

ADVANCING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUITY THROUGH THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AUTHORIZATION

VICTOR RUBIN



Philadelphia,
May 13, 2010

Reinventing Older Communities

Overview

- Principles for Equitable Reform
- The Context for Policy Change
- Eleven Policy Ideas
- Legislative Landscape

Guiding Principles for Reform

- Create Robust, Affordable Transportation Choices for All
- Ensure Access to Jobs, Workforce Development, and Contracting Opportunities in the Transportation Industry
- Promote Healthy, Environmentally Sustainable Communities
- Invest Equitably and Focus on Results

Federal Policy Timeline

- **1991, ISTEA** (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act)
 - new vision for surface transportation
 - expanded funding to air quality, reducing congestion and pedestrian and bicycle access
- **1998, TEA-21** (Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century)
 - Declared interstate highway system complete
 - Increased funding levels and added local flexibility to programs
 - Reverse commute
- **2005, SAFETEA-LU** (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users)
 - Safe Routes to School Program

Transportation Authorization: Time for Transformation?

- SAFETEA-LU expired September 2009 (under extension)
 - An opportunity that arises only once every 5 to 6 years
- SAFETEA-LU signed into law in 2005
 - Over \$244 billion for 5 years
 - 6th largest federal expenditure –much of which is matched by states, regions, and locales
- An unwieldy bill
 - Over 6K earmarks
 - 108 programs (from very small to very big)
 - Funding distributed through formula funds and competitive grants

New momentum for policy reform and transportation equity

- Coalitions working to create a strong and equitable authorization bill:
 - ▣ **Transportation For America**, including the new T4A Social and Economic Equity Caucus
 - ▣ **Transportation Equity Network**
 - ▣ **Transit Riders for Public Transportation**
- In general, many more advocates and interests concerned with smart growth, sustainable development, environmental quality, sustainability, economic opportunity, access for all, and more democratic decision-making

Policy Idea #1

***Increase federal funding for public transportation—
both to build and operate the system.***

- Direct at least one-third of all funding to public transit
- Equalize local match
- Support for operations

Policy Idea #2

Foster access and mobility by increasing funding and improving the delivery of programs that serve those dependent on transit.

- Job Access and Reverse Commute, New Freedom Program, Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program
- Significantly increase funding levels for these programs to a total of \$7 billion over six years (or approximately \$1.2 billion per year on average)

Policy Idea #3

Promote job quality and job access in transportation construction careers.

- Target jobs to local, low-income workers (15% of work hours)
- Ensure quality job training opportunities by maximizing the use of apprentices (1% of funding)
- Support quality pre-apprenticeship training programs and recruitment
- Use community workforce agreements

Policy Idea #4

Increase affordable housing near quality public transit and job centers.

- Create new resources for TOD that encourages creation and preservation of affordable housing and supports critical community services
- Structure federal transportation funding to create incentives to preserve and expand affordable housing near public transit and job centers

Policy Idea #5

Make streets safe, complete, and welcoming for all.

- ***Complete Streets:*** Require states and local governments to adopt these policies and use these practices in federally-funded projects
- ***Safe Routes to School:*** Provide \$600 million in annual funding; expand eligibility to include high schools; and dedicate 10 percent of funding to create safe routes to bus stops

Policy Idea #6

Promote integration of transportation, housing, environmental, and community revitalization strategies.

- Establish an Office of Livability at US Department of Transportation
- Provide increased funding to help local communities develop and implement coordinated regional plans

Policy Idea #7

Make transportation investments that foster healthy people and healthy communities.

- Funding and TA to mitigate health impacts, ozone hot spots, and poor air quality
- Health impact assessments
- Modernize ports and freight systems to reduce pollution and other health impacts
- Targets spending toward maintenance and repair

Policy Idea #8

Establish national transportation objectives with clear measures to assess progress toward equity.

- Increase by five percent the number of essential destinations accessible within 30 minutes by public transit, or a 15-minute walk for low-income, senior, and disabled populations
- Reduce by 25 percent the average combined housing and transportation costs for a household
- Achieve zero percent population exposure to at-risk levels of air pollution
- Triple biking, walking, and public transportation use

Policy Idea #9

Strengthen civil rights protections.

- Renewed energy at the Office of Civil Rights
- Broad range of advocacy, organizing, and legal strategies to reverse *Sandoval*
- Establish a private right of action that enforces the disparate impact regulations adopted by the USDOT

Policy Idea #10

Reform Metropolitan Planning Organizations to foster greater accountability and representation.

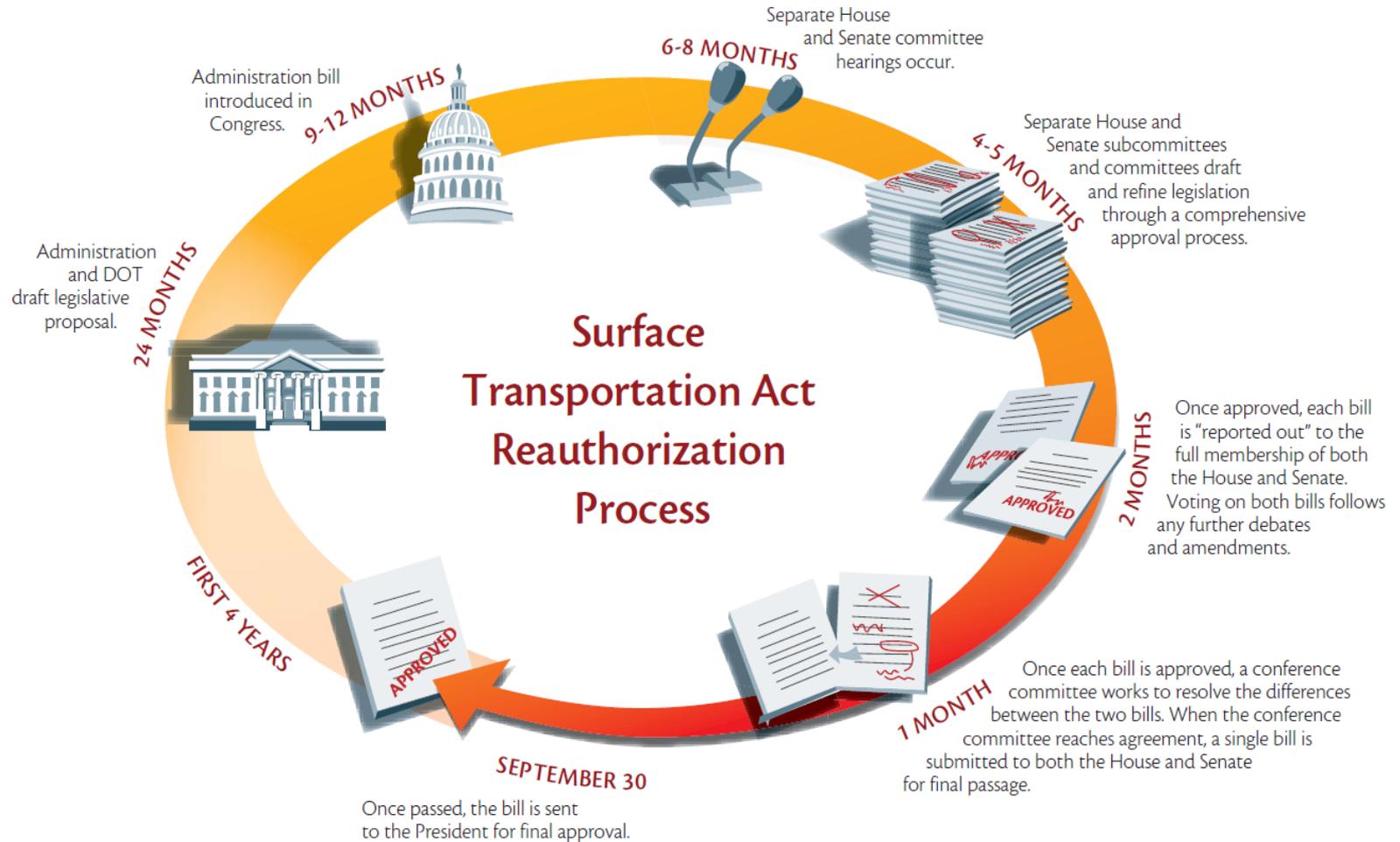
- MPOs have not historically been representative of the geographic or racial composition of the communities they represent
- Reforms needed (e.g., proportional voting system)

Policy Idea #11

Utilize equitable financing and revenue options.

- Highway Trust Fund bankrupt
- Must ensure financing mechanism does not disproportionately burden disadvantaged communities
- Dedicate a portion of new revenues toward expanding mobility options and lowering transportation costs for low-income people and communities of color

The Authorization Process



Committees of Jurisdiction

- **House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (Oberstar - Minnesota)**
 - Highways and Transit Subcommittee (DeFazio - Oregon)
- **Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee (Boxer –California)**
 - Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee (Baucus - Montana)
- **Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee (Dodd-Connecticut)**
 - Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee (Menendez—New Jersey)
- **House Ways and Means (Levin—Michigan)**
- **Senate Finance (Baucus—Montana)**

Legislative Landscape

- June 2009 – draft House bill by Chairman Oberstar
- Big Hurdle – the financing mechanism
- Extension of SAFETEA-LU through 2010 (several possible scenarios in terms of when authorization will happen)
- Senate EPW has begun hearings and says they will write a bill by Memorial Day
- Unclear whether we will see jobs legislation with infrastructure spending in 2010
- Some exciting policy shifts have started from Administration absent a bill

Resources on the internet

www.policylink.org

www.T4america.org

www.transportationequity.org

www.thestrategycenter.org/project/transit-riders-public-transportation