

Message from the Secretary



I appreciate this opportunity to share the highlights of President Bush's fiscal year 2008 budget plan for our Nation's transportation programs.

Building on the Administration's success in cutting the deficit in half three years ahead of schedule, the President's 2008 proposal puts America on a track for a balanced budget by 2012. Reaching this goal requires both setting priorities and restraining spending.

Our priorities at the Department of Transportation are clear. We are working on real transportation solutions that will keep America moving forward in the 21st Century:

- Solutions that will make travel safer;
- Solutions that will fight congestion by improving system performance; and,
- Solutions that employ advanced technologies and contemporary problem solving to meet today's challenges.

The President's \$67 billion request for the Department reflects these priorities. Nearly one-third of the Department's resources will be devoted to transportation safety. Over the past six years, we have made impressive progress. Record numbers of Americans are wearing safety belts, and commercial aviation has just come through its safest three-year period ever. Trucking, pipelines, and rail transportation are delivering steadily improving safety records, and public transit continues to be one of the safest forms of transportation available.

But there is no acceptable fatality rate when it is your loved one -- or your community -- at risk. So the President's FY 2008 budget proposes resources for equipping our Nation's airports and roadways with new safety technologies, for targeting growing problem areas like motorcycle crashes, and for supporting aggressive inspections of trucks, tracks and pipelines to assure the highest safety standards are met. In addition to supporting our efforts to raise the bar on safety, the President's FY 2008 budget will help improve the performance of America's transportation network.

When our network performs as it should, our economy grows stronger, consumers pay less for goods, and families spend more time together, not stuck on congested highways or circling overcrowded airports.

The President's FY 2008 budget gives the country new resources to confront congestion by supporting the comprehensive, department-wide Congestion Relief Initiative announced last year. It includes \$175 million for two key components -- forming Urban Partnerships to test combinations of leading-edge approaches such as congestion pricing, flexible work schedules, transit, and real-time traffic information, and accelerating development of our most critical trade and travel Corridors for the Future.

Today's challenges call for fundamental changes in the way we operate and fund transportation programs to keep America moving. Nowhere is this more true than with respect to aviation. The President's FY 2008 budget sets the stage for meeting the air travel demands of the future with a proposal for revamping Federal Aviation Administration financing.

The Bush Administration's plan replaces the current excise tax structure built largely around the ticket tax with one that more closely ties what various users pay to what it costs FAA to provide services.

This package puts incentives in place that will make the system more efficient, as well as more responsive, to the needs of the aviation community. This more rational, equitable, and stable approach will facilitate transformation of the aviation system to keep up with demand that is changing radically and growing exponentially.

The President's FY 2008 budget requests almost \$175 million to support key FAA investments in satellite navigation systems and other components of the Next Generation Air Transportation System. The flying public will see dramatic improvements in safety, security, and convenience as we replace our 1950s architecture and bring the air traffic system into the 21st Century.

The programs in the President's FY 2008 budget reflect the Department of Transportation's priorities. They provide a foundation for building a modern transportation system that is very safe, very efficient, very effective, and gives America every possible competitive advantage in the global economy.

Thank you. I look forward to working with you as we move forward.

Mary E. Peters
Secretary