Platform Approved by CSAC Board of Directors – March 30, 2006

Transportation and Public Works

Section 1: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Transportation services and facilities are essential for the future well-being of the state of California. A balanced transportation system utilizes all available means of travel cooperatively and in a mutually complimentary manner to provide a total service for the needs of the community.

Transportation services should also responsibly meet the competing future needs of all segments of industry and society with maximum coordination and reasonable amounts of free choice for the consumer of the transportation service.

Balanced transportation does not simply mean the provision of highways or public transit devices. A balanced transportation system is a method of providing services for the mobility requirements of people and goods according to rational needs.

Transportation systems must be fully integrated with planned land use; support the lifestyles desired by the people of individual areas; and be compatible with the environment by considering air and noise pollution, aesthetics, ecological factors, cost benefit analyses, and energy consumption measures.

Transportation systems should be designed to serve the travel demands and desires of all the people of the state, recognizing the principles of local control and the unique restraints of each area. Local control recognizes that organizational and physical differences exist and that governments should have flexibility to cooperatively develop systems by which services are provided and problems resolved.

Section 2: BALANCED TRANSPORTATION POLICY

A. System Policy and Transportation Principles

Government belongs as close to the people and their related problems as possible. The system of transportation services, similarly, must recognize various levels of need and function.

It is of statewide interest to provide for a balanced transportation system on a planned and coordinated basis consistent with social, economic, political, and environmental goals within the state.

Rural and urban transportation needs must be balanced so as to build and operate a single transportation system.

Transportation systems should be an asset to present and future environmental and economic development of the state within a framework of its ability to invest. All people of the state bear a share of the responsibility to ensure proper environmental elements of the transportation system.

Maintenance needs of transportation systems must be met in order to protect existing public investment (current revenues are not keeping pace with needs of local road systems).

The local road system, a large component of the state's transportation network, is critical in order to address congestion, meet farm to market needs, address freight and goods movement, and provide access to other public transportation systems.

Public safety, particularly access for public safety services, is dependent on a well-maintained local road network.

Analysis of the cost effectiveness of all modes of transportation, existing and proposed, is needed in order to provide the most coordinated and efficient transportation system.

Additionally, repairs to local access roads that are damaged in the course of emergency operations (for example, in fighting a fire or flood) should be eligible for reimbursement under the same programs as roads which are directly damaged by the event.

System process modifications are needed to expedite project delivery and minimize project cost.

B. Financing Policy and Revenue Principles

Transportation financing needs exceed existing and foreseeable revenues despite growing recognition of these needs at all levels of government. Additional funding is required and should be supported and any new sources of funding should produce enough revenue to respond significantly to transportation needs.

Multi-jurisdictional boundaries should be variable to recognize different "regions" for different and specific transportation funding needs.

Counties support making block grants for transportation purposes directly to urban, urbanized, and rural areas for allocation to local projects and to projects of regional significance in accordance with regional mechanisms developed through a cooperative process by the affected local general purpose governments within each area and without unnecessary involvement of the state or federal government.

Single Transportation Funds--comprised of state and federal subventions--should be available at each of the local, regional and statewide levels for financing the development, operation, and/or maintenance of highways, public transit, airports or any other modal system as determined by each area in accordance with local, regional, and statewide goals. The cooperative mechanisms established by counties and cities to meet multi-jurisdictional needs should be responsible for the financing, construction, operation and maintenance of regional transportation systems utilizing--as appropriate--existing transportation agencies and districts.

Federal and state funds should be sent directly to applicable operational levels without involvement of any intermediate level of government. Pass-through and block grant funding concepts are highly desirable.

The cost of transportation facilities and services should be fairly shared by the users and also by indirect beneficiaries.

Transportation funding should be established so that annual revenues are predictable with reasonable certainty over several years to permit rational planning for wise expenditure of funds for each mode of transportation.

Financing should be based upon periodic deficiency reports by mode to permit adjustment of necessary funding levels. Additional elements such as constituent acceptance, federal legislative and/or administrative actions, programmatic flexibility, and cost benefit studies should be considered.

Efforts to obtain additional revenue should include an examination of administrative costs associated with project delivery and transportation programs.

Funding procedures should be specifically designed to reduce the cost of processing money and to expedite cash flow. Maximum use should be made of existing collection mechanisms when considering additional financing methods.

In the development of long-range financing plans and programs at all levels of government, there should be a realistic appreciation of limitations imposed by time, financing, availability, and the possibility of unforeseen changes in community interest.

Rural and urban transportation funding needs must be balanced so as to build and operate a single transportation system.

Existing funding levels must be maintained with historical shares of current funding sources ensured for counties (e.g. state and federal gas tax increases, etc.) and additional revenue sources are needed such as additional gas tax, congestion pricing, and user or transaction fees to provide a diverse financing strategy.

Transportation revenues must be utilized for transportation purposes only and purposes for which they are dedicated. They should not be diverted to external demands and needs not directly related to transportation activities.

Revenue needed for operational deficits of transit systems should be found in increased user fees, implementation of operating efficiencies and/or new sources, rather than existing sources depended upon by other modes of transportation.

Future revenues must be directed to meet mobility needs efficiently and cost effectively with emphasis on current modal use.

C. Government Relations Policy

The full partnership concept of intergovernmental relations is essential to achieve a balanced transportation system. Transportation decisions should be made comprehensively within the framework of clearly identified roles for each level of government without duplication of effort.

Transportation decisions should be made at the level of government providing the most sensitive direct response to the people. Decisions should be made at local levels whenever possible, unless local decisions obviously and seriously conflict with broader state or national goals.

Where transportation problems cross jurisdictional boundaries, cooperative regionalism should be supported in preference to arbitrarily imposed regionalism which merely moves the decision-making process farther from the people to a less responsive level of government. Counties and cities, acting through a mechanism or mechanisms established for regional decision-making, are best equipped to resolve interjurisdictional issues.

No county or city should be split by regional boundaries without the consent of that county or city.

Multi-jurisdictional boundaries should be, wherever possible, held to areas only large enough to assure problem solutions. It is recognized there are very likely different "regions" for different and specific circumstances.

Counties and cities in partnership with state government, should attempt to actively influence federal policies on transportation as part of the full partnership concept.

D. Management Policy

Effective transportation requires the definite assignment of responsibility for providing essential services including fixed areas of responsibility based upon service output.

Greater attention should be devoted to delivery of overall transportation products and services in a cost-effective manner with attendant management flexibility at the implementation level of the management system.

Special transportation districts should be evaluated and justified in accordance with local conditions and public needs.

The State Department of Transportation should be responsible for planning, designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining a system of transportation corridors of statewide significance and interest. Detailed procedures should be determined in concert with local government.

Restrictive, categorical grant programs at federal and state levels should be abandoned or minimized in favor of goal-oriented transportation programs which can be adjusted by effective management to best respond the to social and economic needs of individual communities.

Policies and procedures on the use of federal and state funds should be structured to minimize "red tape," recognize the professional capabilities of local agencies, provide post-audit procedures and permit the use of reasonable local standards.

Section 3: SPECIFIC MODAL TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

A. Aviation

Air transportation planning should be an integral part of overall planning effort and airports should be protected by adequate zoning and land use. Planning should also include consideration for helicopter and other short and vertical take-off aircraft.

State and federal airport planning participation should be limited to coordination of viable statewide and nationwide air transportation systems.

Local government should retain complete control of all airport facilities, including planning, construction, and operation.

B. Streets and Highways

Highway transit--in a coordinated statewide transportation system--will continue to carry a great percentage of the goods and people transported within the state. A program of maintenance and improvement of this modal system must be continued in coordination with the development of other modal components.

Efforts to maximize utilization of transportation corridors for multi-purpose facilities should be supported.

C. Public Transit

Counties and cities should be responsible for local public transit systems utilizing existing transportation agencies, and districts as appropriate.

Multi-jurisdictional public transit systems should be the responsibility of counties and cities acting through mechanisms, which they establish for regional decision-making, utilizing existing transportation agencies and districts as appropriate.

The state should be responsible for transportation corridors of statewide significance, utilizing system concepts and procedures similar to those used for the State Freeway and Expressway System. Contracts may be engaged with existing transit districts and public transportation agencies to carry out and discharge these state responsibilities.

Consideration of public transit should be an integral part of a local agency's overall planning effort and should maximize utilization of land for multi-purpose transportation corridors.

Public transit planning should include a continuing effort of identifying social, economic, and environmental requirements.

D. Rail

Railroads play a key role in a coordinated statewide transportation system. In many communities they form a center for intermodal transportation.

Rail carries a significant portion of goods and people within and out of the state. The continued support of rail systems will help balance the state’s commuter, recreational, and long distance transportation needs.

Rail should be considered, as appropriate, in any local agency’s overall planning effort when rail is present or could be developed as part of a community.

Research and development of innovative and safe uses of rail lines should be encouraged.

E. Other

Non-motorized transportation facilities are proper elements of a balanced transportation system. Facilities for non-motorized transportation should be financed through a combination of sources best suited to the needs of the community.

Research and development of new vehicles and propulsion units should be encouraged.

Section 4: CONCLUSION

Since 1970, transportation demands and needs have out-paced investment in the system. An examination of transportation revenues and expenditures compared to population, travel and other spending in the state budget, adjusted for inflation, shows a long period of under-investment in transportation continuing through the 1980s. California's population increased by 50 percent, personal income increased by almost 90 percent and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) increased by 140 percent, yet transportation revenues declined until 1991, when there was a slight increase. When population and transportation use was increasing steadily for two decades, California chose to decrease its investment in transportation capacity. The decline in transportation spending was not part of an overall decline in public spending. An examination of state budget expenditures, adjusted for inflation, for transportation, health and welfare, corrections and education from FY 1969-70 through FY 1992-93 reveals that overall spending more than doubled while transportation expenditures as a percentage of state programs was cut in half.

The current revenue system is not providing the funding necessary to maintain existing transportation systems, much less to finance operation and expansion needs. Revenues per 100 VMT, which represent each driver's tax fee to travel 100 miles on the system, are now only 40 percent of what they were 25 years ago. Further, only 15 states have fuel tax rates lower than California's 18 cents per gallon. Only three of those, Michigan, Florida and New Jersey, are large enough to compete with California for economic development.

The citizens of California have invested significant resources in their transportation system. This $3 trillion investment is the cornerstone of the state's commerce and economic competitiveness. Virtually all vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle trips originate and terminate on local streets and roads. Emergency response vehicles extensively use local roads to deliver public service. Public safety and mobility rely on a well-maintained transportation infrastructure. Transportation funding is important to the economy and the economic recovery of the state. Increased investment in the transportation network is essential to stimulate the economy, to improve economic competitiveness and to safeguard against loss of the public's existing $3 trillion investment in our transportation system.