

INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL

reviving a mobility option

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Passenger rail is going through a "Renaissance" period caused by the rising cost of gas, traffic congestion and commuter fatigue. More people are choosing transit with double digit increases in ridership.

Vision for the Future: A national panel recommends a multimodal system which is environmentally responsive and user financed with a strong federal partnership, said Frank Busalacchi, Secretary of Wisconsin DOT. The vision through 2050 builds on a network that is frequent and reliable with 80 percent of the funding coming from the federal government.

Status of Amtrak: Expanding intercity rail corridors will boost ridership to 50 percent by 2020, said Anne Witt, vice president of Amtrak. As Congress considers the reauthorization of Amtrak, the key tasks are stakeholder leadership, standardized equipment, corridor network and service quality. The future is a network of corridors and support of federal funds, state support, requiring station improvements, procuring rolling stock and using standardized equipment. The 'perfect storm' of corridor growth is occurring with airline fees and traffic congestion pushing people to consider rail

travel. The future approach should be to define the corridor system using tiers of investment.

Successful State Models: California and North Carolina

In California, 80 percent of the state population base is covered by rail and bus network with three of Amtrak's six busiest routes located in the state, said Gene Skoropowski, Managing Director, California Capitol Corridor. The state's rail success is owed to capital funding with \$2.7 billion invested in the last 17 years. The quantity and quality of service is enough to generate the ridership and they have had 15 percent growth in the last year.

The challenges of expanding new service in North Carolina included developing a sealed corridor program, traffic and signal improvements, private crossing safety and investments in equipment, said Patrick Simmons, the director of North Carolina DOT's Rail Division. Not only did they increase the speed of passenger trains from 60 to 79 mph through rail line improvements but they also decreased the time between Raleigh and Charlotte to 180 minutes, which is below the competitive time of vehicles.

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