
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Roads, rails, and beyond: Implications and opportunities for metropolitan America

 **The nation is facing a series of intra- and inter-metropolitan transportation challenges**



However, transportation policies are either outdated, absent/aspatial, or compartmentalized



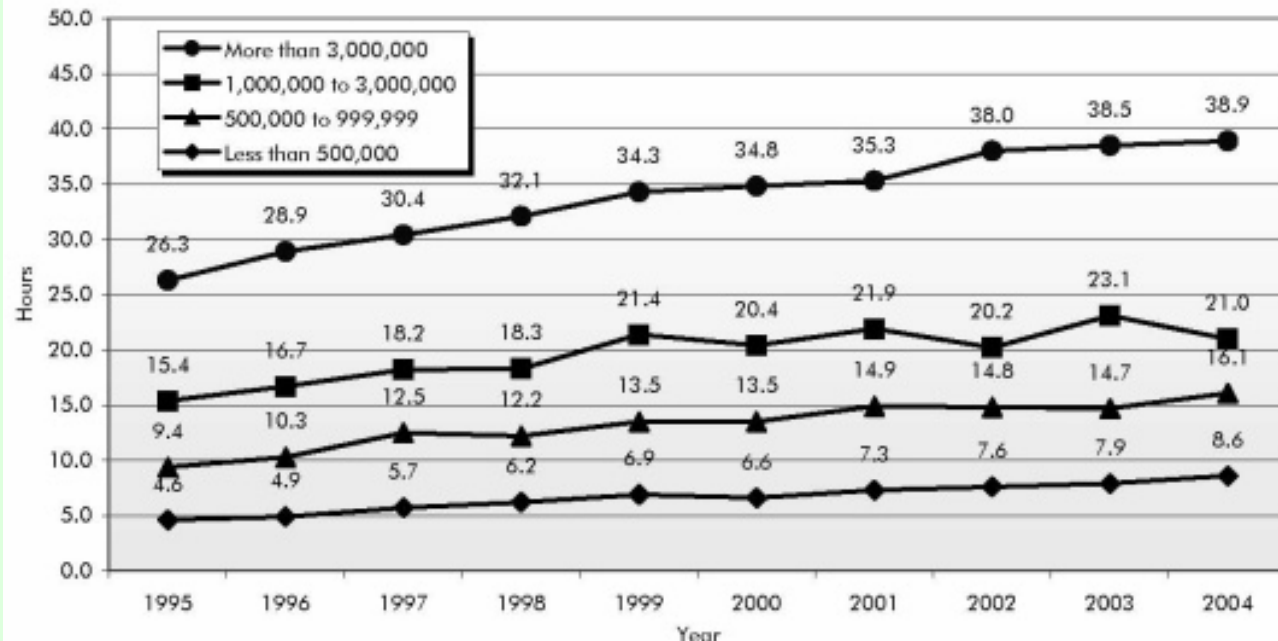
A transportation agenda for metropolitan America

I. America's major metros are still stuck in traffic

INTRA-METRO CHALLENGES

- Congestion tripled over 20 years
- 42% of congestion costs are concentrated in 5 largest metros
- In 10 years, 20% more cars on the road
- Urban VMT increased by $\frac{1}{3}$ from 1995 to 2002 but is leveling off, and *declining* in some metros

Percent of Additional Travel Time by Urbanized Area Size, 1987-2002



I. America's major metros are still stuck in traffic

INTRA-METRO CHALLENGES

Metro Implications

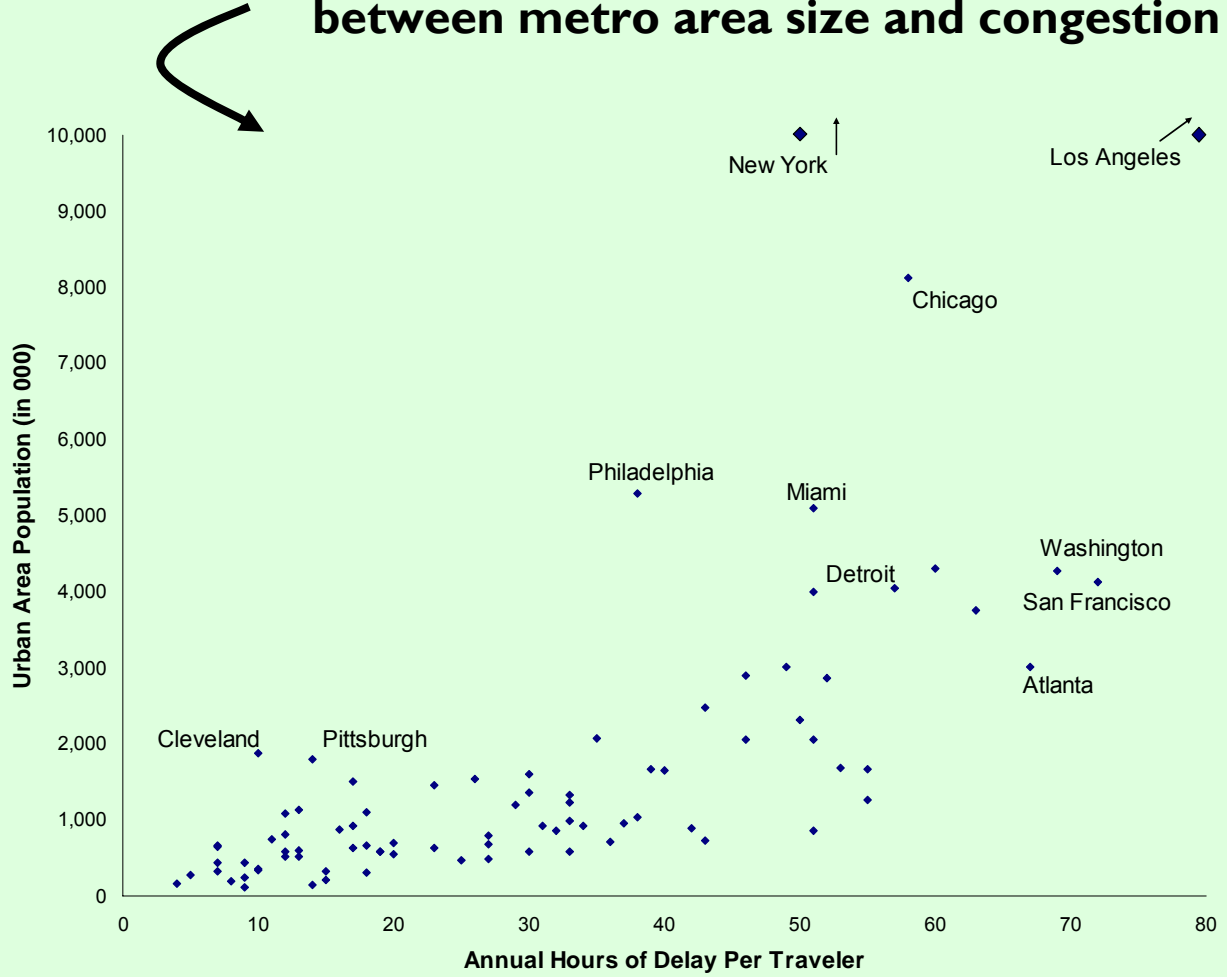
Billions in lost economic output (~ \$4 billion in New York metro)

2.3 billion gallons of fuel wasted annually

In 2005 CO₂ levels were 27% higher than ever recorded

Congestion reduces agglomeration effects of dense places

There is a fairly direct correlation between metro area size and congestion



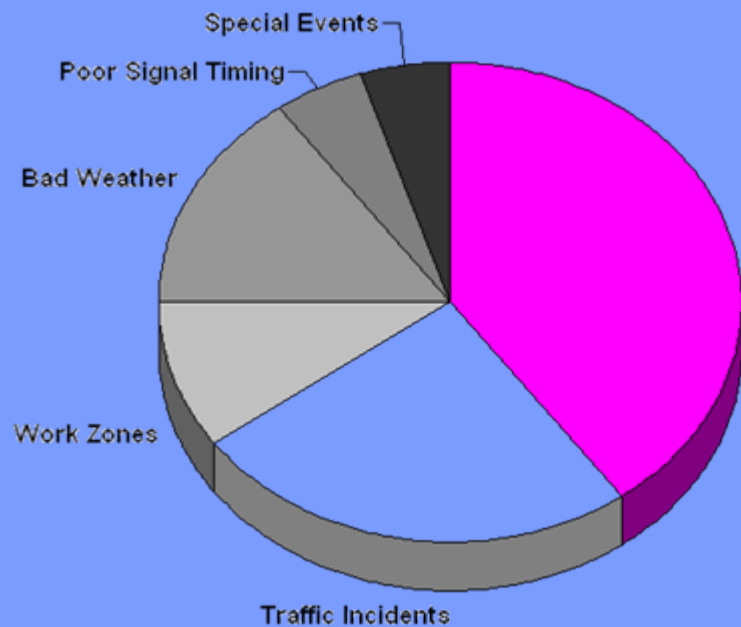
Source: Various

2. Increasing truck and freight congestion

INTRA-METRO CHALLENGES

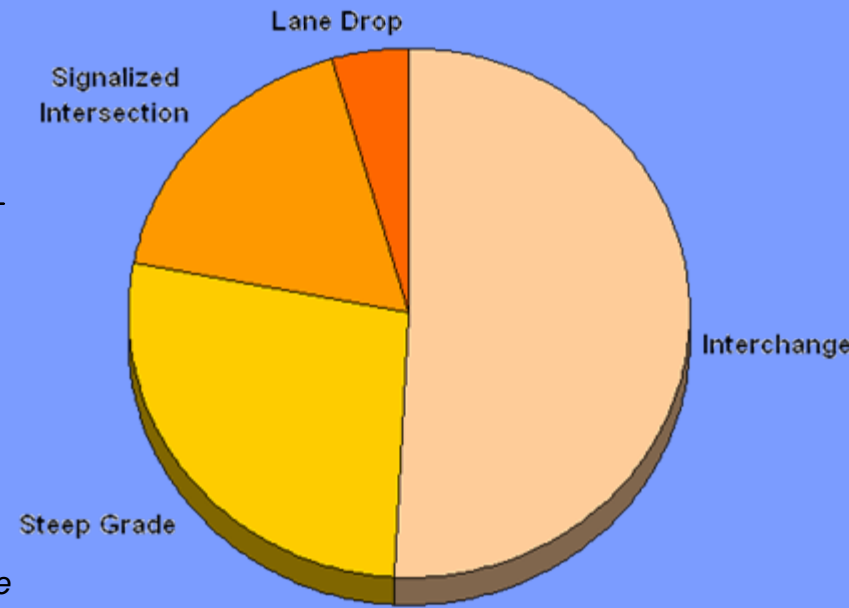
- 13% increase in trailer trucks since 2001
- Trucks are projected to carry 82% of new freight by 2020
- 2/3rds of cargo is shipped less than 100 miles
- Half of all freight delays are interchanges where highways meet

Sources of congestion



Bottlenecks

Truck hours of delay by bottleneck type



Source: Cambridge

2. Increasing truck and freight congestion

Metro Implications

- Congestion in and around freight terminals is a major problem for short haul traffic
- Int'l gateways have seen largest increases in congestion
- More trucks means more overall metro congestion



3. Outdated and outmoded infrastructure

- Less than half of roadway miles are in good condition
- From 1997 to 2002 spending on new capacity increased 41% while maintenance and services increased only 24%
- Half of rail cars (outside of NYC) are past replacement age
- Only $\frac{1}{3}$ of freeway miles are monitored by traffic management centers

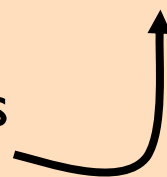


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INTRA-METRO CHALLENGES

Metro Implications

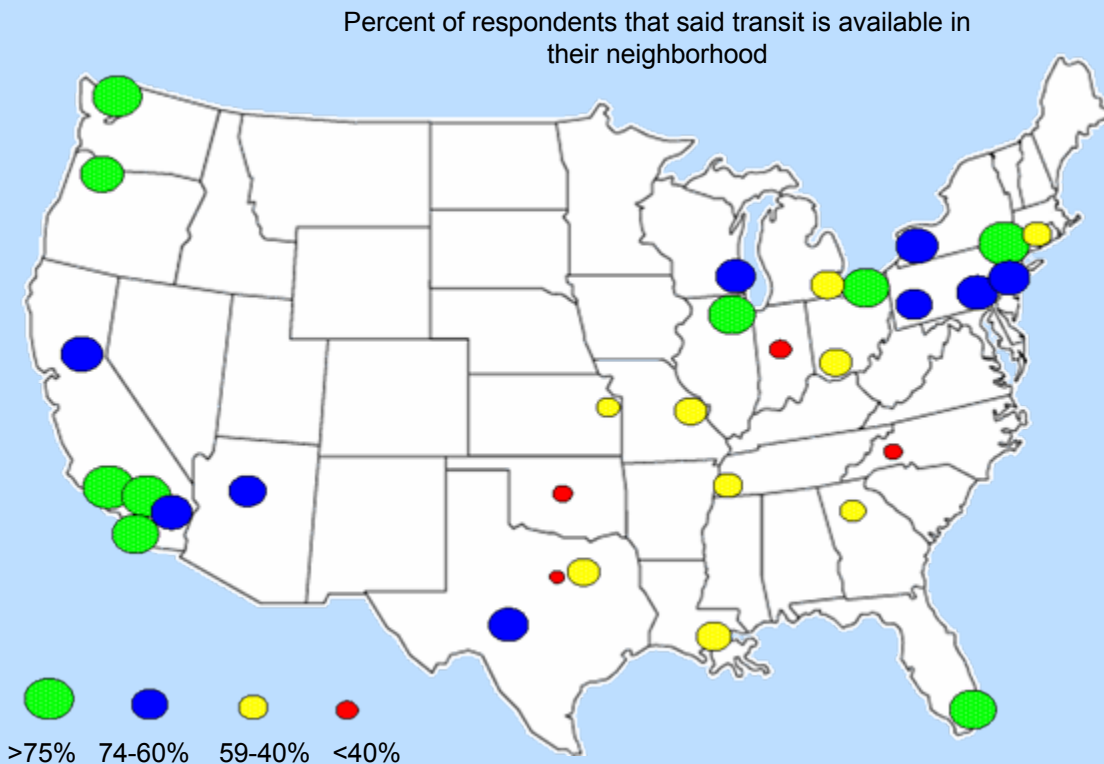
- Only about $\frac{1}{3}$ of urban roads are considered to be in “good” condition, as compared to over half in rural areas
- More than 8 out of 10 Californians live in metros where 80% of roads are poor or mediocre
- Older rail lines are designed to fit obsolete radial patterns



4. Poor public transit accessibility

INTRA-METRO CHALLENGES

- Just over half of Americans report that transit is available to them
- That figure is only $\frac{1}{3}$ for those living in new housing
- Half of the nation's 55,000 buses serve just 10 metros
- 54 of the top 100 metros have no rail service and have low bus volumes per capita.
- 52 million people live in these places



4. Poor public transit accessibility

Metro Implications

- Of the largest metros, in only 9 do 25% or more of workers commute by transit
- Job sprawl results in a spatial mismatch between low income workers
- The working poor spend twice as much of their income on commuting than other workers



5. Inter-metro passenger rail is not world class

INTER-METRO CHALLENGES

- Amtrak requires annual subsidies to avoid shutting down or slashing service
- Amtrak owns only 3% of the tracks it uses
- Amtrak riders are almost entirely (96%) metropolitan. More than half are in the 10 largest

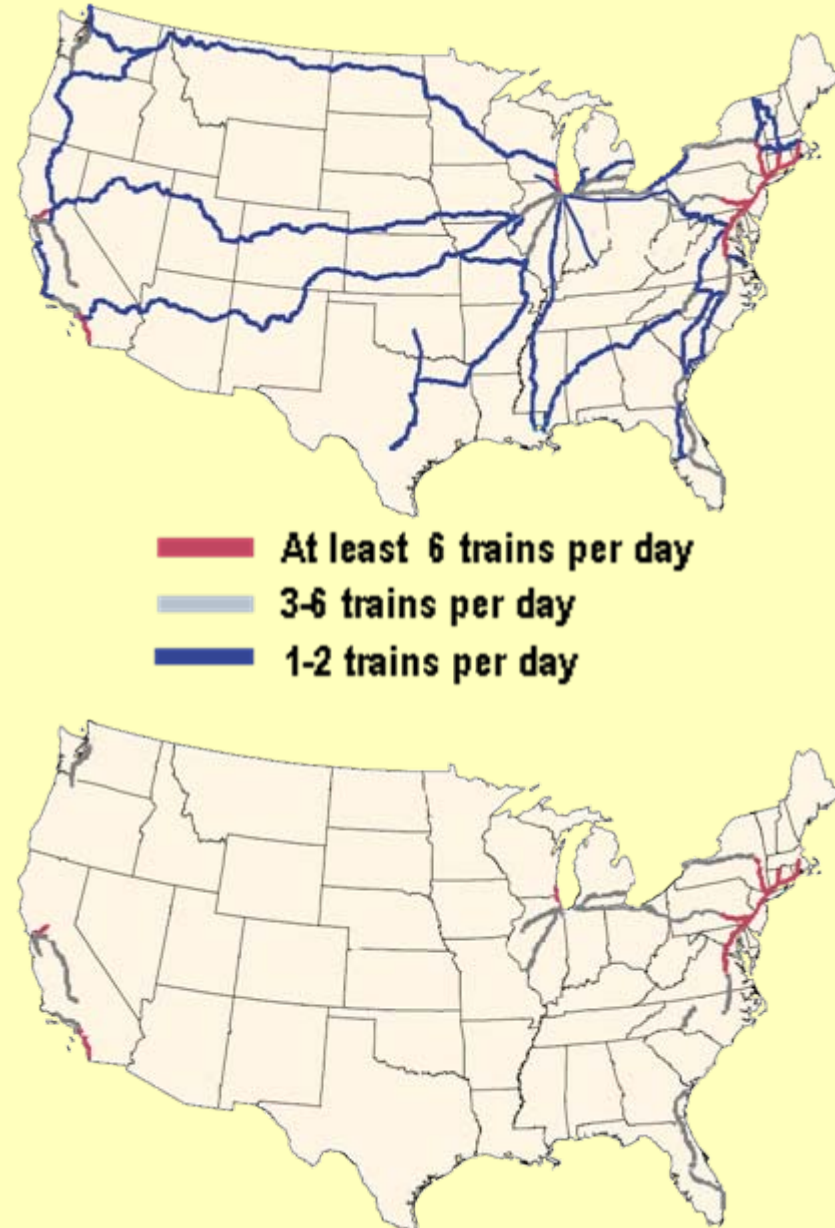


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INTER-METRO CHALLENGES

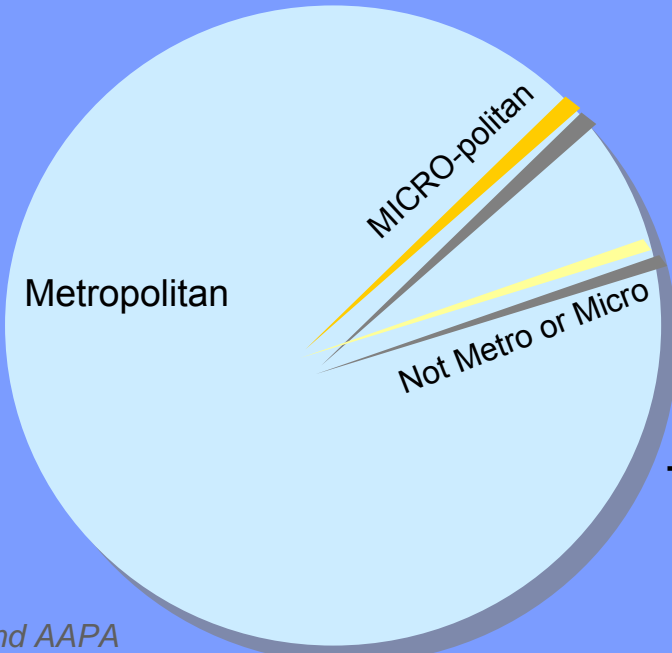
Metro Implications

- Amtrak must contend with the owners of the tracks for service time
- The majority of major metros do not have efficient, reliable service



6. Rail freight and intermodal ports are struggling to meet new demands

- Total amount of freight mileage (tracks) declined by 1/3 since 1980
- In 2005 2.4 of the 2.6 billion tons of freight came from metro areas. More than 1/3 went through ports in the 10 largest metros
- Container volumes will increase by nearly 200% in 20 years yet there is no effort to expand any major U.S. port



Total Trade (in tons), 2005, Metro and Non-Metro

Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and AAPA

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INTER-METRO CHALLENGES

Metro Implications

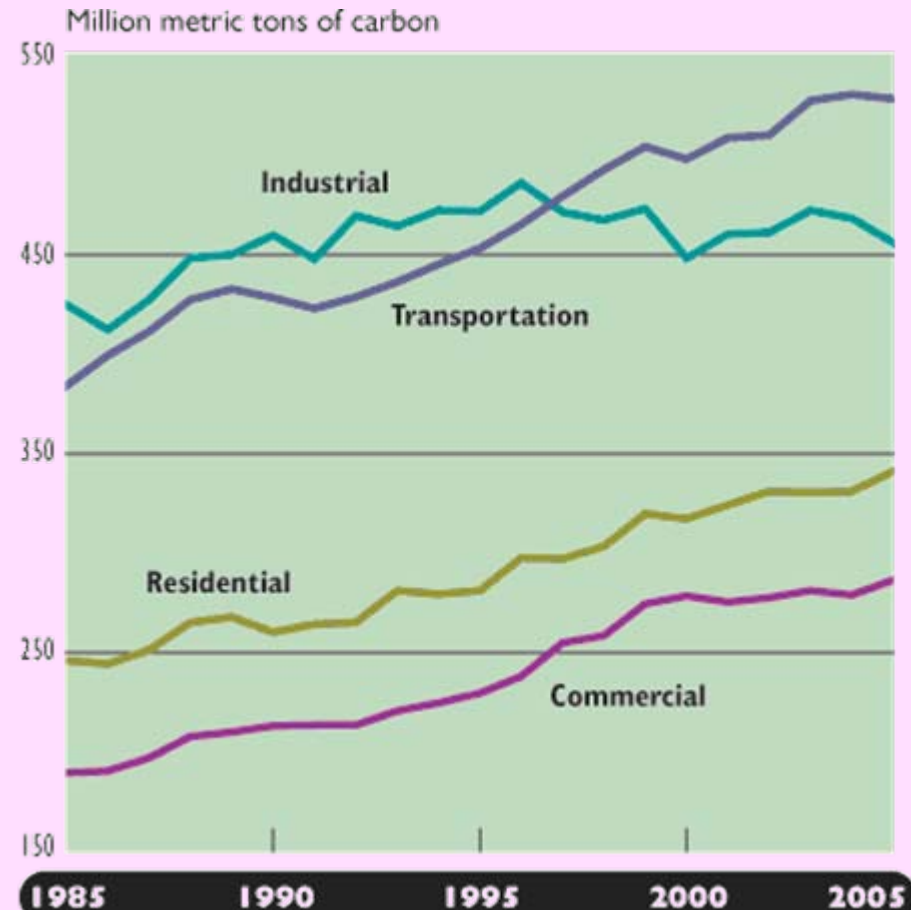
- Shortages and capacity decreases are resulting in service delays and disruptions, increasing costs for businesses and products
- Congestion in and around ports (e.g., New York, San Francisco, LA, Miami, Portland, Seattle) affects overall metro problems



7. Climate change has emerged as a major national concern

OTHER RELATED CHALLENGES

- CO₂ accounts for 84% of greenhouse gas emissions and is steadily increasing
- In 2005 transportation accounted for 1/3 of all CO₂ emissions
- U.S. consumers drive more and consume more oil per capita than any other nation



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OTHER RELATED CHALLENGES

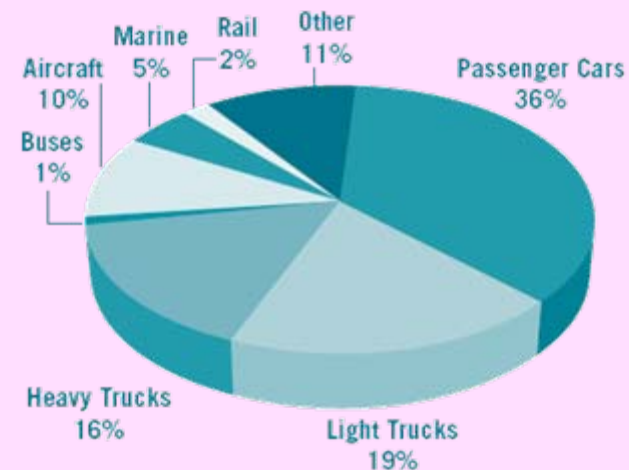
Metro Implications

- Transportation is a key element in any policy aimed at climate change mitigation
- Increased fuel efficiency and alternative fuels is chiefly being considered as the response – reducing driving only to a slight degree



Transportation GHG Emissions

by Mode, 2000



Source: U.S. EPA, 2002, Table 1-14.

8. Household spending on transport is very high

OTHER RELATED CHALLENGES

- Transport is the 2nd largest expense for most American households (19%)
- For every dollar a working family saves by moving out, they spend 77 cents more on transport
- Once a commute has surpassed 12-15 miles, the increase in transport costs usually outweighs the savings on housing

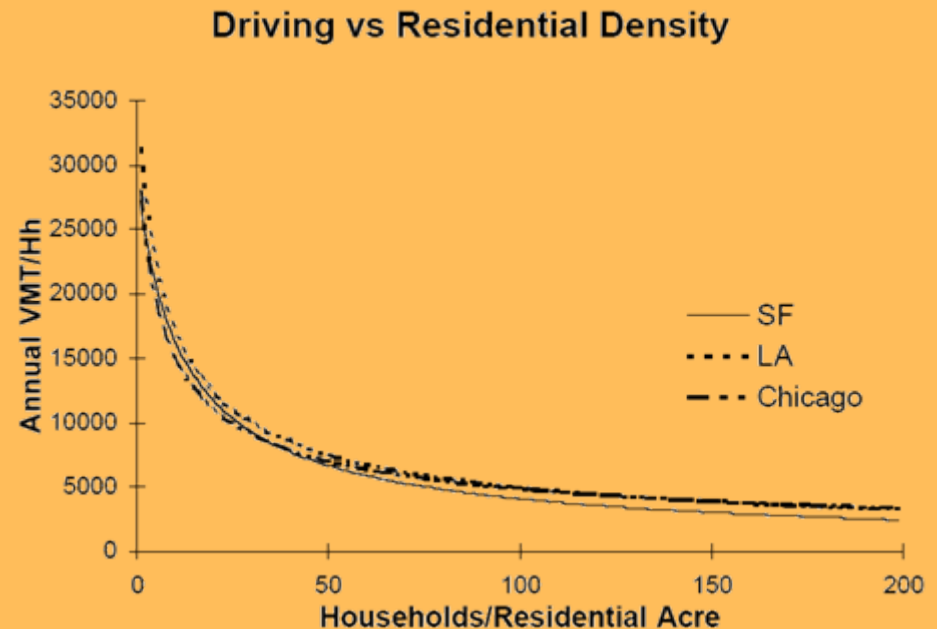


8. Household spending on transport is very high

OTHER RELATED CHALLENGES

Metro Implications

- Characteristics of neighborhoods such as density, access, and transit shape households spending through “location efficiencies”
- Research shows that households living closer to the metro core – and in places with travel options – drive less and spend less on transport than others



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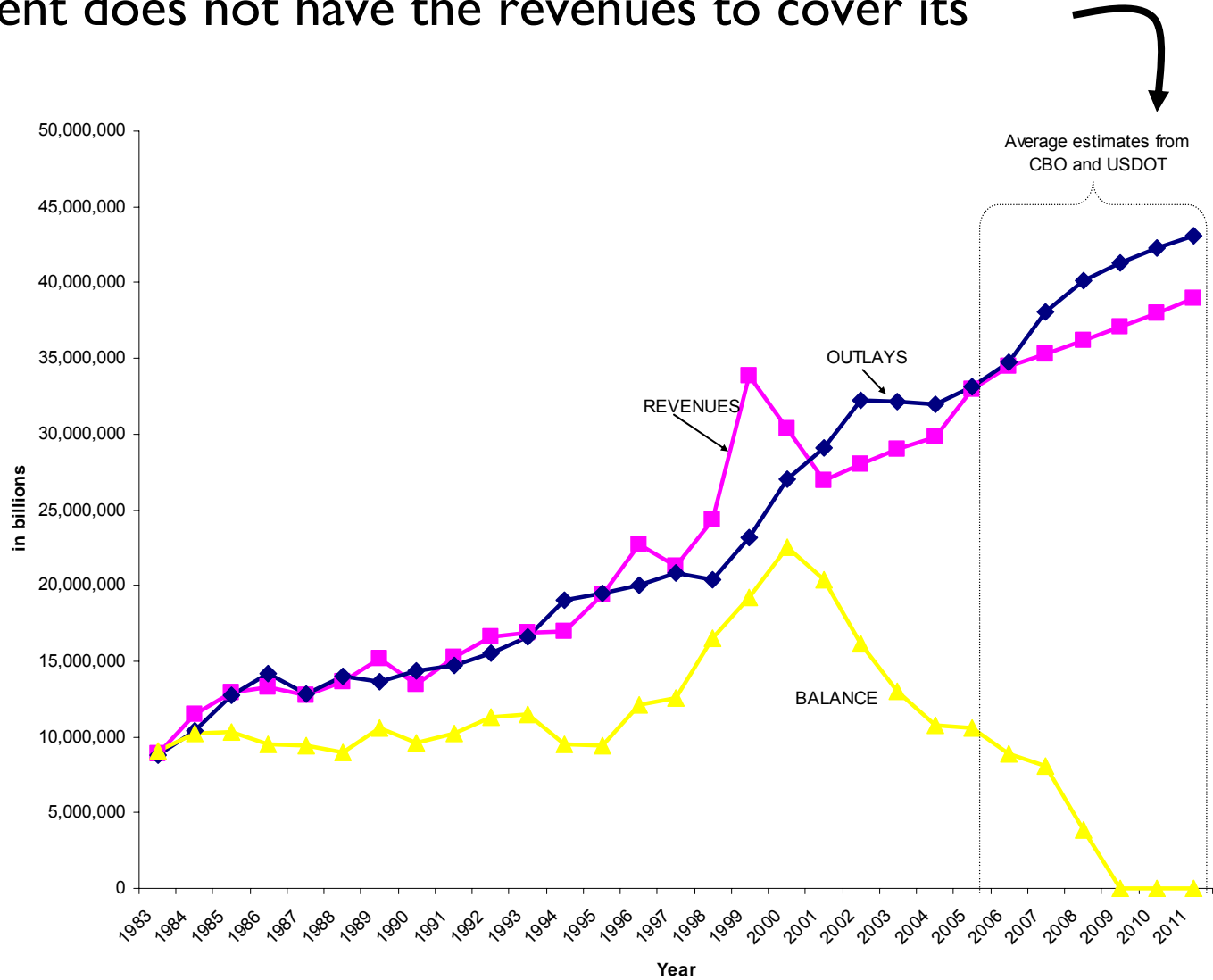


A transportation agenda for metropolitan America

I. A transportation finance crisis is looming

OUTDATED POLICIES

- Federal government does not have the revenues to cover its obligations
- GAO added transport finance to annual list of high risk areas
- Federal gas tax has not been raised in 14 years
- Cost of materials has skyrocketed

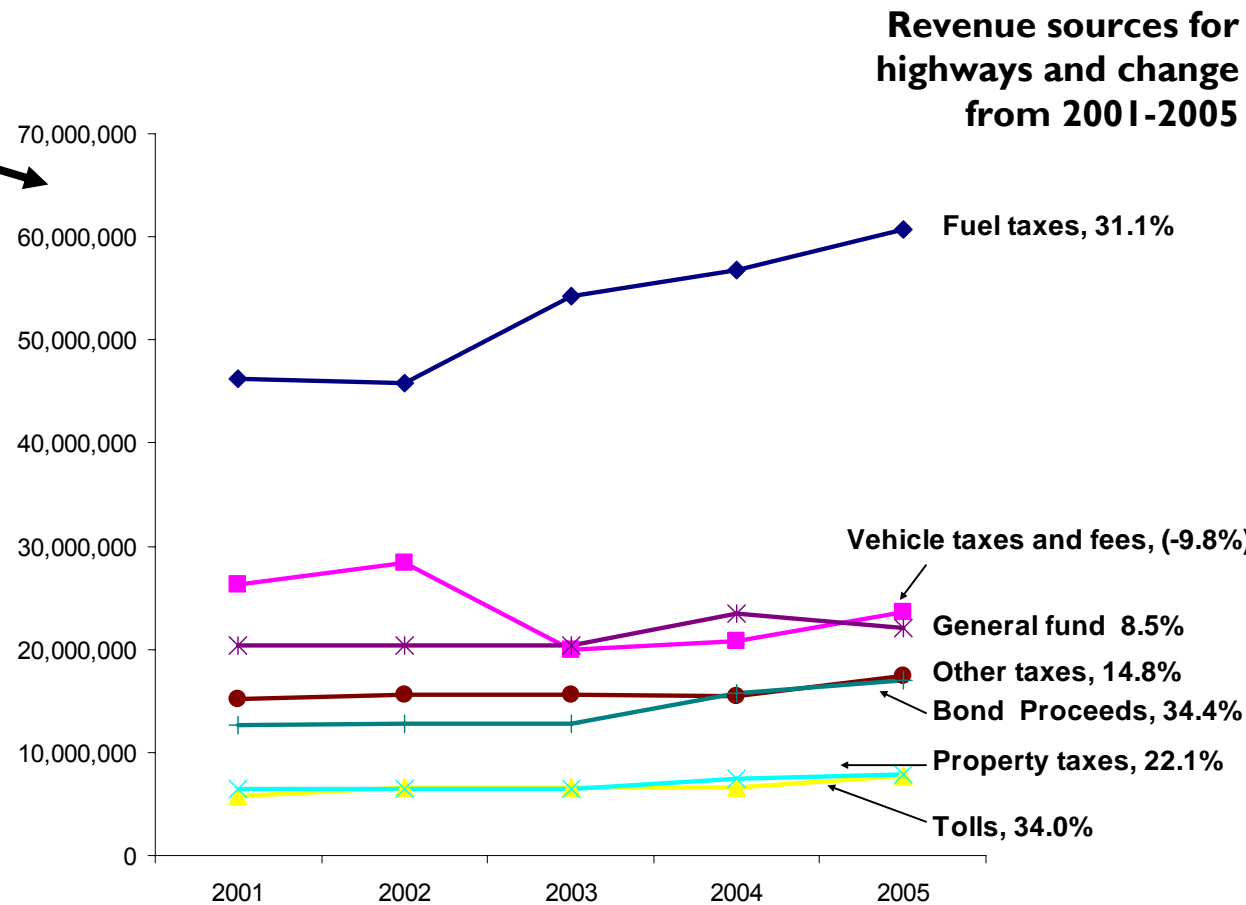


I. A transportation finance crisis is looming

OUTDATED POLICIES

Metro Implications

- In the last 2 years the federal government rescinded nearly \$8 billion from states
- The gas tax is still the dominant – and growing – source of federal funds
- Though revenue from tolls are increasing, the system is still not priced correctly
- Public transit from local sources has soared



2. Transit and highway programs operate on an unlevel playing field

OUTDATED POLICIES



- New transit projects are funded at a 50/50 split vs. 80/20 for highways
- New transit projects are subject to intense oversight and project selection while other new capacity projects are not
- Amtrak has no dedicated funding stream and not eligible for flex funding

2. Transit and highway programs operate on an unlevel playing field

OUTDATED POLICIES

Metro Implications

- Local and metro policy makers cannot make project decisions on an equal basis
- Approval for federal transit projects is time consuming and highly demanding
- Amtrak service is stretched too thin and service in many large metros suffers



3. Transportation decisions are not connected to a coherent national plan

ABSENT OR ASPATIAL POLICIES

- Federal government takes an agnostic approach to where funds are spent
- The GAO found that the federal program is serving as a “cash transfer, general purpose grant program”
- No oversight or accountability for project selection
- Too much flexibility
- Too much earmarking



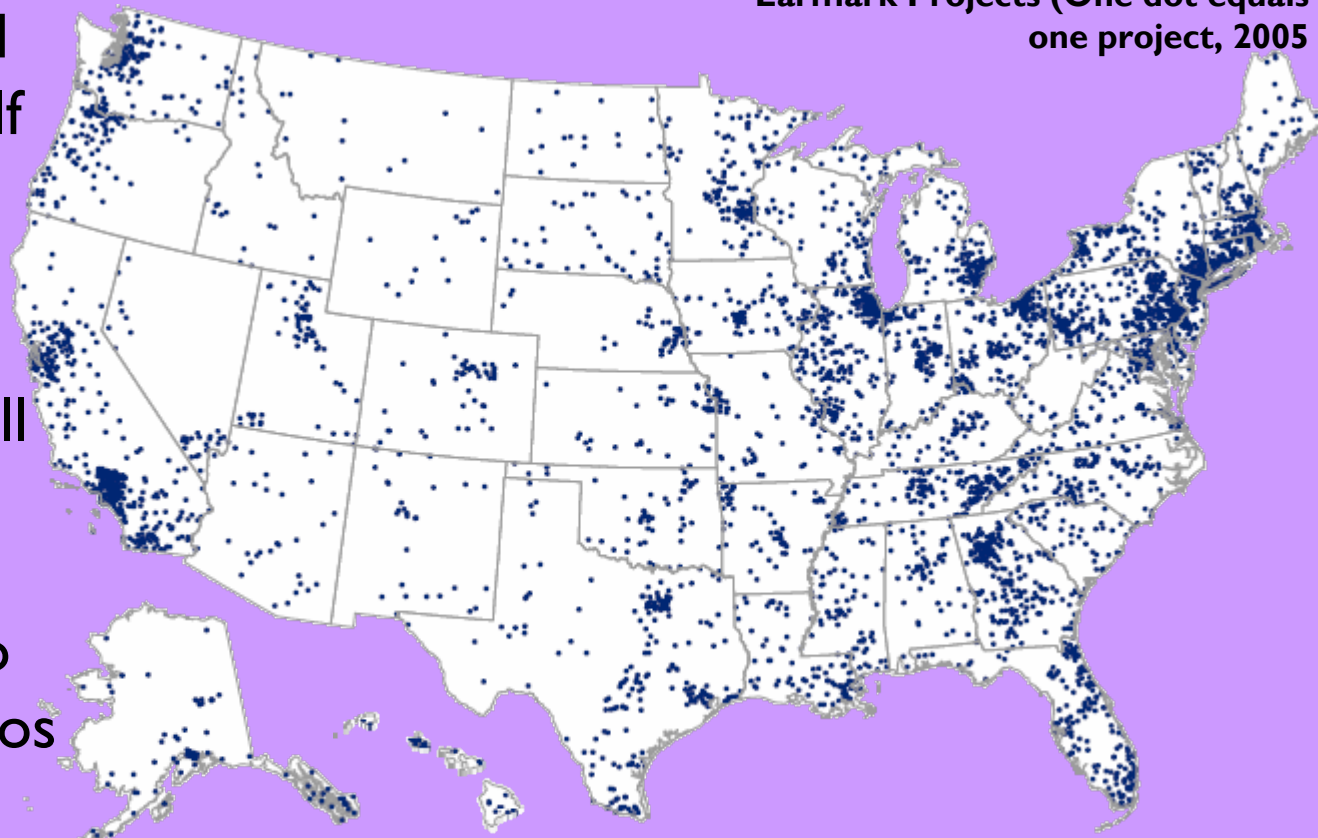
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ABSENT OR ASPATIAL POLICIES

Metro Implications

- The lack of federal vision is frequently cited as a major problem
- States have broad flexibility over half of their federal dollars
- Just over half of all dollars from the SAFETEA-LU earmarks went to the top 100 metros

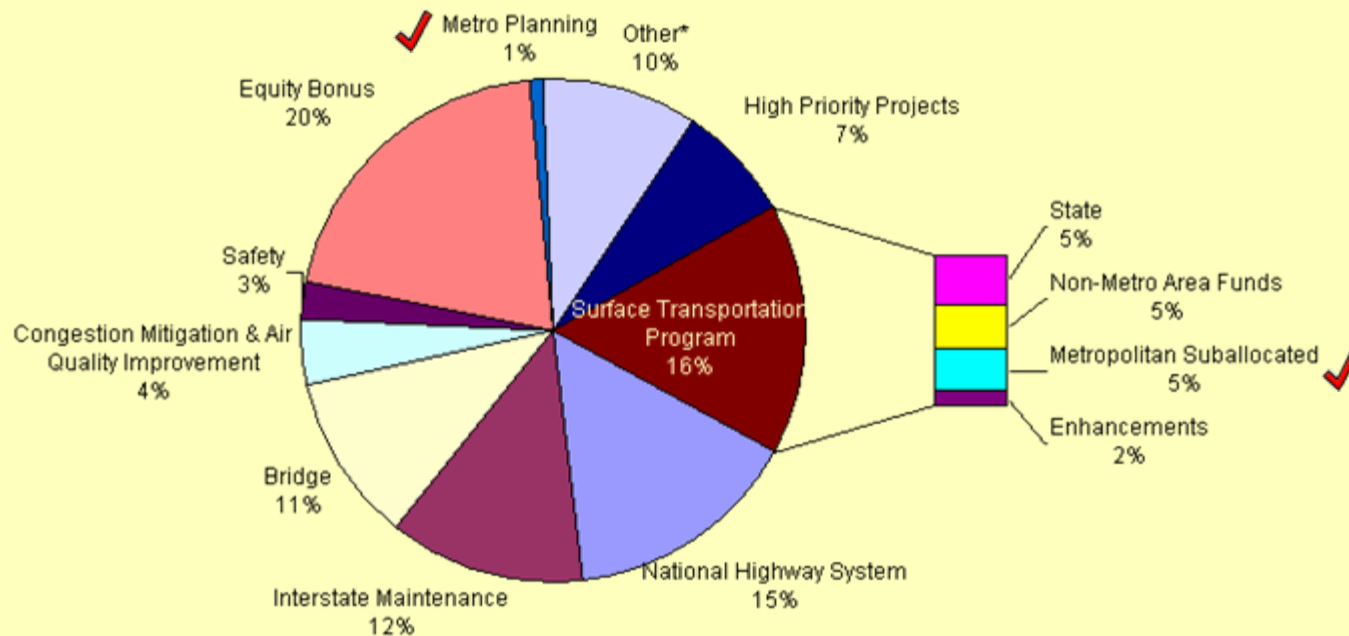
High Priority Transportation Earmark Projects (One dot equals one project, 2005)



4. There is a lack of proportionate attention to metro areas

ABSENT OR ASPATIAL POLICIES

- Inadequate suballocation and misaligned funding
- Federal law only gives metro areas direct control over a small portion of all funds

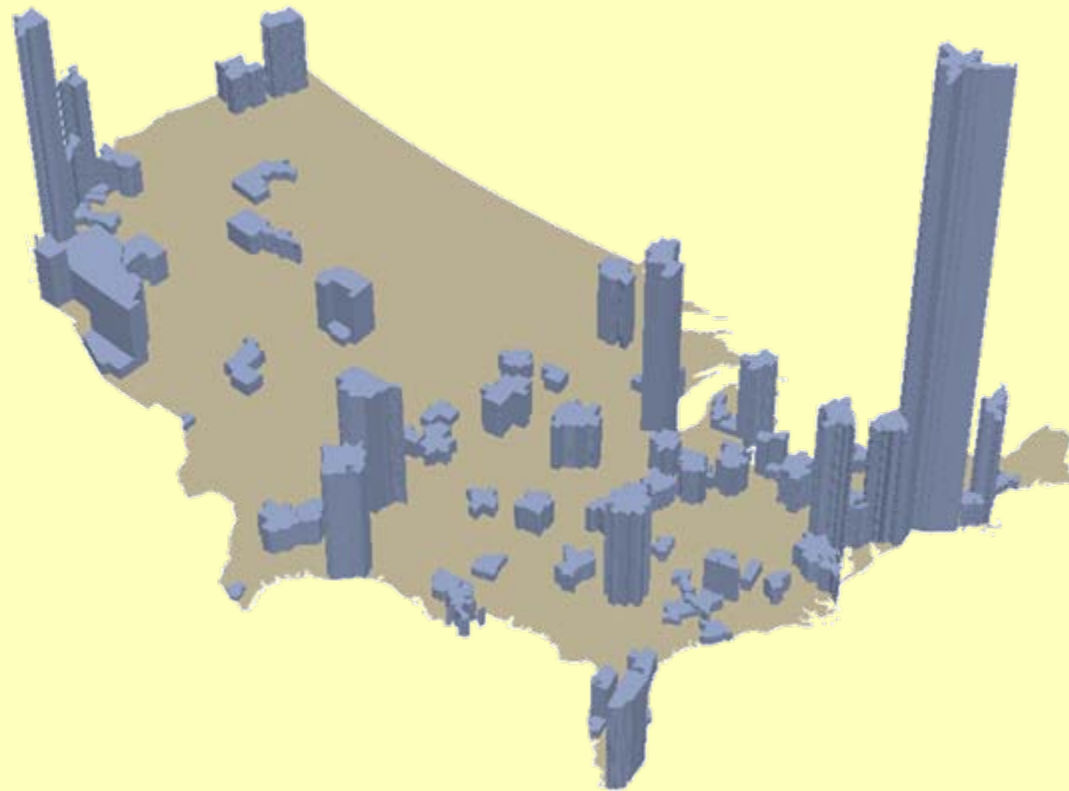


4. There is a lack of proportionate attention to metro areas

ABSENT OR ASPATIAL POLICIES

Metro Implications

- There is only a modest commitment to metros despite their critical importance to the nation



5. Related federal policies are rigidly stovepiped and unconnected

COMPARTMENTALIZED

- Housing, transportation, and economic development policies are separate and act independently of – and often in conflict with – each other
- Federal transit program does not reward projects that reorient land use and achieve greater densities



5. Related federal policies are rigidly stovepiped and unconnected

COMPARTMENTALIZED

Metro Implications

- Investments are being pushed out of urban areas
- Car trips to a park-and-ride lot adjacent to a rail station receive preference from federal analysts over shorter trips, or ped/bike trips



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➔ A transportation agenda for metropolitan America

TO ADDRESS OUTDATED POLICIES

1. De-politicize and recondition transportation finance

To spend federal dollars better and more efficiently

2. Level the playing field between highways and transit

The two modes are treated differently and policy makers cannot make objective decisions about new capacity

3. Develop a functioning and efficient inter-metro passenger rail network

Lack of consistent commitment has left the U.S. with a dramatically substandard system that is spread too thin

4. Unleash the market to address a range of concerns

Many problems are due to the system not being priced correctly and inefficiencies abound

TO ADDRESS ABSENT OR ASPATIAL POLICIES

5. Rebuild the public trust

Unlike other areas of domestic policy, transportation decisions are not transparent nor are they held to any performance standards or accountability

6. Develop a coherent national purpose and target spending

Federal transportation decisions are not tied to a national plan and undermine metro areas

TO ADDRESS COMPARTMENTALIZED POLICIES

7. Explicitly connection
transport, housing, economic
development

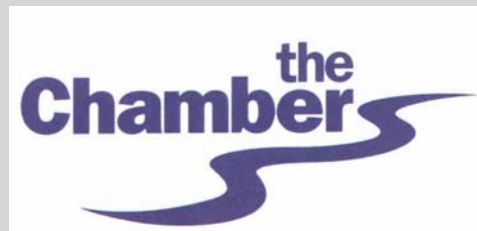
**Related federal policies are
disconnected, spatially misaligned, and
not designed to deliver long term
benefits**

THE ROLE OF THE CHAMBER

Almost by definition, chambers view transportation, housing, economic development and a host of issues through the proper lens: *metropolitan*

In many regions, the chambers are one of the few voices for true metropolitan decision making

At minimum, chambers should take a leadership role in promoting true decision making that supports and strengthens metropolitan areas.



THE ROLE OF THE CHAMBER

- *Federal level:* Chambers should play a leading role in calling for a new vision for federal transportation policy that focuses on targeted and prioritized investments for metropolitan America.
- *State level:* Chamber executives can provide cover for state electeds to make hard decisions.
- *Local and regional level:* Chambers can get beyond log-rolling and work with their MPOs to prioritize investments where they will have the biggest payoff for the region.





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