

# VIEWPOINT

## Moving To Greater Economic Strength And Competitiveness

by Ken Graham

(NAPSA)—With the recent rise in gas prices, we were once again reminded of how dependent we are on foreign oil to maintain our mobility and economic competitiveness. The answer lies in multimodalism.



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It looks at transportation as one integrated system versus independent sectors. For the past 60 years, we have created and funded each sector—highway, aviation, mass transit, rail—independently. These systems were innovations of their time, but now we need a new approach.

### **The Girth of a Nation**

By 2050, the United States will be home to 100 million more people, which will mean a greater demand for transportation. Our highway system can't handle it all.

Based on current trends, highway capacity will grow only 9 percent by 2043, but traffic levels will swell by 135 percent to more than 7 trillion vehicle miles traveled annually.

Highways will remain vital for travel and transport in the United States; however, we can't continue to rely on a product of 20th century engineering and construction for economic growth, opportunity and competitiveness in the 21st century.

Highways, aviation, public transit, rail, ports, bike lanes and sidewalks all work together to help each perform optimally and the entire system perform more efficiently. With more transportation choices, we can accommodate more people and more commerce to serve our growing population.

One of the best examples of multimodal transportation is Chicago's no-mode-left-behind

approach. The Windy City has demonstrated it's open to multiple solutions and focuses on those that deliver goods and people to their destinations most efficiently.

There are a few things required for population centers to succeed, including access to fresh water and transportation. Regions that develop a more sophisticated, multimodal transportation system will have a stronger economy because they will attract more businesses.

For outlying communities and small towns nearby, connecting to major metropolitan regions with alternative transportation is a brilliant self-preservation strategy.

### **All Together, Now**

Creating a plan that integrates all modes of transportation begins with the transportation authorization bill being developed in Congress. By designating a new funding category especially for multimodal projects of regional or national significance, Congress can begin to encourage multimodalism.

As Rep. John Mica, chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, said, we must not develop a better highway system, a better aviation system or a better rail system, but a better transportation system for America.

• *Mr. Graham is CEO of the infrastructure practice of HNTB Corporation, an employee-owned infrastructure firm serving federal, state, municipal, military and private clients. With nearly a century of service, HNTB has the insight to understand the life cycle of infrastructure and the perspective to solve the most complex technical, financial and operational challenges. Professionals nationwide provide award-winning planning, design, program management and construction management services. Learn more at [www.hntb.com](http://www.hntb.com).*