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***Making the Connection between
Transportation and Community and
Environmental Outcomes:
The Third Wave of the Transportation
Reform Movement***

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Abstract

Since its inception in 1999, the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities has worked to engage a diverse array of funders (community, regional, and national foundations) in efforts to reform transportation policies and practices. Ineffective transportation policy and practice present threats to a number of economic, environmental, and fairness concerns. Opportunities exist to address these threats by supporting efforts to transform transportation policy at all levels of government from the current framework that views transportation as a goal in itself (moving cars and traffic) to a new policy framework that views transportation as a tool to serve community outcomes.

This paper, commissioned by the Funders' Network and written by David Burwell, is designed to help advance understanding about these opportunities for reform. The paper provides an overview of the transportation reform and smart growth movements, describes the current state of transportation reform, and offers opportunities to advance a transportation agenda that improves community outcomes.

Introduction

Transportation reform is entering its third—and potentially most significant—stage. The first stage (1965-1990) was the protest period, when grassroots organizations opposed highways being built through city centers, neighborhoods, parks, and wildlife habitat. As a result, laws were enacted to blunt the worst impacts of this program. The second stage (1990-2005) was the deconstruction stage, when the Interstate Highway System was declared complete; the narrow, highway-oriented focus of state and national transportation programs was broadened to include more programs and more money for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian projects; and some control over transportation decision-making moved from states to regional and local governments.

In the third stage of transportation reform, transportation policy, programs, and funding will become increasingly integrated with land use and broad societal goals such as climate protection, public health, energy security, social equity, and overall community development. This transition is already underway with the emerging new discipline of “smart transportation” combining with “smart growth” to better align transportation practice with sustainable communities.¹ Most transportation agencies are, however, still dominated by an engineering culture that looks for the design solution, not the community solution, to transportation problems. Opportunities for funders interested in facilitating this transition include supporting project partnerships and developing new paradigms for transportation practice, research and training, policy, and advocacy.

This transition is coming not a moment too soon. This nation is fast losing its economic, environmental, and social capital—due in large part to a tendency to think of transportation as a goal in itself, rather than as a tool to advance social and economic exchange. The challenge of this “third wave” of reform is to accelerate a paradigmatic change in transportation practice so that federal, state, and community-level transportation policies, programs, and financing are aligned with community and societal goals—and with each other. By so doing, America's international competitiveness in a carbon constrained world

can be restored, while also promoting social equity and community aspirations for a better quality of life.

“By building more and more roads, we have made it almost impossible to solve our transportation problems.”

–Allen Biehler, Secretary, Pennsylvania DOT

Transportation Reform and Smart Growth: A Historical Perspective

The national transportation reform movement traces its origins back to the 1960s when cities and communities opposed construction of the Interstate Highway System through city centers. Opposition particularly focused on highways located through poorer neighborhoods where land values were low and residents did not have the political clout to effectively object. Between 1956—the start of the interstate program—and 1967, more urban housing units were destroyed by highways (about 330,000) than were constructed by the entire national public housing program (239,374). Fully 77 percent of the units destroyed were low to moderate-income units.²

Making the Housing and Transportation Connection

While households spend, on average, about 19 percent of household income on transportation, working families with household incomes in the range of \$20,000–\$50,000 spend 28 percent of their income on transportation, largely due to the increasing distance between jobs and housing that is affordable. The combined cost of housing and transportation for these households is 57 percent of total household income, while the national average is 48 percent. For every dollar a working family saves on housing by moving further away from job centers, it spends 77 cents more on transportation, not including the personal cost of added travel time and the public costs of accommodating more travel. In contrast, households with good access to transit service spend an average of just 9 percent of household income on transportation.³

Eventually, community organizers teamed with leaders of the emerging environmental movement to spur Congress to enact laws discouraging highways through dense communities, historic centers, parks, and environmentally sensitive areas. These laws—the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Air and Water Acts, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Housing Relocation and Assistance Act, among others—dramatically reduced the societal and environmental damage of road projects. In 1966, the Bureau of Public Roads was incorporated in a new U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). But the Interstate Highway Program, a national strategic imperative championed by President Eisenhower and by every presidential administration thereafter, rumbled on.

In 1991, Congress declared the Interstate Highway System complete.⁴ In its place it declared a new policy to develop a “National Intermodal Transportation System” that is, “economically efficient and environmentally sound, provides the foundation for the nation to compete in the global economy, and will move people and goods in an energy efficient manner.”⁵ It also declared that this new system, “shall include significant improvements in public transportation necessary to achieve national goals for improved air quality, energy conservation, international competitiveness, and mobility for elderly persons with disabilities and economically disadvantaged persons in urban and rural areas.”⁶ Finally, it directed that the new Declaration of Policy be distributed to each employee of the U.S. DOT and posted in all U.S. DOT offices.

This singular success was the result of a broad reform initiative undertaken by an unlikely coalition made up of environmentalists, housing and community organizers, architects, social equity advocates, consumer groups, transit advocates, labor activists, local government leaders, bicycle, pedestrian and trail advocates, historic preservation leaders, and planners. This coalition called itself the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) and operated on the principle that each member organization would support the entire reform platform, not simply those elements of interest to its core constituency. As an unincorporated initiative, each member organization contributed staff time and resources to its support, as well as committed to serve as liaisons between STPP and its own internal network of policy leaders.

It worked. In collaboration with a group of congressional reformers led by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY), the reform community secured real change in the national transportation bill, called the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, or “ISTEA” (pronounced “ice-tea.”). Under this new law funding for transit tripled; funding for regional planning doubled; and more authority was given to planning organizations to directly fund projects in large urban areas and to connect transportation and land use. Many special interest road programs were combined into one “Surface Transportation Program” with the ability to flex the funding of this program to transit and other non-highway projects. Highway agencies were prohibited from planning projects for which adequate funding was not identified. A special Congestion Management and Air Quality (CMAQ) program was enacted to help areas not in attainment with national clean air standards to control mobile sources of air pollution. A special Transportation Enhancements (TE) program was authorized to help “replace the divots” caused by the rush to build the national highway system, including more money for bicycle facilities, trails on disused rail corridors, preservation of historic transportation structures, billboard control, and wetland mitigation.

Under this new reform framework, it was expected that state transportation agencies would begin to share control over transportation decisions (and money) with regional and local agencies, as well as with community-based leaders, to advance its new mission as stated in the Moynihan-drafted Declaration of Policy. To reduce the pain to states caused by the intended new power-sharing, ISTEA increased overall federal transportation funding by 25 percent, to \$116 billion over six years. This was more than enough to fund the new CMAQ, Transportation Enhancement, transit, safety, and planning initiatives in ISTEA while still devolving, through its flexibility provisions, more control over decision-making to the states as well as regional planning agencies. More choices, more money, and a new mandate would leverage the engineering spirit of the transportation community with the new policy goals of

ISTEA and the planning expertise (including land use planning) of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).

Additional transportation reform initiatives were included in the next federal transportation law in 1998, including programs to integrate smart growth with smart transportation planning, improve worker access to jobs in the suburbs, and price road access at the true marginal cost of the capacity used. In 2005, a Safe Routes to School program was added to the Highways Safety Program, with funding to encourage safe walking and bicycling to schools. With this new arsenal of programs promoting sustainable transportation that served broad community needs, the future looked bright for reform.

Making the Equity and Transportation Connection

The benefits resulting from an annual \$160 billion investment of public funds into roads, transit, airports, rail service, ports, and other transportation services are unequally distributed. The Federal Transit Administration estimates that one-third of the American population is transportation disadvantaged. Ninety percent of former welfare recipients do not have access to a car. More than one in five Americans age 65 or older do not drive and, of those, over 50 percent stay home on any given day partially because they lack transportation options. Two-thirds of all new jobs are in the suburbs while three-quarters of welfare recipients live in central cities or rural areas. For the poorest 20 percent of Americans, transportation costs consume more than 30 percent of household income, preventing wealth accumulation and, thus, freedom from poverty.⁷

Yet state and local transportation practices were slow to catch on to these reforms. In the majority of states, the reform initiatives enacted by ISTEA were simply added on top of the underlying highway program rather than changing transportation practice. Although most reforms added flexibility *at state option*, most states decided not to take advantage of this new ability to set a new course. To the contrary, more flexibility in program spending, combined with removal of the mandate to build a new highway *system*, simply politicized the entire effort. Soon both state and federal legislators were earmarking projects of personal interest to themselves or their constituents for accelerated funding. The process eventually got out of hand. Whereas President Ronald Reagan vetoed the 1987 highway bill because it included 100 earmarks, by 2005 the transportation bill contained over 6,200 earmarks, and was signed into law without objection by President George W. Bush. One of these earmarks was the infamous “bridge to nowhere,” a \$238 million project to build a new bridge to an island off the Alaskan mainland with a population of 50. Elsewhere in the bill, with no explanation, Congress quietly removed the Moynihan “Declaration of Policy” from the law.

The Emergence of the National Transportation and Smart Growth Movement

The transportation reforms of the 1990s represent the beginning of the modern transportation and smart growth reform movement. Upon enactment of ISTEA in 1991, reform leaders realized that their singular success was due primarily to two factors: 1) strong Hill leadership in the Senate (Moynihan) and the House, where Rep. Norm Mineta (D-CA), Chair of the House Transportation and Public Works subcommittee on Surface Transportation, supported the reform initiative; and 2) surprise. The highway lobby, which had previously enjoyed complete control over the shape and direction of the highway program, did not anticipate a challenge to its hegemony over transportation policy and funding. This element of surprise would not be present in the next transportation funding bill, scheduled for 1998 when the ISTEA law expired.

The Achilles' heel of the transportation reform movement in the early 1990s was obvious: it was a top-down effort. Hatched by what has been described as “motley assortment of groups” with only one common bond—suffering under a monolithic highway program—it was an inside-the-beltway campaign.⁸ There was little coordination between the grassroots members of the reform organizations. There was also little or no capacity, or will, within state departments of transportation (DOTs) to change their way of doing business. In addition, the traditional highway interests (construction, consulting, materials, etc.) lost no time in organizing to undo the ISTEA reforms. If the ISTEA reforms were to be sustained, the movement needed to develop alliances with the grassroots organizations, agencies, and coalitions all across America that would benefit from these reforms, but which knew little about them.

“If we don’t fight back we will soon have bike trails and historic preservation projects littered across our landscape.”

—William Fay, President, Highway Users Federation

The strategy adopted to build these national-state-local alliances was a research and public awareness initiative called the “Transportation and Quality of Life Campaign.” The STPP coalition wrote or commissioned reports connecting transportation policy and actions to issues of local public importance, citing specific examples of how traditional transportation policy hurt communities, and then explained how the ISTEA law could help. The reports were co-published with grassroots groups working on these issues. The local partners were listed as the contacts on the press releases, thus providing local perspectives and leadership while highlighting local campaigns in the media. These “quality of life reports” addressed issues relating to public safety (*Mean Streets*), the high cost of sprawl on household transportation budgets (*Driven to Spend*), the high cost and low benefits of a highways-only transportation policy (*Road Work Ahead*), the social costs on the elderly of policies that fail to provide transportation choices to non-drivers (*Stranded without Options*), how transportation costs were pricing families out of the housing market (*Transportation and the American Dream*), and how a highways-only transportation policy was hurting public health and encouraging obesity (*Measuring the Health Effects of Sprawl*).⁹

The campaign, which continued for more than ten years through two rounds of ISTEA renewal in 1998 (TEA-21)¹⁰ and 2005 (SAFETEA-LU),¹¹ was a success. A grassroots network of local transportation and smart growth campaigns embraced the ISTEA reforms and helped to successfully defend these reforms from attack by traditional highway interests in the subsequent congressional reauthorizations. It also helped to build a strong, nationwide movement dedicated to connecting transportation investments to land use decisions by increasing transportation choices and promoting smart growth policies at the regional and local level. Virtually all of this work was made possible by the continued, persistent support of national, state, and community foundations.

Making the Health and Transportation Connection

Almost 65 percent of the adult population in America is overweight and one-third is obese. In the past 25 years, the percentage of overweight teenagers has tripled. At the same time the number of children who walk or bicycle to school has declined from 50 percent in 1970 to less than 10 percent in 2000. Urban and exurban sprawl, largely caused by roads and streets built at increasingly high design speeds to accommodate motorist desire for faster travel, is increasingly fingered as a significant cause of what has been called the “obesity epidemic.”¹² In addition, according to a recent study of 3,677 children from 10–18 years of age in Southern California, children who live within 500 meters of a freeway have substantial deficits in lung development and performance compared to children living at least 1,500 meters away.¹³

In 1998, STPP helped form a companion organization devoted to restoring old railroad depots (The Great American Station Foundation), which eventually changed its name to **Reconnecting America**. Reconnecting America has a specific mission to break down the silos between transportation modes and promote the creation of integrated, multi-modal transportation systems. Starting in 2000, STPP incubated a smart growth coalition which, in 2002, combined with the Growth Management Leadership Alliance as **Smart Growth America**. Working together, STPP, Reconnecting America (RA), and Smart Growth America (SGA) now form a triad of national and grassroots networks devoted to permanently embedding the ISTEA goals and policies into the mainstream of transportation and land planning and practice.¹⁴

The Community-Based Roots of Transportation and Smart Growth Advocacy

As noted previously, the roots of the transportation reform movement lie in community. The protests in the 1960s in Washington, D.C., were not about the overall federal program—they were about the decision to build I-95 through the middle of a minority community in Northeast Washington. Transportation and smart growth decisions are, by their very nature, place-based and therefore community-based issues. Most of the STPP coalition member were, themselves, federations of state and local agencies and organizations suffering under the yoke of misguided transportation policies. It is therefore in regions and communities all over America that the battle for transportation policies that improve community outcomes and for smart, sustainable land use policies will be won or lost.

“If you plan for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places.”

—Fred Kent, President, Project for Public Spaces

After ISTEA was enacted, regional and local coalitions formed to fulfill the promise of this new federal direction.¹⁵ Many of these coalitions were comprised of the state and local affiliates of the veterans of the ISTEA fight. Others, such as the Regional Plan Association in the New York City region and 1000 Friends of Oregon, headquartered in Portland, were independent organizations with experience in regional transportation reform campaigns. Still others were relatively new national coalitions that formed, or have strengthened, since enactment of ISTEA such as the Transportation Equity Network (TEN), The National Housing Conference, America Bikes, and the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), which was formed to take advantage of the new focus on metropolitan transportation needs in the new law.

The difference between these new coalitions and earlier highway fighting coalitions is their pro-active agenda—they seek to change transportation and land use policy at the state and regional levels for the better. Some of these new regional coalitions, and their issues, include:

- [**Action For Regional Equity \(Action!\)**](#), a coalition of 18 organizations in Massachusetts organized to address disparities in affordable housing, transportation investment, and environmental justice that is working to add new transit-oriented development stations, with affordable housing, along the Silver Line in the Dorchester region of Boston.
- [**Transit for Livable Communities**](#), a Minnesota coalition which is leading an effort to build sustainable communities along a new light rail line connecting Minneapolis to St. Paul (Central Corridor Coalition).
- [**Transportation Choices Coalition**](#), a coalition of nonprofits, public agencies, and businesses in the state of Washington with a mission of linking communities and providing mobility for people and goods throughout the state. The coalition was a leader in a successful statewide campaign to enact a law requiring a 50 percent

reduction in vehicle miles per capita by 2050 as part of the state's climate protection and green jobs plan.

- [Transportation and Land Use Coalition \(TALC\)](#), a coalition of over 90 organizations in and around the San Francisco Bay area that has worked since 1997 to change transportation investments and land development patterns to preserve the environment and quality of life for all area communities, and which is playing a lead role in developing the land use elements of AB 32, the California Climate Protection Act.
- [The Tri-State Transportation Campaign](#), which has a mission to reduce car dependency in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, and which played a leadership role in developing the transportation elements of Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC and promoting the congestion pricing element of that plan.
- [The Coalition for Smarter Growth](#) in the Washington, D.C.-Virginia-Maryland region that is committed to ensuring that transportation and development decisions accommodate growth while revitalizing communities, providing more housing and travel choices, and conserving natural and historic areas.

These are just a few of the regional campaigns and coalitions that have formed, and are working together, to connect transportation and land use for better community outcomes. The unique quality of this new, fast-growing movement of over 800 separate organizations and coalitions is that these groups are not focused simply on stopping bad projects and developments, although this is sometimes required. Instead, this movement is focused primarily on creating better communities for everyone through policy analysis, education, and advocacy in the area of transportation, smart growth, and livable communities. It is the living legacy of a modern reform movement that has found its voice, and has multiplied its strength, by beginning the hard but essential task of building durable collaborations between transportation agencies and the communities they serve.

The State of Transportation Reform: A Status Report

The modern transportation reform era initiated by the 1991 ISTEA law is now more than 15 years old. During this relatively short time span, transit funding has more than tripled in real dollars. Transit ridership is at higher levels than at any time since World War II. Demand for transit-oriented, location-efficient development far outstrips demand for development in the sprawling exurbs. Pollution from tailpipe emissions is down. Bicycle sales, at over 18 million annually, now handily beat total car sales of 15 million and the gap is widening. Communities are being redesigned for walkability and safety, with sidewalks connected and widened, traffic-calming roundabouts gaining in popularity, and "complete streets" campaigns multiplying in communities throughout the nation, challenging the presumed right of motor vehicles to exclusive access to street space.

Inter-urban travel is also improving. Airports are being connected to railways. Railway and bus depots are becoming intermodal centers. Ports and international gateways are modernizing, cleaning-up, and becoming better community neighbors. More than 15,000

miles of open rail-trails now form the backbone of an emerging national on-road/off-road non-motorized transportation network. Affordable housing is now being located closer to transit, and bus service depots are being removed from residential areas. Communities, and especially populations in most need of public transportation services (those too old, too young, too poor, or too frail to drive), are gaining more agency respect, attention, and funding in the never-ending political debate over who benefits from, and who pays for, transportation investments. Integrated transportation and land development planning, and joint development of transportation facilities with the land uses they are intended to support, is no longer a novel planning concept. Transportation practice and land use practice are merging as the larger community vision challenges short-term bottle-necks for limited transportation funding.

These are all real reforms. The transportation game has changed to a great extent. Never again will the forces in favor of the transportation status quo be able to imply that “bikes are for kids (only),” or state that “transit is for losers.” The era of “make way for highways” is over. The reform community has earned the grudging respect of the transportation establishment. The new challenge is to turn this new respect into a partnership where transportation and community leaders work together on a new mission: community and national well-being through sustainable, community-based development.

“We used to be in the facilities development business. Now we are in the community development business.”

—Jack Lettiere, former Commissioner, New Jersey DOT

Applied wisely, transportation policy can be a force for positive community change and development. Applied carelessly, and with a narrow focus on simply improving motorist convenience, transportation policy can destroy the soul of a community. Unfortunately, absent strong community and private citizen oversight, the latter approach continues to be too often adopted. Transportation practice is still too focused on transportation as primarily an engineering issue, with the “design solution” the subject of agency planning, and the construction of this solution the focus of agency funding.

Most of the measures of progress outlined previously are the result of hard-fought campaigns to make the promise of ISTEA a reality at the state, regional, and local level. These campaigns are often supported by community and regional funders who approach the work with an interest in community outcomes related to public health, equity, smart growth, climate protection, child safety, or other community values, rather than transportation in and of itself.¹⁶ Transportation policy is a tool to advance these community goals, not the goal in itself. **That is the core value that drives this reform campaign.**

Transportation and smart growth funders recognize the crucial role transportation plays as a key tool of community development and they have invested in guiding transportation to serve these values. Working together, funders and community advocates have achieved great success in identifying and implementing strategies to extract better solutions from transportation planning processes. Yet the idea that transportation policy is a tool to achieve

an end, not an end in itself, has not penetrated deeply into professional transportation culture. The paradigm has not yet realized a permanent shift.

Making the Energy Security, Climate, and Transportation Connection

Transportation is 96 percent dependent on oil for fuel—gasoline, diesel, jet fuel, bunker oil etc. More than 70 percent of domestic oil consumption is for transportation purposes, including the oil used in pavements. More than 60 percent of that oil is imported. In addition, combustion of transportation fuels accounts for fully 34 percent of domestic end-use carbon emissions, a primary contributor to climate change. Increased fuel efficiency and an accelerated transition to non-carbon-based fuels are essential elements of any domestic oil back-out strategy. Yet continued growth in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is projected to neutralize these gains by 2030. Integrated smart growth/smart transportation development can reduce VMT growth by 10 percent below business as usual over this time period, while investment in more transportation choices, plus marginal cost pricing of the system, can add another 21 percent in VMT reductions, thus stabilizing VMT at present levels. Efficient development and management of the transportation system itself is a key element of the infrastructure of the New Energy Economy.

The Way Forward: Fixing a Broke and Broken Transportation System

“Life in community is meant to be shared equally and equitably by all.”
—*Transportation Policy Statement, Gamaliel Foundation*

Transportation practice today faces a “perfect storm” of problems that makes continued reliance on engineering solutions untenable: 1) looming new costs; 2) declining revenues; and 3) the emerging, universal need to adjust to life a climate-constrained world. Specifically:

- **Cost:** Building highways in wide-open spaces was easy and cheap 50 years ago. But these highways are now approaching the end of their design life, meaning they have to be reconstructed and/or rebuilt entirely. In the meantime, land has become expensive as development has followed the highway, and material costs are soaring. Today, it is not uncommon for reconstruction costs to exceed original construction costs, even including original land costs.
- **Funding:** As costs are rising, funding is declining. The primary funding sources for transportation are state and federal gas taxes. Yet these sources are declining as fuel efficiency increases, the public demands more travel choices that don’t involve gasoline consumption, and people drive less than predicted. In addition, as gasoline prices climb it becomes increasingly difficult to win public approval of gas tax increases. The federal Highway Trust Fund, which is 90 percent funded by gas taxes,

went into deficit in 2008 and no new source of funding is obvious.

- **Climate Change:** Climate change is fast becoming the “game-changer” in transportation policy and practice—for three reasons: 1) the impact of climate change on transportation infrastructure will consume huge amounts of transportation funds going forward; 2) the public is beginning to realize that building more roads just makes the climate problem worse; and 3) carbon emissions from the combustion of transportation fuel is likely to be regulated in any national climate protection legislation.

Taken together, these factors presage a complete rethinking of present transportation practice. The present approach is both out of money (broke) and demonstrably at odds with emerging national energy and climate protection policies (broken). Transportation practice is in desperate need of new ideas.

What the Transportation and Smart Growth Community Can Do

The transportation reform movement, now closely aligned with the smart growth movement, is well-positioned to bring transportation policy and practice into alignment with new national goals of international economic competitiveness, energy security, environmental and climate protection, community development, social equity, and public health. If reformers succeed, over the next ten years (2008—2018), transportation practice will undergo a profound shift in focus. This shift will be characterized by the following changes in transportation service delivery, primarily within state DOTs and their local agency partners:

- A shift from system construction to system management;
- A shift from accommodating vehicle travel to removing trips from the system, reducing trip length, and focusing on trip efficiency;
- A shift from mode-specific to inter-modal solutions, including system integration, system connectivity, and increased trip choices;
- A shift from a primary focus on engineering solutions to a new solution-set including pricing, land use, technology, and negotiated solutions involving public/private partnerships;
- A shift from agency-specific solutions to partnerships to achieve multiple community objectives;
- A shift from a primary focus on increasing mobility to a focus on improving access to promote common community aspirations;
- A shift from allocating available transportation capacity on a “first come, first served” basis to a more intentional process of allocating capacity to serve the needs of the surrounding community (the place or “context”); and
- A shift from designing bigger, long-lead time, expensive and less efficient solutions to one favoring smaller, short-lead time, cheaper and better solutions that are focused on serving community needs.

In short, transportation leaders are beginning to recalibrate transportation practice away from moving vehicles and building new roads to serving community and public outcomes. The ISTEA reforms notwithstanding, however, the policy structure is not yet in place to support this transition. Also, transportation agencies at the state and regional levels don't have the installed diagnostic, planning, land development, financing, legal, and community engagement expertise needed to make this journey. This presents an opportunity for community leaders and funders interested in assisting the transportation community through this transition by partnering with it in this effort. Opportunities exist in at least the following four areas:

Federal Policy Reform	State and Local Policy Reform
National, State, and Local Advocacy Capacity Building	Practitioner Education and Training

Fortunately, a broad coalition of national, state, and local partners, including the regional and grassroots transportation coalitions mentioned previously is in place and working together to tackle initiatives in each of these four areas. This coalition, organized under the umbrella of [Transportation for America \(“T4A”\)](#) is committed to working together to advance all four elements of this transportation and smart growth reform movement. It has adopted a platform, collectively developed and vetted by the more than 800 coalition members themselves. It is a coordinated action program that speaks to the interests of the broad smart growth community, as well as its funders.¹⁷ Other national transportation and smart growth campaigns of possible interest to smart growth leaders and funders include the [Complete Streets Campaign](#), [Good Jobs First](#), [From the Margins to the Mainstream](#), the [Streets as Places Campaign](#), and the [Thunderhead Alliance](#), all of which are participants in the Transportation for America Campaign as well. Organizations that play a leadership role in the national campaign that have a particular link to smart growth include [Smart Growth America](#), [Reconnecting America](#), [PolicyLink](#), the [Transportation Equity Network](#) and the [National Housing Conference](#).

“The car is not the problem. What we do to accommodate the car is the problem.”
—William Whyte, The Last Landscape

While action is needed to align federal transportation policies with state, regional, and local smart growth and community development needs, transportation practice is conducted through state, county, and municipal departments of transportation as well as regional metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). There is no single set of strategies capable of serving the needs of the many state and local campaigns seeking to improve the connections between smart transportation and smart growth. Instead, the idea is to provide the organizing, media, research, policy, and advocacy tools needed to help coalition members self-organize around specific transportation and smart growth initiatives of their own choosing. This is particularly true at the

state and regional levels where “the rubber meets the road” (or, hopefully, “the shoe hits the sidewalk”) in integrated transportation and land use planning. For campaign opportunities at the state and regional levels see the listing of regional campaigns in this paper or contact the Funders’ Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities (which staffs the Transportation Reform Funders Group).

In addition to campaigns linking transportation and smart growth across several levels of geography (federal, state, regional, local), there is an equal need for campaigns to promote horizontal linkages and opportunities for collaboration among transportation agencies and across various state agencies of government. For example, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has adopted a program that takes control of state capital assistance programs across several agencies, including transportation, and then disburses these funds to localities based, in part, on how well these localities are prepared to use such assistance to promote smart growth, clean energy, accelerated permitting and community cohesion. For more information, see www.mass.gov/comcap.

On the other coast, California has enacted a law that connects \$5 billion in state transportation funds to regional and local efforts to promote smart growth, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and cut transportation-related carbon emissions. Under this program the state Air Resources Board (ARB) sets statewide and regional goals for carbon reduction from transportation system development (measured in reductions in the number and length of vehicle trips) and then the California Transportation Commission disburses state transportation assistance, giving priority to those regions that take action to meet their carbon reduction goals through sustainable transportation investments, zoning changes, and development permitting adopted as a “sustainable communities strategy.” Under this scheme, the ARB reviews each regional sustainable communities strategy to determine if it will achieve its greenhouse reduction targets. Once approved, the region is given priority status for distribution for state transportation funds.¹⁸ In addition, the California Environmental Protection Agency will waive some permit requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for developments that help implement the strategy.

These are only two examples of innovative, cross-agency initiatives where state DOTs collaborate with sister agencies to advance broad societal objectives. These collaborations may be the result of grassroots campaigns, or may be initiated by the agencies themselves that then solicit community support for their implementation. In either case, strong grassroots and community support is needed to help transition transportation practice from a sole focus on building and maintaining transportation infrastructure to a more appropriate role as an enabler of cross-agency initiatives to develop more sustainable, equitable and healthy communities for all.

Conclusion

“As soon as several of the inhabitants of the United States have taken up an opinion or a feeling which they wish to promote in the world, they look around for mutual assistance; and as soon as they have found each other out, they combine. From that moment they are no longer isolated men, but a power seen from afar, whose actions serve as an example, and whose language is listened to.”

-Alexis de Tocqueville

Apart from the gender reference, politics in America has not changed all that much since de Tocqueville penned these words in *Democracy in America* in 1828. The best sort of help in making sure transportation serves community outcomes is self-help. Likewise, the path to real change in transportation policy—to where community values and outcomes are the core mission of transportation agencies—runs through every community in America. The purpose of this paper is to provide a roadmap for change based on the history of the transportation reform community to date and its vision for the future. The trail is winding and long, but it leads to a more sustainable future for America, and even the world.

Endnotes

- ¹ For an overview of smart transportation and a link to a smart transportation guidebook see: http://www.contextsensitivesolutions.org/content/reading/dots_release_smart_transportation_guidebook/.
- ² **The End of the Road: A Citizen's Guide to Transportation Problem-solving** (National Wildlife Federation, 1977) at 23. Figures from USDOT, *Annual Report on the Highway Relocation Assistance Act* (Washington, D.C. 1972) and P.W. Sly *In the Path of Progress: Federal Highway Relocation Assistance*, 82 Yale L.J. 373, 377 (1972).
- ³ Barbara J. Lipman, **A Heavy Load: The Combined Housing and Transportation Burden of Working Families**, Center for Housing Policy (October, 2006). Transportation costs of transit-oriented households from Center for Transit Oriented Development.
- ⁴ 23 U.S.C. 104a (P.L. 102-240, December 18, 1991); “Declaration—Congress declares that the authorizations of appropriations and apportionments for construction of the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways...are the final authorizations of appropriations and apportionments for completion of construction of such System.” This language was contained in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Assistance Act (ISTEA)
- ⁵ ISTEA at Section 2: Declaration of Policy.
- ⁶ Id.
- ⁷ Surface Transportation Policy Partnership, *Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options* (2004); see also <http://www.transact.org/library/factsheets/equity.asp>.
- ⁸ The “motley” description comes from a previous Funders’ Network translation paper on transportation and smart growth (*Transportation Reform and Smart Growth: A Nation at the Tipping Point*, 2001).
- ⁹ These reports can be found at www.transact.org/report. Several of these topics are also covered in Funders’ Network “Case for Support” memos prepared for the Transportation Reform Funders Group (TRFG) in 2008.
- ¹⁰ The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (P.L. 105-206, June 9, 2008).
- ¹¹ The Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Act—A Legacy for Users (P.L. 109-59, August 10, 2005).
- ¹² Reid Ewing and Barbara McCann, *Measuring the Health Effects of Sprawl: An Analysis of Physical Activity, Obesity and Chronic Disease*, Smart Growth America and Surface Transportation Policy Project (2003).
- ¹³ W. James Cooperman et al., *Effect of Exposure to Traffic in Lung Development from 10 to 18 Years of Age: A Cohort Study*, Lancet Magazine (January 27, 2007).
- ¹⁴ In 1996, the Surface Transportation Policy Project changed its name to the Surface Transportation Policy Partnership to reflect its new commitment to networked advocacy.
- ¹⁵ It should be noted that the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) in Chicago, an organization with no Washington-based presence, played a crucial role in the organization and development of the STPP coalition, and its president still serves as STPP board chair.
- ¹⁶ For “case for support” memos on each of these policy areas contact the Funders’ Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities.
- ¹⁷ More information is available on this coalition, and its members at www.t4america.org.
- ¹⁸ As of the printing of this paper, the new law, SB 375, had been enacted but not yet signed by Governor Schwarzenegger. However, it is such a unique and important law, with such wide-ranging consequences for shaping future development patterns to be consistent with state greenhouse gas reduction goals, that it is included here for consideration by funders interested in pursuing similar campaigns within their jurisdiction. The campaign to enact SB 375 was a grassroots effort that was conducted over several years, and was enacted with the support of the California Building Industry Association, American Lung Association, American Farmland Trust, and the California League of Conservation Voters. See www.ecovote.org/vmt/.

