

Talking Points

National Idle-Reduction Planning Conference

Albany, New York – Desmond Conference Center

May 17, 2004

OPENING

Thank you for inviting me to speak at this very important conference. The department is committed to addressing the relationship between transportation and the environment, and I'm pleased to have this opportunity to address energy use, air quality issues, and demands for high quality transportation services.

This conference is an example of one of the many initiatives DOT is undertaking with EPA and DOE to carry out the directive in the Administration's May 2001 National Energy Plan, which addresses idling emissions from long-haul trucks.

SAFETEA

Thanks to President Bush's tax cuts and the amazing productivity and ingenuity of American businesses, our economy is the strongest in the world

and getting stronger. Over the past six months, economic growth in the United States has been faster than during any six-month period in the last 20 years. With this increased economic activity comes increased demands on our transportation system. For example, due to changes in our economy, demand for freight transportation is projected to increase by up to 70% over the next 20 years.

To build the transportation backbone that will support economic growth, America needs to invest in its transportation infrastructure and services. Nothing has a greater impact on economic development, on the pattern of growth, or on the quality of life, than transportation. That's why President Bush sent a bill to Congress last May that proposes a record investment in roads, bridges, transit, and safety. Our bill, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act, commonly known as "SAFETEA," will invest \$256 billion over the next six years in the construction and repair of America's roads and transit systems and highway safety improvements - a 21 percent increase over TEA-21.

SAFETEA takes a fiscally responsible approach and provides for the largest investment in history in our nation's surface transportation infrastructure

without resorting to a fuel tax hike or taking general fund money. That's the road we need to follow. The proposal also continues minimum guarantee funding levels for States. SAFETEA does not just tackle funding but also proposes significant policy reforms designed to: increase highway safety, give states more flexibility, and expedite needed highway improvement.

As you are probably well aware, TEA-21 expired on September 30, 2003, before a new bill was authorized. Therefore, we are currently operating under the third short-term extension of TEA-21, which will expire at the end of June. Currently, both the Senate and House have passed surface transportation reauthorization bills, but the bills still must go to Conference to work out differences. The sooner a bill can be passed, the sooner we can move forward with our SAFETEA initiatives.

Idle-Reduction

One of the SAFETEA initiatives relates to idle-reduction activities. Under current law, the funding of commercial establishments, including idle-reduction facilities, is prohibited on interstate rights-of-way. The Administration has proposed that idle-reduction facilities be exempt from this law.

Without this provision, the benefits of idle reduction to the trucking industry and to the environment through energy savings and air pollution reduction will be lost on the most heavily traveled roads in the country. Section 1608 of the Senate bill provides this exemption - the House bill has no comparable provision, and the Administration has urged the conferees to adopt the Senate provision.

From an energy savings, pollutant reduction, and driver safety perspective – idle-reduction is a win-win strategy. We all know that technology – cleaner engines and cleaner fuels – has been responsible for most of the air quality and transportation efficiency improvements over the past two decades. And technology will provide substantial additional emission reductions for at least another two decades, as EPA Tier II, heavy-duty vehicle and non-road standards are phased in. However, in addition to these regulatory approaches, voluntary technology initiatives such as idle-reduction can significantly contribute to improving air quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Air Quality

We have made significant progress in reducing criteria air pollutant emissions from motor vehicles and improving air quality since the 1970s through both regulatory and voluntary programs. In fact, EPA's national air quality data shows that all criteria pollutant emissions from motor vehicles, with the possible exception of NO_x, are less than they were in 1970 despite a more than doubling of vehicle miles traveled.

However, more work lies ahead. On April 15 of last month, EPA issued new ozone designations. Part or all of 474 counties nationwide are in nonattainment for failing to meet the 8-hour ozone standard, and designations for fine particulate matter will be made in December 2004.

These tighter standards present those of us in the transportation community with significant challenges, since they will result in more and larger nonattainment areas. We must work to bring these new areas into attainment.

Energy

Transportation energy use is the fastest growing U.S. sector in terms of energy consumption, and is projected to grow by 1.3% a year through 2020.

In fact, the U.S. transportation sector uses more energy than any other country uses as a whole, with the exception of China and Russia.

Despite a multitude of efforts and measures developed to reduce the demand for transportation energy use, no action has yet been able to significantly curb this demand. This suggests that a major focus needs to be on technology improvements – such as idle-reduction – to make our vehicles more fuel-efficient.

The average fuel economy for the new light-duty vehicle fleet as a whole has been declining (from 22.1 in model year 1987 to 20.8 in model year 2003).

The primary reasons for this decline are increased vehicle weight, more powerful engines, and the increasing market share of less efficient light trucks.

Sales of light trucks, which include SUVs, vans and pickup trucks, have risen steadily for over 20 years and now make up 48% of the U.S. light vehicle market – more than twice their market share in 1983.

In April 2003, DOT successfully increased fuel economy standards for light duty trucks for model years 2005-2007, the greatest increase in fuel economy standards in 20 years.

In addition, the Department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration issued an advance notice of proposed rulemaking in December 2003 seeking public comment on a host of CAFE reforms aimed at revising and modernizing fuel economy standards to balance America's need for better fuel efficiency with improving auto safety and maintaining a healthy economy.

For DOT, addressing energy efficiency will require continued actions in areas such as fuel economy and CAFE, congestion mitigation, intelligent transportation systems, clean fuels, and improved vehicle technologies such as fuel cells. We're playing a vital safety and development role in the Administration's Hydrogen Initiative, and we're committed to supporting this advanced technology that has the potential to revolutionize the relationship between transportation and the environment.

CMAQ

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program is a U.S. DOT program with the primary focus of reducing mobile source emissions. The CMAQ program has contributed to meeting air quality goals. The Administration has proposed a funding level of \$8.9 B over the life of SAFETEA with the goal of increasing the effectiveness of the CMAQ program by making sure that areas designated nonattainment under the new ozone and fine particulate standards receive their fair share of CMAQ funding.

Since ISTEA, the CMAQ program has initiated over 10,000 projects and obligated approximately 8 billion dollars for transportation projects that improved air quality – several idle-reduction projects around the country have been funded by CMAQ. As you've heard throughout the day today, idle reduction projects like these have the potential to significantly reduce transportation's energy consumption, lower transportation costs, and improve transportation's impact on the environment.

Closing

I want to conclude my remarks by once again stating how very important I think this initiative is and how happy I am that the transportation community

is a part of it. By building partnerships and establishing closer coordination among state transportation, energy and environmental decision makers, we can promote greater interagency and interstate communication.