



MINETA BALANCES TRANSPORTATION, SECURITY NEEDS

U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta talks with ACEC leaders about TEA-21 reauthorization, outsourcing, and engineering stronger national security.

A **CEC Chairman Dan DeYoung:** Following the events of September 11, how has the increased security burden (and the creation of the Transportation Security Administration)—along with new concerns in air travel, ground travel, and transit—affected your agency's program?

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta: September 11 required the entire country to carefully reassess its vulnerabilities. From the perspec-

tive of our nation's transportation system, that reassessment included looking at every aspect of the way in which we provide security for the American traveling public. And all Americans should know that we have worked very hard to successfully make a series of common-sense, demonstrable improvements, and we will continue to make improvements throughout the coming weeks and months.

I'd say the biggest shift in the agency over the past few months has been securing our

aviation system, where, for the first time in history, the federal government is now directly responsible for providing the security at 429 commercial airports. To do this, we have created a new organization, the Transportation Security Administration [TSA]. This means that airline passengers will now be provided a world-class system of security and customer service. In the six months since its inception, TSA has already taken over screening supervision at all of our nation's airports,

screening baggage for explosives, enforcing positive bag matching on all originating flights, as well as conducting a study on how to include bag match on all connecting flights.

By last fall, we had reinforced all aircraft cockpit doors, created new passenger boarding procedures, and begun the process of ensuring our pilots and flight crews are better trained for hijacking scenarios. Just as importantly, to protect our aircraft in flight, we have expanded the federal air marshal program.

MINETA'S VISION FOR TEA-21 REAUTHORIZATION

Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta has drafted a set of core principles to shape the Department of Transportation's efforts at reauthorizing TEA-21.

It is dramatically larger today than it was on September 11, and the program will continue to grow until we reach the numbers we believe are necessary to adequately address the threats to the aviation system.

In January, I announced the foundation of a process for hiring blue-chip quality federal security directors for every airport and a cadre of professional federal

sectors. We recognize differences exist between transportation modes, and the TSA is committed to ensuring security and maintaining absolute citizen confidence in the security of our transportation system.

ACEC President Dave Raymond:

ACEC was very proud of the work it did in securing passage of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century [TEA-21], especially with respect to changes in regulations aimed at expediting the environmental review process for much-needed projects. Given a chance to "write the law," what would you seek in terms of reforms to expedite the environmental review for highway, transit, and airport projects?

Mineta: The department, through interagency involvement, will continue to improve the efficiency of the environmental review process so that we can deliver a sound and environmentally responsible transportation program, including highways, transit, and airports. Earlier this year I sent to Congress a report on our progress in the surface transportation area, and last year I sent a report on the airport environmental review process.

In our efforts to implement TEA-21, the department has worked with its federal and state partners to identify flexible solutions and more effective ways to complete the process and manage conflicts. We have developed performance measures, conducted research to evaluate why projects are delayed and how we might implement them more effectively, and supported best practices and pilot projects that lead to even better outcomes. We appreciate the support that ACEC has given us in this regard.

For airports, the department outlined several possible reforms in a May 2001 report to Congress on the environmental review of airport improvement projects. These include more resources to expedite environmental impact statements for capacity projects at congested airports, more mitigation of environmental impacts to reduce community opposition to airport expansion, more cooperation and concurrent environmental reviews among federal and state agencies, and more streamlined environmental documents and processes. I am pleased that there are pending bills in both the House and Senate that include these elements and that congressional interest in airport project environmental reform remains high. We have also taken a

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screeners who will specialize in world-class security and customer service, and we have begun putting these in place.

We must remember that some of the changes the department is making are tasks that many people thought would take almost a decade—and we're doing it in a little more than one year.

Given the deadlines set forth for the TSA, its initial focus has been on aviation security. But, working in conjunction with all DOT modal administrations and key federal stakeholders, such as the U.S. Customs Service, we are moving forward to strengthen the security of other transportation modes, including maritime and surface

- Assure adequate and predictable funding for investment in the nation's transportation system. This funding can contribute to the long-term health of the economy and, by enhancing the mobility of people and goods, promote greater productivity and efficiency.
- Preserve state and local government funding flexibility to allow the broadest application of funds to transportation solutions.
- Build on the intermodal approaches of ISTEA/TEA-21.
- Expand and improve innovative financing programs in order to encourage greater private sector investment in the transportation system, and examine other means to augment existing trust funds and revenue streams.
- Address the security of the nation's surface transportation system.
- Make substantial improvements in the safety of the nation's surface transportation system. It is not acceptable that the nation suffers 41,000 deaths and over 3 million injuries annually on the highway system.
- Strengthen the efficiency and integration of the nation's system of goods movement by improving international gateways and points of intermodal connection.
- Simplify federal transportation programs and continue efforts to streamline project approval and implementation.
- Develop the data and analyses critical to sound transportation decision-making.
- Foster intelligent transportation systems as a means to improve safety, reduce congestion, and protect the environment.
- Improve on the performance of the entire transportation system through better planning, management, construction, operations, asset management, maintenance, and construction.
- Increase accessibility to transportation so that all Americans can enjoy its benefits.
- Ensure an efficient infrastructure while retaining environmental protections that enhance our quality of life.

Secretary Mineta discusses Department of Transportation plans with ACEC Chairman Dan DeYoung (right) and ACEC President Dave Raymond (left) in the transportation secretary's office.



number of administrative steps to complete environmental reviews for projects that enhance capacity at our busiest airports.

We are looking at legislative changes that might make the environmental and project development processes even more effective as part of our consideration of changes the administration might recommend in TEA-21 and AIR-21 [the Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century] reauthorization.

If I were to write the law, I would seek an approach to environmental stewardship that embraces a proper protection of the environment with effective and timely solutions to deliver the transportation infrastructure our nation requires. For example, when a local office is undertaking a project I would like the national office

**"I've always felt that outsourcing is the way to go."
— Secretary Mineta**

to begin its review as well so that everything can get started. Trying to get old dogs to do new tricks is sometimes difficult, but we were definitely successful with regard to the reconstruction of I-15 in Salt Lake County, Utah. That was a successful project all around because not only did it involve environmental streamlining, it also involved design-build and it came in under budget and way ahead of schedule.

Raymond: ACEC has been working to prepare for the reau-

thorization of TEA-21 next year. I know that the administration is scheduled to spell out your priorities in depth the beginning of next year, but can you give us a thumbnail sketch today? What are the high priority items that you would like to see in the next generation of funding legislation?

Mineta: The new legislation should continue and build upon the successes of ISTEA [the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act] and TEA-21, but we have an opportunity and an obligation to do more than that. The DOT has established an intermodal process to develop surface transportation legislative proposals for reauthorization. In the coming months, the department will work with stakeholders and Congress in shaping the reauthorization legislation.

Outreach will include listening to stakeholders and other federal agencies as well as educating them about the proposals being developed by the department. I have articulated a set of core principles and values that is shaping the department's reauthorization effort. [See sidebar on p. 13 for a complete list.]

DeYoung: Government competition continues to be a challenge for our member companies. Too much federal funding for engineering work remains in-house with state and federal agencies, as opposed to being outsourced to private companies. Can you comment on the value of using private sector design firms to address and expedite development of the nation's transportation infrastructure needs?

Rep. Mica Spearheads Airport Streamlining Legislation

Significantly reduced travel following last year's terrorist attacks resulted in a reprieve from congestion at the nation's airports. Now that volume is returning to pre-Sept. 11 levels, the strain on the nation's air travel infrastructure is sure to return. The House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee has approved legislation aimed at streamlining airport improvement projects.

The Airport Streamlining Approval Process Act of 2002 was introduced by T&I Committee Chairman Don Young (R-Alaska), Aviation Subcommittee Chairman John Mica (R-Fla.), and former Aviation Subcommittee Chairman John Duncan Jr. (R-Tenn.). During hearings on the legislation, ACEC President Dave Raymond testified that "it [currently] takes an average of eight years to plan, design and build a runway ... [a length of time that] should be completely unacceptable in an advanced industrial country."

According to Rep. Mica, the act does several things. First, it allows some project approvals to run concurrently. Second, it directs the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to take a lead role in the project review process, especially as it pertains to environmental regulation, including coordinating the actions of other agencies. Third, it states that the "purpose and need" established by the DOT for the environmental review of any project will take precedence. Fourth, the act places some limits on judicial appeals.



Rep. John Mica

"You simply can't resolve congestion and delays unless you construct runways at the nation's most crowded airports," Rep. Mica says. "Passenger traffic is returning and will soon reach pre-September 11 levels. It's not a question of if, but rather when, gridlock will return to our busiest airports."

Rep. Mica is confident this act will make it more cost-effective for engineers to develop new airport projects. "It will be more cost-effective for everyone," he says. "It will ensure that once a community reaches consensus on a critical capacity project, the review process will not unnecessarily delay construction."

Rep. Mica told *Engineering Inc.* he has a bipartisan agreement to bring the measure to the House floor for a vote. Because other related streamlining acts are in the works, Rep. Mica believes there may be some delay before a final House vote to see if some legislation can be bundled together.

Rep. Mica now finds his attention turning to reauthorization of the Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century (AIR-21), among other things. He feels confident that such a measure will be successfully passed.

"[AIR-21] was a pretty comprehensive, well-written piece of legislation. I think it only needs some tweaking. I don't see major changes," says Rep. Mica.

Look for hearings on AIR-21 to begin this summer.

—Dobby Gibson

Mineta: I've always felt that outsourcing is the way to go. The department considers the private sector a strong partner as it works to make the nation's transportation system the safest and the strongest in the world.

For example, the Federal Transit Administration [FTA] outsources a large number of FTE positions, and the majority of them are engineering positions. Although the total number of FTA employees is 495, only 33, nationwide, are engineers. The reason for this is the highly successful Project Management Oversight [PMO] program through which FTA manages \$74 billion worth of major capital projects through 15 major engineering firms.

These engineering firms—most of them ACEC members—are paid \$28 million, an average of \$1.9 million per firm per year. This program employs 94 engineering consultant employees who would otherwise be federal government employees.

usually have large staffs because they are constantly expanding while having to maintain the existing infrastructure. It's also important to have individuals who are familiar with the history of the agency and the projects.

With smaller and newer transit agencies such as Phoenix, Cleveland, and Minneapolis, staffs are usually leaner and the agency depends more on large design consultants for expertise and advice.

The bottom line comes down to getting more dollars into transportation and transportation infrastructure. Even with the larger transit agencies, most designs are now done by engineering design consultants. The large transit agencies are finding it more beneficial to have consultants on board. What they need are more dollars for transit work.

As a matter of fact, I was looking at some figures this morning because I just released \$3 million as the initial down

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— Secretary Mineta

Raymond: Do you think engineering firms doing this kind of work should be compensated for the innovation and the value of the services as opposed to just a fixed fee?

Mineta: Absolutely. We get our money back.

DeYoung: So you support a value-based compensation concept for engineering industry service to government clients and private clients?

Mineta: I think this whole issue of risk management is something that we ought to be doing more of in terms of compensating the contractors because if the incentive is a proper one, people will really go the extra mile. We definitely found that to be the case in the aftermath of the Northridge earthquake in 1989—incentives worked really well there.

Through the first half of 2001, runway congestion and airport overcrowding were huge issues. How does the administration plan to address the huge costs associated with implementing new security requirements in light of the tremendous need for terminal and runway improvements at our nation's airports?

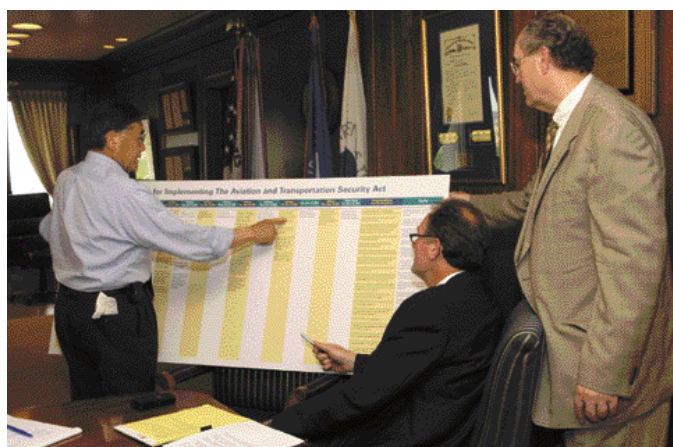
We expect that a great deal of the FAA's [Federal Aviation Administration] Airport Improvement Program [AIP], our grant program for airports, will be used for security. We are balancing all of the needs this year and we continue to fund non-security projects that are already

underway. But make no mistake about it, safety and security have always been and will continue to be priorities.

Regarding AIP, multi-year commitments for ongoing capacity projects are being funded and we are doing our best to keep phased projects underway. We may not be making many new capacity starts, but that should be expected. Many airports are delaying some new starts themselves in order to be able to respond to the costs that are largely unknown today, but that can be expected in the future. So far, the airports still are optimistic. They are treating the current situation as temporary. Some terminal building projects are being held up until new security requirements become better known, but we have seen little change in the projected opening dates of the new runways that are being planned at large hub airports.

These are major programs that take about 10 years from conception to commissioning and are not very sensitive to temporary dips in traffic.

For the near term, security will obviously occupy a prominent place in our funding strategy. The president's supplemental request for the TSA contains approximately \$800 million for site preparation and installation of explosives detection equipment that will provide for the necessary construction costs at the airports where this equipment will be installed.



Secretary Mineta reviews the implementation plans for the Aviation and Transportation Security Act with Raymond and DeYoung.

In transit authorities and state operated transit agencies, the number of engineers employed depends on the size and history of the agency. The larger and older transit agencies—New York MTA, Boston MBTA, Washington, D.C., WMATA—

payment for the reconstruction of the bridge in Webber Falls, Oklahoma, which got hit by a barge. That project will probably cost between \$15 million and \$18 million, and we'll be spending a lot on private contractors for that.