



## MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY



As I begin my tenure as the new Secretary of Transportation, I look forward to continuing the U.S. Department of Transportation's record of excellence. Safety is and continues to be our top priority. Over the past few years, we achieved one of the highest rates of safety belt usage, the lowest level of rail-related accidents and the lowest level of aviation fatalities. Yet, even with these successes, there is still more work to be done. As we move forward, I challenge the employees of the Department to focus on improving the safety of our transportation systems, improving system performance and reliability, and implementing 21st century solutions to 21st century problems.

Moving forward we must be mindful of our obligation to be responsible stewards of the American taxpayers' dollars, and we must align our resources to the areas that need the greatest attention. In the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), that means using a performance-based approach to focus our safety resources within the 16 identified states where the greatest opportunity exists to save lives. In the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), we are ranking airspace design projects based on relative benefits. In the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), we are rigorously inspecting pipelines near communities and environmentally sensitive areas. This approach ensures our efforts are concentrated on the highest priority areas.

### IMPROVE SAFETY

The Department has made tremendous strides in creating and maintaining the safest and most efficient transportation system in our country's history. However, we are discovering that we have reached the limits of traditional solutions. The fatality rate per 100 million vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) was 1.47 in 2005, up from 1.45 in 2004. Actual fatalities for this period increased more than 1 percent to 43,443, which is the highest level since 1990. The Department is firmly committed to meeting the fatality rate goal of 1.0 fatalities per 100 million VMT, but we will need the assistance of state and local governments, the entire traffic safety community and all motorists if we are to be successful in making our roads even safer.

To continue making our roads safer, we are exploring new strategies and technologies to reduce highway fatalities. We are also exploring new performance targets in key areas to focus the Department's efforts on the critical factors responsible for the overall highway fatality rate increase. Being a rider myself, one area of particular concern is motorcycle safety, where the data is screaming for something to be done. Motorcycle fatalities have been going up steadily



over the past few years especially in my own 50-plus age group. Crashes have gone up an astonishing 400 percent in 10 years. In my first month as Secretary, I met with motorcyclists and manufacturers, and asked all the top state transportation officials to make sure manufacturers, dealers, and others are able to offer safety training programs to motorcycle riders.

We must also address: impaired driving, commercial motor vehicle safety, and safety belt use. DOT has launched a new campaign to focus on impaired drivers, “Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest.” Sadly, 14,593 fatalities last year involved a driver or motorcycle operator with a blood alcohol concentration of .08 or higher, the legal limit throughout the United States. Thirty-nine percent of all traffic deaths in 2005 involved alcohol misuse. We have discovered that impaired driving disproportionately impacts particular segments of our population. We need to do a better job of reaching out to the newly identified communities and addressing the root causes.

The Department also has completed a pilot project dealing with safety strategies and commercial motor vehicles. The purpose of the project was to test ways to reduce fatalities resulting from other vehicles cutting off, tailgating, and speeding near and around large trucks. We were able to demonstrate the effectiveness of using high-visibility enforcement, education, media and evaluation to raise public awareness of the need to be vigilant when driving near large trucks.

In the past five years, safety belt use has increased steadily from 71 percent in 2000 to 81.7 percent in 2005 (latest data available). To date, 25 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have enacted primary safety belt use laws. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), provides real incentives for states to enact stronger belt use laws. We already are seeing benefits. Since the beginning of 2006, three more states, Alaska, Kentucky, and Mississippi, have enacted primary safety belt use laws in direct response to the SAFETEA-LU incentives.

## **IMPROVE SYSTEM PERFORMANCE AND RELIABILITY**

Each of our major transportation systems are facing challenges, and our infrastructure is showing signs of aging. Increased congestion on our highways, railways, airports, and seaports is choking our cities and reducing our nation’s economic productivity and consuming our citizens’ time.

The Department is working to both increase system capacity and focus on ways to improve the efficiency of the existing transportation network. For example, FAA is pursuing a redesign of the airspace around LaGuardia airport to reduce delays and improve efficiency. FHWA is focusing on delays that create uncertainty in travel times. By promoting the use of 511 traveler information systems, and implementing quick clearance policies and roving response teams in the case of accidents, a measure of system reliability can be returned to travelers.



Shippers face serious freight bottlenecks at every turn. Our Corridors of the Future pilot project will help us test leading-edge policies and find better and more effective ways to keep goods moving. Eliminating the freight chokepoints and bottlenecks along our key corridors and border crossing will make American products more competitive on the global market place.

## **IMPLEMENTING 21ST CENTURY SOLUTIONS TO 21ST CENTURY PROBLEMS**

The Department recognizes that traditional problem solving approaches may no longer be effective. The traveling public needs us to take a fresh look at how we consider the issues of today. The decades-old solutions aren't working anymore.

The reauthorization of FAA will be our first opportunity to re-think traditional approaches. FAA has already started this process by providing a clear line of sight between the work employees perform on a daily basis and the overarching goals of the organization with their Organizational Flight Plan.

As traditional funding sources are no longer able to keep up with program demands, we are exploring ways to incorporate private sector resources to provide greater flexibility to state and local officials. The Department is in the process of compiling best-practices and creating model legislation and model contracting language to spur public-private partnerships. We must re-think the traditional approaches to problem solving in order to fully realize the next level of system performance.

## **SECURITY/PREPAREDNESS**

The aftermath of last year's hurricanes reinforced the importance of preparedness. It is not enough that the Department was able to quickly respond to disasters after the fact. The Department has begun a systematic analysis of ways to improve our preparedness so crucial contracts and Memoranda of Understanding with other relief organizations are in place prior to a disaster.

For example, DOT, in support of the Department of Homeland Security, has established major contracts for bus and passenger rail evacuation support to ensure the capability is in place to evacuate large populations in the event of a catastrophic incident. DOT also refined an existing contract to improve access to commercial aviation services. These contracts clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each organization charged with responding to a catastrophic event.

## **PROGRAM AND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE**

Our 2006 Performance and Accountability Report contains performance and financial data that are substantially complete and reliable. The Performance Data and Completeness and Reliability section in the report contains a detailed assessment of the inadequacies in the DOT's



performance data, and explains how we will remedy those deficiencies. DOT has a qualified statement of assurance with exceptions noted under the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act (FMFIA) in the Management Discussion and Analysis Section. Two material weaknesses are for Section 2 and one material non-conformance is for Section 4. We will continue to make improvements throughout FY 2007.

## **CONCLUSION**

My top priorities at DOT are to keep the traveling public safe and secure, increase their mobility, and have our transportation system contribute to the Nation's economic growth.

Our achievements from the past year inform, but do not limit, our direction. I believe the Department has the talent, creativity and innovative spirit to produce tangible results for the American people, making our communities more prosperous and improving quality of life. We are on the brink of new and exciting programs that will further our ability to provide a safe, effective, and efficient transportation system for all Americans.

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