

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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**U.S. Department of
Transportation**

Office of the Secretary
of Transportation

Chief of Staff

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**MEMORANDUM FOR THURGOOD MARSHALL, JR.
SECRETARY TO THE CABINET
THE WHITE HOUSE**

FROM: MICHAEL P. HUERTA 

SUBJECT: DOT Climate Change Events

1. A major part of the effort of Secretary Slater, Deputy Secretary Downey, and others at DOT in August and September will be related to getting the National Economic Crossroads Transportation Efficiency Act (NEXTEA) passed. President Clinton has called NEXTEA the most important piece of environmental legislation to be proposed this year. For instance, NEXTEA increases funding for the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) by 30 percent, to \$1.3 billion annually; increases Transportation Enhancement funding by more than 35 percent to support bike paths, pedestrian walkways, and other community-oriented projects; expands CMAQ eligibility to include regions that fail to meet any new air quality standard; and provides greater flexibility for state and local investment in non-polluting modes of transportation. As part of our efforts on NEXTEA, we will incorporate messages directed toward promotion and advancement of the Administration's policy on climate change.

2. In response to your request for a special event directly focused on supporting the President's climate change policy initiative, we are reviewing an opportunity for the Secretary to address the American Public Transit Association in Chicago on September 22. The audience is expected to be generally receptive and Secretary Slater can emphasize the transit role in reducing the automobile contribution to greenhouse gas emission levels and new transit climate change and technology. FTA's alternative fuels bus program--fuel cells, biomass ethanol, and hydrogen fuels offer great promise for future climate benefits.

Global Climate Change Issue Amplification Department of Transportation

July 21, 1997

Background

Transportation sources contribute 32% of U.S. carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. The Department of Transportation's policies and programs encompass each of the sectors to which these emissions are attributed, including automobiles and light trucks, freight trucks, aircraft, rail, marine, and pipelines. DOT does not specifically regulate pollution emissions; however, the Department does have in place programs and policies designed to help mitigate the externalities from transportation. The Department works closely with EPA on pollution issues related to transportation sources. The Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy, Frank E. Kruesi, (Policy) is the designated lead for the Department on global climate change issues.

DOT is unique among Cabinet-level Departments in that it is divided into operating administrations (modes). Each mode is headed by an administrator. The administrators travel frequently and often have direct contact with our constituent groups and stakeholders at state, regional and local levels and in the private sector. Therefore, in addition to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, there are several vectors for the Administration's global climate change message.

Media - General

The Office of the Secretary's Director of Public Affairs works closely with public affairs staff in the modes. Although specific media commitments cannot be made at this time, Policy will provide necessary information and support to the Director of Public Affairs in order to identify or create opportunities to talk about environmental concerns and transportation, specifically focusing on global climate change. Typical message vehicles for the Department include press releases, speeches, press conferences, editorial boards, and interviews with senior staff members for trade and industry publications.

Opportunities for Amplification

Secretary Slater and Deputy Secretary Downey: The Secretary, who is currently travelling in Africa, has extensive travel scheduled throughout July and August, and, currently, has very few events in September. He will be speaking in Minneapolis, San Francisco, Austin, Denver and Little Rock over the next few months. The Deputy Secretary will be speaking in different venues throughout the remainder of the summer and fall, including the American Public Transit Association Conference in Chicago on September 22. Language will be provided to the Secretary's and Deputy Secretary's speechwriters for insertion into their speeches, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy will track closely the Secretary's and Deputy Secretary's calendars to identify opportunities to amplify global climate change issues.

Modal Administrators: The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) [CAFE standards], Federal Aviation

Administration (FAA), Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Federal Maritime Administration (MARAD), the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), and the Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA) [pipelines] are led by administrators who hold meetings with constituents and address groups that will ultimately be affected by the U.S. policy on global climate change. Those Administrators will be provided with talking points, background materials, and paragraphs to be included as part of their speeches and incorporated into topics for meetings. Policy will work with their staffs, including public affairs staff, to help identify opportunities to discuss climate change as the Administrator's schedules develop.

Issue-based Opportunities

Alternative Fuel Vehicle Safety Standards: These standards facilitate introduction of alternative fuel vehicles into the fleet, and pave the way for movement from high carbon-intensive petroleum fuels to alternatives which will provide less carbon intensity, such as alcohols from biomass, electric vehicles, and over the long term, hydrogen. NHTSA will issue four standards over the next few months. Announcement of standards by senior DOT officials could emphasize potential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by moving to alternative fuels.

Congestion Pricing Pilot Programs: Congestion pricing offers opportunities to reduce energy wasted in urban driving in congested conditions. The pilot programs are contributing to knowledge of which policies work and the impact of price (tolls) on driving behavior. Visits by DOT participants could emphasize the climate change benefits of increasing fuel efficiency and reducing total fuel use from eliminating congestion.

PNGV-Related Studies: Safety and infrastructure studies underway provide another focal point for amplification. In addition, the PNGV program is an excellent example of partnership across the government, and opportunities for cooperation on amplification with other Cabinet-level agencies could be created.

Alternative Fuel Bus Programs: FTA funding of alternative fuel buses contributes to the U.S. potential for moving to less carbon-intensive fuels for buses and other motor vehicles, and also to the potential for energy saving shifts from travel by single occupant auto to transit. Events focusing on these advances are another forum for global climate change amplification.

National Economic Crossroads Transportation Efficiency Act (NEXTEA) and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ): September promises to be a significant month as Congress moves to pass the reauthorization of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). NEXTEA is the Administration's proposal for reauthorization: funding in this major surface transportation proposal would support alternative fuels infrastructure investment, funding for the CMAQ program to help states and communities clean their air, and transportation planning efforts that take air quality issues into account. Although NEXTEA does not specifically address global climate change issues, it presents opportunities to discuss this Administration's environmental priorities.