**Policy Details**

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| **House T & I Subcommittee hears testimony on "Transportation Challenges of Metropolitan Areas" 4-9-08** |
| 04-09-2008 |
| This morning, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Highways and Transit Subcommittee held a hearing on “Transportation Challenges of Metropolitan Areas”. Testimony on the needs of our national surface transportation program and next year’s transportation reauthorization was heard from a panel of transportation and planning experts. The panel consisted of Robert Puentes, Fellow at The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program; Robert Yaro, President of the Regional Plan Association (New York, New York); the Honorable Ron Sims, King County Executive (Seattle, WA); Jolene Molitoris, Assistant Director of the Ohio Department of Transportation; Michael Wiley, CEO of Sacramento Regional Transit District and Ron Kirby, Transportation Director at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Rep. Grace Napolitano (D-CA) used her time to get directly to the point of the hearing by asking the panel “what should the next federal surface transportation program accomplish?” In his [testimony](https://www.44fish.com/assets/623_transportationchallenges4.doc), Ron Kirby emphasized the need for restructuring the program, particularly through the creation of a mode-neutral federal discretionary program to select infrastructure investments. He explained that “it makes no sense to try to address the challenges of a major urban corridor with separate modal programs, each with its own evaluation criteria and program requirements.” Kirby also made a point that MPOs should not only receive formula-based funding for metropolitan planning but also for project selection and implementation in order to “empower metropolitan areas to turn strategies…into real projects on the ground.” This message was reiterated in Robert Puentes’ testimony and in a statement by full committee chair Rep. James Oberstar (D-MN), who acknowledged the “increasing demand for funds to bypass” the usual system and go straight to MPOs and metropolitan areas, that in many cases are better prepared to spend them. Rep. Oberstar also emphasized the need for a new multi-modal national surface transportation program. He referenced 1991’s Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), by concluding that “the ‘I’ in ISTEA will be coming back in the next transportation bill”.  |