

Message from the Secretary

I am honored to present the President's fiscal year 2004 budget request for the United States Department of Transportation (DOT). This budget request reflects the Administration's continued commitment to ensuring that we all enjoy a safe and efficient transportation system that keeps America moving. President Bush is requesting \$54.3 billion in mandatory and discretionary funding for our Department - more than 6 percent above his request in 2003. I am very pleased to note that the 2004 budget request includes more than \$14 billion targeted toward my top priority - safety.



Over the past year, we at DOT have reflected on ways to create a safer, simpler and smarter transportation system for all Americans. We are working to achieve systems that are safer because we will place a greater emphasis on saving lives and reducing accidents than ever before; simpler because we envision consolidating and streamlining programs and improving project delivery; and smarter because we are focusing on system performance and enhancing program accountability. These goals will form the blueprint for our efforts at DOT over the coming year, and I have every confidence that we will make steady progress.

The President's fiscal year 2004 budget request sets the stage for two key reauthorization proposals. Current laws authorizing surface and air transportation programs will expire at the end of fiscal year 2003. In anticipation of this, a major component of the 2004 budget request includes the financial foundation for proposed new legislation that will authorize these programs for the next several years. We look forward to working with the Congress on swift enactment of these reauthorization bills that will continue to keep our programs strong and responsive to the Nation's transportation needs.

Two major DOT operating administrations - the United States Coast Guard and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) - are moving from DOT to the new Department of Homeland Security next month. DOT is proud to have provided guidance and support to the Coast Guard for more than 35 years. We are also honored to have shepherded the TSA from its inception through its first full year of operation. We send the Coast Guard and TSA to the Department of Homeland Security with our best wishes as they address their expanded missions in homeland security.

I want to express my appreciation to the President for his continued support of transportation programs in his 2004 budget request. We at DOT are solidly behind the President who is trying to balance the current economic climate with our security needs. These challenges place us in a constrained budget environment. Yet I believe that the budget request for DOT is fair and I look forward to continuing to work with the President, my colleagues in the Administration, and the Congress as we strive together to achieve the safer, simpler and smarter transportation system that America deserves.

Norman Y. Mineta
Secretary