## **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

## Office of the Secretary

National Transportation System (NTS) Initiative: Refinements to the Development Process

**AGENCY:** Office of the Secretary, Department of Transportation. **ACTION:** Notice of refinements in the development of the NTS.

SUMMARY: The Department of Transportation is modifying the process through which the NTS initiative will be developed and the proposed products of that process. These refinements are in response to the Department's extensive public outreach and comments to the docket last fall.

DATES: Comments on the refinements

DATES: Comments on the refinements are welcomed. To be most useful, comments on these issues should be submitted no later than July 31, 1995.

ADDRESSES: Three copies of comments for the public docket on the NTS should be sent to: Office of the Secretary, Documentary Services Division, C–55, Attn: NTS Public Docket #49617, Room PL 401, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions on the NTS initiative also can be directed to the Departmental Offices designated as leads for the NTS outreach and planning initiatives:

Mr. Michael P. Huerta, Associate Deputy Secretary, Room 10200, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590, Phone: (202) 366–5781.

Mr. Frank Kruesi, Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy, Room 10228, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590, Phone: (202) 366–4450.

Mr. Stephen Palmer, Assistant Secretary for Governmental Affairs, Room 10408, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590, Phone: (202) 366–4573.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On December 9, 1993, Secretary of Transportation Federico Peña invited Congress, other Federal agencies, state and local officials, private businesses and citizen groups to participate in the development of the National Transportation System initiative. Officials from the Department of Transportation spent the next several months meeting with individuals and groups noted above to discuss all aspects of the NTS.

The **Federal Register** Notice laying out the basic concept and framework for the NTS was published on June 23, 1994 (59 FR 32481). A supplemental Notice

on the proposed process and criteria for designating the NTS was published in the **Federal Register** on August 24, 1994 (59 FR 43610). The Department received over 350 comments to the docket. In addition to soliciting public comments on the NTS concept through **Federal Register** notices, the Department received input from meetings held in Washington, DC, and around the country, that were attended by representatives of transportation interest groups, state and local agencies, and the private sector.

The key purposes of the NTS initiative were to conduct a dialogue with our customers and partners on the future of Federal transportation policy, improve transportation investment decisions, make DOT policy and programs more outcome-oriented and less modally driven, and draw attention to the state of the national transportation system and its implications for other goals.

## **Interim Results of the NTS Outreach**

A number of strong and recurrent themes emerged from the outreach process. Across the spectrum of users, operators and interest groups, there is strong support for the NTS concept of an integrated, multimodal transportation system. These groups and individuals recognize the need to shift from looking at single mode solutions toward an intermodal, customeroriented approach that looks at results in terms of mobility, congestion, and a variety of economic, social and environmental impacts.

There was consensus that the focus of the NTS should be on developing a better understanding of transportation demands and constraints and their implications for attaining national social, economic and environmental goals which would help all levels of government identify impediments to the efficient functioning of the system. Many felt that the Federal Government—working closely with state and local governments, the transportation industry and interested members of the public—should set a strategic agenda for achieving progress on these various fronts. There was little support for identifying current, high volume facilities through a mapping process. Thus the Department does not plan to develop an NTS map.

The outreach discussions and comments to the docket indicated widespread support for the NTS concept but recommended changes in the NTS evaluative framework to consider work being done at the state and local level and by the private sector.

Recommended revisions to the initial

NTS approach included giving more emphasis to building upon the planning processes required by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), developing the analytical capability to evaluate the performance of the system and developing performance measures to facilitate outcome-oriented, multimodal decisionmaking.

## **Refinements to the NTS: Products**

In response to these comments, the Department is refining the NTS to focus on the following three major products:

1. Transportation Performance
Measurement System: A recurring
theme in the Department's outreach
efforts to date has been that existing
performance measures for the
transportation system are incomplete.
Specifically, we heard that there is a
need for performance measures that
consider more than simply traffic flows
or transportation efficiency; they should
consider effects on the economic,
environmental and social outcomes
which we, as a Nation, are pursuing.

To respond, the Department will initiate a performance measurement effort. The purpose is to bring about a better understanding of how transportation performs as an integrated system in meeting national goals. We intend to develop specific examples of performance measures that consider the broader transportation impacts discussed above. These measures will be developed to illustrate cause and effect relationships between transportation decisions, the external demand factors that lead to them, and their broader impacts on the system overall.

Data needed for this effort will be derived, for the most part, from existing state, local and national data collection efforts. This is to minimize any additional burdens on state and local governments. Where appropriate, we will also draw upon the state and local planning processes established by ISTEA.

The emphasis of the Department's work will be on the national system. However, this effort also will provide an analytic base for future discussions with state and local officials about how national goals of the transportation system, performance objectives, and tools necessary for achieving these objectives are linked with state and local objectives.

2. National and Regional Transportation Analytical Capability: A strategic analysis capability will be developed, using a national intermodal GIS database and performance measures, which could be used to