

The California Environmental Dialogue Perspective

California Transportation: The key to a Prosperous Economy and a High Quality of Life

CALIFORNIA'S TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES

CED's POSITION: No other single investment in the infrastructure of California will have a greater effect on our economy, our quality of life, and our environment than transportation. Our ability to increase productivity and to compete in the world economy depends on efficient transportation. Without it, people cannot make efficient use of their time, nor can business efficiently provide services and move goods.

- California's transportation systems are in need of refurbishment and restructuring. Because they are a low budget priority, years of deferred maintenance have left urban core streets and public transportation in poor condition. It is not a coincidence that many older, urbanized areas are lagging the state's remarkable prosperity. Throughout the state, bridges are inadequately maintained. Gridlock slows people's commutes and important errands, and interferes with services, business, and the movement of goods.
- Existing patterns of development, and inadequate alternative modes of transportation, have resulted in both more short trips and long commutes, too often in single occupancy vehicles. Short trips for shopping, errands, school, and after school activities are automobile dependent for lack of alternatives. Short trips result in more "cold auto starts" and added vehicle miles, making it difficult for California to meet air quality standards. Urban sprawl results in more people driving alone, more inefficient use of energy and limited road capacity, more congestion, and more vehicle emissions. Run-off from roads and air pollution reaching our water are ways that water quality is degraded by transportation.
- Without confidence that existing and new transportation funds will be spent efficiently and effectively, the public will be unlikely to approve needed transportation funds. But to properly evaluate and improve transportation policy, operation, and spending, decision makers must have the right information about how transportation funding effects concerns like congestion.

*CED defines
transportation
as the movement
of people, goods,
services, and
information
over distance
and time.*

The "Road" to the Future

We can't just blindly "build or buy" our way out of these problems. To paraphrase Einstein, we can't solve today's problems using the thinking that caused these problems in the first place.

We must look creatively at how we meet the needs of system users and how we cover the costs of building, maintaining, and operating different parts of the system. To improve accountability, we should methodically review the performance of the key elements—and the stewards—of our transportation system.

Transportation agencies and others have documented over \$100 billion for California's transportation need, not including the environmental costs of transportation, nor the effects of deferring its infrastructure maintenance. Since it is unlikely that such amounts will be made available, properly prioritizing transportation projects is essential. Timely repair and maintenance of roads avoid their much more expensive replacement. Public transportation with high load factors can move people more efficiently than roads; but its low use can be wasteful. Making it user friendly would increase ridership and efficiency.

Beyond efficiency, social equity suggests the need for additional transportation options. Providing public transportation for people without cars can increase economic productivity and serve Californians who cannot drive because of health or age.

Transportation must be defined differently. More than just the movement of people and goods, transportation is now also the electronic movement of information. Telecommunications allows increasing numbers of people to do business from home and nearby offices, creating alternatives to traditional transportation.

Some intelligent transportation investments can actually improve environmental quality. Better road design and maintenance would reduce tire wear, fuel use, and habitat destruction. Transportation funds should be used to reduce (or eliminate) environmental damage caused by transportation development. California should pioneer "intelligent" transportation system technologies to fully exploit limited transportation resources.

Demonstration of regional conformity with the Federal Clean Air Act by Metropolitan Planning Organizations is a prerequisite to California's receipt of federal transportation funds. Hence, if transportation systems provide incentives for clean vehicle use, they will help ensure conformity instead of federal sanctions.

Investing in California's Transportation Future

California is considering significant new investments in transportation infrastructure.

The California Environmental Dialogue supports new funding if accompanied by reform.

How funds are generated for transportation infrastructure can be as important as how they are spent. The California Environmental Dialogue generally supports "user funding" for transportation because:

- Users respond to price signals in transportation as in everything. If funding is not derived directly from use and in direct proportion to actual costs, users receive incorrect economic signals. The result is incentives for inefficient system use and even more congestion. Riders and drivers need to know actual costs of use to make rational decisions on use.
- Transportation infrastructure has several sources of user funding. In contrast, many worthy programs such as education, libraries, and parks must depend on the limited amount of general funds or general obligation bonds. Transportation should not compete for scarce general and bond funds, except for necessary and cost-effective public transportation subsidies.

The California Environmental Dialogue recommends three key factors to guide our investment strategy:

1. **Preserve and enhance the long term economic prosperity of the state.**
2. **Protect open space, habitat, and other environmental qualities.**
3. **Improve the quality of life of all Californians.**

These goals are achievable by maintaining, restoring, reinforcing, and expanding existing transportation infrastructure, with an emphasis on improving the transportation infrastructure of developed areas and those appropriate for future development. Transportation investment should make it easier for people to work without long distance commuting, and when unavoidable, create alternatives to single occupancy vehicles. People should be able to meet their mobility needs without frequent daily, short vehicle trips. Finally, we must eliminate, or mitigate, the impacts of existing and future transportation investments on habitat, open space, and air quality.


The business, governmental, and environmental members of the California Environmental Dialogue agree that the best way to achieve these goals is to invest new transportation dollars in accordance with the following seven principles:

Seven Point Transportation Agenda


- 1 The Highest Priority: restore and maintain transportation infrastructure. Existing streets, highways, freeways, and bridges would cost hundreds of billions of dollars to replace if allowed to decay further. A comparatively modest investment in maintenance and earthquake retrofit today can avoid huge future rebuilding costs. Maintaining what we already have must be the first priority. Because of the cost and vulnerability of infrastructure—particularly bridges and public transit—protecting it to safely withstand earthquakes remains a top priority.
- 2 Recognizing that California will need new transportation infrastructure, priority investments should be those which encourage and serve compact land uses generating transit, bicycle, and pedestrian walk ways that support higher densities and higher environmental quality. Transportation investment should encourage multi-occupancy vehicle trips, and increase the interdependency of housing, jobs, and retail locations.
Additional transportation services should be provided in urbanized areas and should serve brownfields which can be redeveloped. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities should be expanded. Impacts on the service levels of existing roads, freeways and public transportation must be of concern in constructing new transportation facilities.
Encourage appropriate private investment in sufficiently large bandwidth and other internet and telecommunications infrastructure so that long commutes, and/or numerous daily, short automobile trips are avoidable.
- 3 Support public transportation service levels which assure reasonable access to employment for working people without alternatives. Provide mobility for elderly, young, and disabled people, while encouraging others to use public transit.
- 4 To ensure the public is convinced that any new funds will be spent wisely and effectively, provide clear and understandable criteria for systems accountability, including indicators of performance, at the state, regional, and local levels. To win approval of increased transportation funding, public confidence in the effectiveness of governmental spending is fundamental.
- 5 Provide funding to mitigate the environmental impacts of transportation development by expanding the existing state Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program for habitat acquisition and for development of bicycle facilities and other amenities. Negative environmental impacts should be avoided, reduced, or eliminated through improved transportation project design.
- 6 Funding sources for transportation maintenance and investments should generally be based on the principle of “user pays.” Fuel taxes are constitutionally directed to highways and fixed rail guideways; general funding sources are justified for public benefit projects like public transit. Tolls and congestion pricing should be utilized whenever possible. Incentives should promote multiple-occupancy of automobiles.
- 7 Public funding for new public transit vehicles and public fleets should include incentives to use innovative technology that minimizes their air emissions.

The California Environmental Dialogue would like to discuss transportation funding issues with other stakeholders; to collaborate with them on the development of mechanisms for prioritizing the above categories of projects and services; and to develop sound performance measures for these important transportation investments.

The California Environmental Dialogue (CED) pursues enhanced efficiency in meeting environmental goals and rational and efficient ways to improve environmental quality. Enhanced environmental quality will make California a better place to live, work, and do business. CED is a five year long discussion between business, environmental, and government leaders. More information about CED is attached.



 Carol Baudler
 Director of Government Relations
 The Nature Conservancy


 Michael Hertel, Ph.D.
 Director of Environmental Affairs
 Southern California Edison

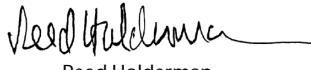

 Claude G. Poncelet, Ph.D.
 Manager, Environmental Policy
 Pacific Gas and Electric Company


 Joseph Caves
 President
 Joe Caves & Associates



 Winston Hickox
 Secretary
 California Environmental Protection Agency

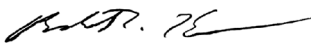

 Gerald Secundy
 Chairman, California Council for
 Environmental and Economic Balance (CCEEB)



 William Dempsey
 Executive Director
 California Environmental Dialogue



 Reed Holderman
 Vice-President, Western Region
 Trust for Public Land


 Candace Skarlatos
 Senior Vice-President
 Environmental Initiatives, Bank of America


 Gary K. Fisher
 Public Affairs Manager,
 Western Region, Chevron Corporation

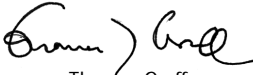

 Robert C. Kirkwood
 Director, Government and Education Affairs
 Hewlett Packard Company


 Susan Stark
 Director, Regulatory Affairs
 BP Amoco


 Manuel G. Grace
 Vice-President, Environmental Counsel
 The Walt Disney Company


 Julia Levin
 California Policy Coordinator
 Union of Concerned Scientists



 Katherine Strehl
 Director, Government and
 Business Relations
 Lockheed Martin Space Systems



 Thomas Graff
 California Regional Director
 Environmental Defense


 Gerald H. Meral, Ph.D.
 Executive Director
 Planning and Conservation League


 Donn Walker
 Regional Manager
 Corporate Communications
 General Motors


 Steve Gross
 State Relations Manager
 The Wine Institute


 Lee Moldaver
 Vice Chairman
 California Audubon Society


 Victor Weisser
 President, California Council for
 Environmental and Economic Balance


 Janet Hathaway
 Senior Attorney
 Natural Resources Defense Council


 Mary Nichols
 Secretary
 California Resources Agency


 Robert Wilkinson
 Board President
 Earth Island Institute


 Laura Hattendorf
 Co-Executive Director
 Sustainable Conservation


 Michele Perrault
 International Vice-President
 Sierra Club


 John Wise
 Director, Office of Strategic Planning
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 Region IX

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was prepared by the California Environmental Dialogue (CED).

The Mission of the California Environmental Dialogue (CED) is to engage California business, corporate, environmental, and government leaders collaboratively to produce timely and improved environmental protection while reducing costs to business, government and society. By engaging in a formal dialogue, CED builds relationships and trust, which allow its members to pursue public and private policies leading to enhanced environmental outcomes and economic efficiencies.

If you want more information on CED, see our web page at www.cedlink.org or contact John Mikulin, CED Project Manager, at 100 Spear Street, Suite 805, San Francisco, CA 94105 / Phone: (415) 512-7890 x 10 / Fax (415) 512-7897 / Email: johnm@cceeb.org