



Key Points

- *Transportation spending, both surface and mass transit, has a major impact on the economic development of local communities and on the quality of life for their residents.*
- *The AIA's Moving Community Forward study shows that well-designed transportation projects can benefit a community by facilitating economic development, creating jobs, increasing productivity, and easing the movement of traffic*
- *Congress should ensure that transportation funding and policies help strengthen communities.*
- *Immediate steps needs to be taken to restore the fiscal health of the nation's Federal transportation trust funds.*

PROMOTING HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES

Federal Transportation Policy: Get Our Communities Moving Again

AIA Position

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) supports the expenditure of Federal highway dollars in ways that enhance the quality of life in local communities. The AIA believes that well-planned transportation and community design can greatly enhance the economic development, sustainability, safety and livability of neighborhoods adjacent to new transportation projects.

Action Sought

The AIA urges members of Congress to support the expenditure of Federal highway dollars in ways that enhance the quality of life in local communities. The AIA believes that the upcoming reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU provides an excellent opportunity to promote transportation projects that benefit communities economically and environmentally and improve healthy and safety. The AIA also opposes efforts to strip funding from mass transit and community enhancement programs.

Explanation and Justification

How transportation projects - from highways and rail lines to multi-modal corridors and intermodal transit facilities - are planned, designed, and built has major impacts on the life of a community. Thoughtful design facilitates economic development, creates jobs, increases productivity, and eases the movement of traffic.

In January 2008, the AIA and the University of Minnesota's Center for Transportation Studies released *Moving Communities Forward* (www.movingcommunitiesforward.org), a study authorized by Congress in SAFETEA-LU and funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation, that measures how well-designed transportation projects can bring multiple enhancements to communities in terms of economic development, health and the environment, visual identity and design, public participation and public safety.

As Congress prepares to reauthorize Federal surface transportation programs, committing significant Federal monies for transportation construction across the country, the AIA believes that the findings of *Moving Communities Forward* offer important lessons for how transportation funding and policies can be leveraged to provide maximum benefits to the communities in which they are built.

In particular, the AIA supports provisions that:

- Increase funding for mass transit and community enhancement programs.
- Support pilot programs to use integrated design principles and community visioning processes in the planning of transportation projects.
- Make projects that improve the energy efficiency of transportation facilities and reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) a top priority for New Start and other funding.
- Study the relationship between location efficiency and congestion relief, economic development, sustainability and housing affordability.
- Expand the use of housing affordability planning in transportation planning and provide incentives for transportation projects that seek to provide affordable and sustainable housing options for more people.

The AIA also believes that immediate steps need to be taken to restore and protect the fiscal health of Federal transportation funds, including the Highway Trust Fund. As congestion increases and the transportation system ages, it would be disastrous for the public's safety and the nation's economic security if Congress and the Administration fail to find the funding streams necessary to ensure that the infrastructure can support our 21st Century economy. Raiding one fund to replenish other funds is a zero-sum game that will weaken our transportation infrastructure.