

The Federal Flyer

Texas Transportation Goals for 107th Congress

In the First Session of the 107th Congress, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) will continue our efforts to build on past successes in ensuring that Texas taxpayers get their money's worth out of every federal fuel tax dollar sent to Washington. As the second largest state in the Union in both area and population, and with eighty percent of overland trade traffic between the US and Mexico traveling on Texas rail or highway systems, we can do no less. Those facts demand a much larger share of federal funding over the next several decades.

Our goals remain unchanged:

- ◆ To protect and enhance the federal investment in transportation infrastructure;
- ◆ To capture for Texas the largest possible share of federal transportation dollars; and
- ◆ To give state and local governments the broadest possible discretion over those federal transportation dollars that are distributed to Texas.

During this session, our efforts will focus on the following objectives:

- ◆ Restoring federal fund capitalization of our State Infrastructure Bank;
- ◆ Protecting our rate of return on federal highway user fees;
- ◆ Dedicating additional revenue to international trade transportation infrastructure;
- ◆ Funding transit vehicle replacement in our small cities and rural areas;
- ◆ Restoring planning and programming effectiveness to Airport Improvement Program block grant states;
- ◆ Streamlining environmental review of transportation projects;
- ◆ Protecting and enhancing highway trust fund revenues; and
- ◆ Developing "one-stop" border ports of entry.

Hutchison Gains Transportation Appropriations Seat *Texan Also Tapped to Lead Commerce Aviation Subcommittee*



Texas **Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison** announced last week that she had won a seat on the Transportation Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, where she will be able to direct much needed federal funds to Texas transportation projects. In addition, on the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee Hutchison traded her post as head of the Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Subcommittee for the chairmanship of the Aviation Subcommittee.

Mineta Confirmed as Secretary of Transportation



By a vote of 100-0, the United States Senate on January 24, 2001, confirmed the appointment of **Norman Y. Mineta** as the 14th U.S. Secretary of Transportation. He was sworn in the next day. **President George W. Bush** nominated him for the post on January 2nd. Mineta, a Democrat, had until recently served as the Secretary of Commerce under the Clinton Administration, making him the first Asian Pacific American to serve in the cabinet. He is the first Secretary of Transportation to have previously served in a cabinet position. Prior to joining the Commerce Department, he was a vice president at Lockheed Martin Corporation.

At his confirmation hearing before the Senate Commerce Committee, Mineta won praise from many lawmakers as an expert in the transportation arena. Mineta represented San Jose, California for twenty years in the U.S. House of Representatives. Mineta served as chairman of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee between 1992 and 1994. He chaired the committee's aviation subcommittee between 1981 and 1988 and chaired its Surface Transportation Subcommittee from 1989 to 1991. During his career in Congress Mineta championed increases in investment for transportation infrastructure and was a key author of the landmark Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA).

While the majority of the discussion at his confirmation hearing focused on the nation's commercial aviation challenges, Mineta said that guaranteeing the safety of the traveling public and finding a way to close the gap between demand for transportation and the capacity of the current infrastructure were among the key challenges facing the USDOT.

A graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, Mineta served as an Army intelligence officer in Japan and Korea in the mid-1950s. He joined his father in the Mineta Insurance Agency before entering his political career. Prior to his election to the House in 1974, Mineta served as a member of the San Jose City Council from 1967 to 1971 and mayor from 1971 to 1974, becoming the first Asian Pacific American mayor of a major U.S. city.

Transportation Leaders Urge Bush to Honor TEA 21, AIR 21 *RABA Funds Possible Target in FY 2002 Budget*



Making a strong start to his term as chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, **Don Young** (R - Alaska) last week sent a letter to **President George W. Bush** urging the new administration to follow TEA 21 and AIR 21 funding levels in the FY 2002 transportation budget.

In the letter, Young, together with the committee's ranking Democrat, **James Oberstar** (D - Minnesota), outlined the committee's concerns that the new administration may not follow the transportation funding mandates set in law and instead use extra transportation funds for other purposes. "These two landmark pieces of legislation [TEA 21 and AIR 21] simply said that the excise taxes imposed on motorists and airline passengers should be used for the purposes for which they were collected and not spent on unrelated programs," the two said. Rumors are floating around Capitol Hill that Bush officials might seek to divert transportation funds to help pay for their tax cut package. Young and Oberstar expressed particular concern that the budget baseline being used for the FY 2002 transportation spending levels would not reflect an extra \$5 billion in gas tax revenues credited to the Highway Trust Fund. These additional funds, known in TEA 21 as Revenue Aligned Budget Authority or RABA funds, represent the increase in federal motor fuels tax revenues above the amount projected when Congress passed TEA 21.

In their letter, Young and Oberstar reminded Bush that "having been a governor of a state whose contributions to the Highway Trust Fund have historically far surpassed returns from the Trust Fund, you know how strongly donor states like Texas supported TEA 21's bedrock principle that all gas tax revenues should be returned to the states for transportation improvements." They also reminded the President that TEA 21 had broad bipartisan support in Congress and among governors, mayors, and other public officials.

Young Announces Committee Restructuring, New Chairs *Rail Subcommittee Back; Other Shuffling Occurs*

Taking the reins of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, new **Chairman Don Young** last week announced a restructuring of the subcommittees, splitting some subcommittees to form new ones and redirecting subcommittee jurisdiction for others. The following table lists the new subcommittees, their jurisdictions, chairmen, and ranking Democrats.

House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittees, 107th Congress

Subcommittee	Jurisdiction	Chairman	Ranking Member
Highways & Transit	Federal-aid Highway program, highway safety and research, public transit programs, commercial motor carrier regulation and safety, transportation aspects of the Clean Air Act, the transportation of hazardous materials, and pipeline transportation (safety and economic regulation)	Tom Petri (R - Wisconsin)	Robert Borski (D - Pennsylvania)
Water Resources & Environment	Civil works programs of the Army Corps of Engineers; inland, coastal, and ocean water pollution control; wetlands protection and enhancement; Superfund hazardous substances program; Tennessee Valley Authority; Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation; and certain "small watershed" projects of the Natural Resources Conservation Service	John Duncan (R - Tennessee)	Peter DeFazio (D - Oregon)
Aviation	Civil aviation, including the airport improvement program, aviation safety, aviation security, aviation noise, economic regulation of airlines, international aviation relations of the US, war risk insurance, labor relations involving the airlines and their employees, and programs of the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board	John Mica (R - Florida)	William Lipinski (D - Illinois)
Railroads	Freight railroads; passenger rail service, including Amtrak; high-speed rail systems; railroad labor; railroad safety; railroad retirement; railroad workers' compensation; and railroad unemployment insurance	Jack Quinn (R - New York)	Bob Clement (D - Tennessee)
Economic Development, Public Buildings, & Emergency Management	Economic development for distressed urban and rural areas, including programs administered by the Economic Development Administration, the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Denali Commission, and the Delta Regional Authority; matters relating to Federally owned or leased buildings; construction of post offices, customhouses, Federal courthouses, and government buildings within the District of Columbia; federal emergency management activities administered by FEMA	Steven LaTourette (R - Ohio)	Eleanor Holmes Norton (D - District of Columbia)
Coast Guard & Maritime Transportation	Coast Guard matters, including regulation of merchant vessel, fishing vessel, and recreational vessel safety; vessel navigation and related laws; rules and international arrangements to prevent collisions at sea; lifesaving service; and oil spill laws and associated financial responsibility requirements; Maritime Administration matters, including ports, foreign flag passenger ships, international maritime activities and intermodal transportation; Federal Maritime Commission matters, including measures relating to the jurisdiction of common carriers by water	Frank LoBiondo (R - New Jersey)	Jerry Costello (D - Illinois)

Biden, Hutchison Introduce Rail Bond Bill

Renewed Effort Focused on High-Speed Rail Corridors

Last week, **Senators Joe Biden** (D - Delaware) and **Kay Bailey Hutchison** (R - Texas) introduced a successor bill to last session's effort to authorize Amtrak to float \$10 billion in bonds backed by tax breaks. The new version would authorize \$12 billion in high-speed rail bonds, backed by tax credits for bondholders in lieu of interest payments by Amtrak.

Amtrak's Acela service in the Northeast Corridor, the only existing high-speed rail service in the nation, would get \$3 billion for further improvement of tracks to allow speeds up to 150 miles per hour over the full Boston-to-Washington route. The remaining \$9 billion would be available for use on the 11 designated high-speed rail corridors, including the South Central Corridor and the Gulf Coast Corridor, both of which run through Texas. The South Central Corridor runs along the route of the *Texas Eagle* line from Little Rock, Arkansas, through Dallas and Austin to San Antonio, Texas. It also includes portions of the *Heartland Flyer* route from Dallas to Oklahoma City and Tulsa, Oklahoma. The Gulf Coast Corridor runs from Mobile, Alabama, through New Orleans, Louisiana, to Houston, Texas.

The two senators acknowledged that, by introducing this bill, they were taking on an effort to shift congressional attitudes about the need to further subsidize Amtrak and the nation's passenger rail system. Both senators stated that growing gridlock in the aviation system, combined with the growing interest by states in the possibilities of the new, improved, or even high-speed passenger service in several corridors, will bolster their case for additional Amtrak funding. "We can't starve Amtrak and expect it to succeed," Hutchison said. Forty-nine other senators have pledged to cosponsor the bill. Both the Democratic and Republican Senate leaders have committed to bringing an Amtrak bill to the Senate floor early this year.



The *Federal Flyer* is a publication of the TxDOT Legislative Affairs Office. It is intended to provide up-to-date information on major legislative activities in the 107th Congress for the management of the Texas Department of Transportation, state leaders, and others interested in Texas transportation issues. This report will also feature key activities in the national transportation community. Sources include news services and staff reports.

Coby Chase, Director of Legislative Affairs, serves as publisher and can be reached at (512) 463-6086. The department's federal legislative analysts are Joe Guzzo (202-638-3927), Tonia Norman Ramirez (512-463-9957), and David Soileau (512-463-6081). Please contact any of the staff for information on federal transportation and legislative issues.

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