

Message from the Secretary

I am pleased to present President Bush's fiscal year 2006 budget request for the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The President's request, which totals \$59.5 billion in budgetary resources, includes major investments in our Nation's highways and roadways, airports and airways, railroads, transit systems, and other transportation programs that move the American economy.



This budget makes a strong commitment to the infrastructure, technology, and research that will ensure that our Nation's transportation network remains a potent and capable partner as our economy continues to grow.

I am proud of the considerable progress that the Department of Transportation has made over the past four years in advancing the safety, reliability, and efficiency of our transportation system. Through the Bush Administration's unprecedented focus on safety, for example, we have helped America achieve the lowest vehicle fatality rate ever recorded and the highest safety belt usage rate ever recorded. During the same time, we have helped bring about the safest three-year period in aviation history.

Building on this progress, the President has proposed major improvements in both surface transportation and intercity passenger rail programs to help them better meet America's 21st Century transportation needs.

Enactment of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act, or SAFETEA, is a top priority. The Administration's reauthorization legislation provides a blueprint for investment that relieves gridlock and ensures future mobility and safety on the Nation's roads and transit systems. The 2006 budget includes a record investment of \$284 billion in Federal resources over the six-year life of the bill - almost \$35 billion more than funding under TEA-21, the previous surface transportation authorization. Continued delays in enactment of the reauthorization frustrate proper planning by states and communities and deprive them of the ability to use new flexibilities that the Bush Administration is proposing to encourage private investment and achieve more efficient use of the Nation's highways.

The budget request also reflects the imperative for reform of America's intercity passenger rail system, which has been operating at a loss for 35 years. Deteriorating infrastructure and declining service further the case that, without congressional action on the Administration's reform proposals, continued taxpayer subsidies cannot be justified. Consequently, no funding is included in the 2006 budget for Amtrak. Rather, \$360 million is budgeted to allow the Surface Transportation Board to support existing commuter rail service along the Northeast Corridor and elsewhere should Amtrak cease commuter rail operations in the absence of federal subsidies.

The President's FY 2006 budget includes nearly \$14 billion for the Federal Aviation Administration to continue our investments both in building new infrastructure and in deploying technology that enhances the capacity and safety of the Nation's aviation system.

The Congress has acted on our reorganization proposal for the Department. Creation of the new Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA) promises to bring new energy and focus to the Department's research efforts and expedite implementation of cross-cutting, innovative

transportation technologies. The reorganization also creates the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), with responsibility for the safe and secure transport of hazardous materials throughout the transportation network. The 2006 budget includes \$130.8 million for PHMSA's first full year of operations, along with \$39.1 million for RITA. In addition, RITA is expected to receive over \$300 million for transportation research conducted on behalf of other agencies on a reimbursable basis.

The FY 2006 budget request recognizes that the transportation sector is the workhorse that drives the American economy, providing mobility and accessibility for passengers and freight, supplying millions of jobs, and creating growth-generating revenue. For our part, President Bush and I remain committed to working with the Congress, and with our public- and private-sector partners to ensure that our transportation network can keep America moving confidently into the future.

Norman Y. Mineta
Secretary

