

Visions Past and Future

Our vision of transportation in this new century and this new millennium is shaped by the many successes of our past and a renewed commitment not only to meet but to surpass new goals, as we strive to obtain transportation excellence for all Americans. Today, under the leadership of President William J. Clinton and Vice President Al Gore, transportation has moved from strength to strength, and the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) is poised to lead the transportation enterprise as we improve safety, expand mobility, support economic growth and trade, protect our environment, and support America's national security interests.

A quarter century ago, William T. Coleman, Jr., the fourth Secretary of Transportation, opened a window into the lives of Americans that was extraordinary. He painted a picture of our society, of the ways in which we travel and interact, of our economic lives, of our safety and health, of our environment, and of our use of natural resources. And then he went even further. He used the knowledge of the past to look into the future, and he set about creating a planning and decisionmaking framework to guide that future. Over the next two-and-a-half decades, the document that outlined that framework would fade from view. But, remarkably, the future unfolded in many ways just as Secretary Coleman envisioned in the 1977 report, *National Transportation Trends and Choices* [USDOT 1977].

Eight USDOT Secretaries would stand watch as the future became reality. They challenged the Department and the transportation community to implement a new vision for transportation in the United States—to embrace higher safety goals, to champion deregulation and investment efforts, to pursue greater private-sector participation in meeting our transportation needs, and to adopt policies that enhanced the performance of the nation's transportation system. Among the Secretaries, Secretary Neil E. Goldschmidt continued efforts to deregulate the railroad and trucking industries as the Staggers Rail Act of 1980 and the Motor Carrier Act of 1980 became law. Secretary Samuel K. Skinner oversaw the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), a major surface transportation program, which also led to the establishment of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) during Secretary Andrew H. Card's administration in 1992. And Secretary Federico F. Peña successfully worked with the transportation community to implement the provisions of ISTEA.

"If we make wise and informed choices today and in the years to come, we can make our communities more livable, give our citizens greater choice and mobility, protect our environment, and help create a truly global community. The 20th century was indeed a golden age for transportation; the 21st century can be an even brighter one."

William J. Clinton
President of the United States
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