

## MOBILITY

- . Are there foreseeable problems that may affect personal mobility?
- . Are there Federal actions that can assure or improve personal mobility?

Americans have come to regard personal mobility as an inalienable right, and the automobile is viewed as the principal means to achieve this end. To assist personal mobility, all levels of Government have taken an active part in promoting the automobile highway system. However, there has been growing awareness in the last decade of some shortcomings in our expansive system of highways and our use of automobiles.

It is recognized that the automobile provides great benefits but at the same time imposes great costs on society because of its energy consumption, environmental pollution, and safety problems. While the automobile is the primary mode

of transportation for many, it does not serve well the mobility needs of the handicapped, the elderly, the young, and the poor. Remedial policies to improve mobility for these segments of the population need to be considered.

Supporting detail for this section of the Summary and Finding is contained in chapter 8 of the Technical Report.



Photo Credit: University of Tennessee

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## Congestion

The future mobility of the population will be influenced by demographic trends, economic conditions, and Federal transportation policies. Between 1975 and 2000, it is projected that the population will increase by about 20 percent. Urbanization will continue. More persons (particularly women) will be in the labor force, and real income will double. Thus, by **2000** it is expected that there will be 36 percent more licensed drivers than in 1975 and 56 percent more cars on the road. The total amount of automobile travel is projected to increase by 75 percent, to 1.8 trillion vehicle miles annually.

The Base Case assumes that new highway construction will taper off and not keep pace with the growth in personal automobile travel. It is assumed that total highway spending by all levels of Government will remain about what it is now in constant dollars, but by 2000 the share spent on new construction and other capital outlays will decline by half as an increasing share of the highway budget is spent for maintenance. Travel times will therefore increase, particularly in urban areas, where average speeds will be 10 to **15** percent slower. Motorists will encounter congested conditions up to 3 times as often as today.

To avoid this congestion and to maintain present levels of service on the highways through the year **2000** would require construc-

tion expenditures more than **60** percent higher than those assumed for the Base Case. Highway maintenance will also be an important concern. The quality of streets and highways will deteriorate greatly, unless strong initiatives are taken for restoration, rehabilitation, and repair.

## Other Means to Improve Mobility

We considered several measures to improve mobility. Major expansion of assistance for public transit could increase transit ridership by over **50** percent in major urban areas, if accompanied by appropriate auto disincentives. Such a program would cost the Federal Government more than \$7.2 billion annually (in 1975 dollars), or about 5 times more than the 1975 expenditure of \$1.5 billion. This program would also reduce State and local transit burdens in 2000 from the Base Case projection of \$4.9 billion to \$1.9 billion, close to today's level.

Within metropolitan areas, ridesharing has the potential to reduce petroleum consumption, emissions, consumer costs, and traffic congestion. Increased acceptance of this form of transportation depends more on institutional changes than on financial assistance.

Transportation System Management (TSM) techniques could be used to improve the movement of persons and vehicles in urban areas at



*Photo Credit: U.S. Department of Transportation*

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relatively low cost. Both the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are encouraging the use of TSM to avoid costly capital projects such as new expressways and rail rapid transit systems.

reduced by changes in urban development policies to channel growth into "high accessibility" areas. Development of telecommunications as a substitute for travel might also have significant impacts on the auto system, but probably not before 2000.

In the long run, the need to travel could be

### Highway and Personal Travel Projections

	1975	1985	2000
Highway expenditures (\$ billion):			
Capital outlays .....	\$14.3	\$11.2	\$ 7.2
Noncapital outlays .....	13.9	17.0	21.2
Total .....	28.2	28.2	28.2
Transit:			
Federal capital assistance (\$ billion) .....	1.21	1.71	1.71
Federal operating assistance (\$ billion) .....	0.30	0.43	0.43
State and local subsidies (\$ billion) .....	1.71	2.70	4.90
Average fare (cents) .....	33¢	20¢	20¢
Vehicles (thousands) .....	62.3	72.0	91.1
Vehicle miles (billions) .....	2.0	2.3	3.0
Ridership (billions) .....	5.6	6.5	6.5
Auto:			
Urbanized area population (millions) .....	130	149	177
Personal disposable income per capita (thousands) ....	5.03	6.72	10.0
Percent of population with licenses .....	61	65	68
Cars per licensed driver .....	.73	.78	.84
Auto VMT per licensed driver .....	7,900	9,500	10,200
Percent of urban driving under congested conditions .....	10	14	24

NOTE: BASE CASE PROJECTIONS OF MOBILITY COSTS are in 1975 constant dollars. Noncapital outlays include maintenance, administration, police, debt retirement, research, and planning.

## FINDINGS

- **Stricter fuel-economy standards, reduced highway construction, and auto disincentives to conserve petroleum and improve urban air quality will have little effect on the amount of auto travel. Only a severe petroleum shortage requiring gasoline rationing or other allocation measures, would produce major reductions in auto use.**
- **Urban mobility will be hampered by increased congestion in the 1985 to 2000 time period.**
- **Continuation of current policies can be expected to increase the transit operating deficits borne by local governments in the future. If more Federal funds were made available for public transportation, mobility in both urban and rural areas could be improved, but the overall effect on the amount of automobile travel would be small.**
- **Increased funding for conventional transit, supplemented by special programs, could be highly beneficial for the transportation disadvantaged.**
- **A policy of promoting population shifts to high-accessibility areas could, in the long-range future, reduce dependence on the automobile as a means of personal transportation. The effects, however, might not be significant on a national basis for as long as 50 years.**