

Nevada is the fastest growing state in the nation with about 6,000 new residents every month and millions of visitors every year. We must continue to invest in our transportation infrastructure to keep pace with this rapid growth and reduce traffic congestion, accidents, and pollution. As a senior member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and Appropriations Committee, I have been working hard to bring federal funds to Nevada to build better roads, public transit, and airports in the Silver State.

Nevada Showcase Airports

McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas posted its second-busiest year in 2003 with nearly 36.3 million arriving and departing passengers. It is critical that we make the necessary investments to keep Nevada's air transportation system safe and convenient. I have been working to secure more than \$25 million in federal funds for the McCarran, Reno-Tahoe, Minden, Elko, and Ely airports.

McCarran faces significant challenges in meeting the needs of southern Nevada's rapidly growing population. That is why I am working with local and state officials to shift helicopter traffic from McCarran to a proposed new heliport near Sloan. I have introduced legislation to convey federal land to Clark County for construction of this heliport, and I am committed to working with interested parties to ensure the expeditious completion of this project.

Highway Development

Our nation's highway system spans more than 8 million lane miles and is valued at over \$1 trillion. We must protect this investment and ensure that our surface transportation system continues to serve our communities and businesses. Roads full of potholes and congested interstates threaten safety, diminish our quality of life, and strangle economic productivity. Our rapid population growth and tourism industry make these challenges even more important - which is why I place a high priority on improving our transportation system.

I secured \$10 million last year to widen U.S. 95 near Laughlin at Railroad Pass, and \$1 million to widen Interstate 15 from the Spaghetti Bowl to Speedway Boulevard. I am also working to secure funds for many other important projects including the Hoover Dam and Boulder City bypass.

Providing New Public Transit Choices

Investing in our public transit system will reduce our dependence on foreign oil, protect our environment, and give residents and visitors more transportation choices.

I have been a strong supporter of both the Las Vegas monorail and the California-Nevada magnetic levitation (maglev) train projects and have secured millions of federal dollars for both projects.

The California-Nevada Superspeed train, which is currently in the study stage, will allow riders to travel between Las Vegas and Los Angeles in an hour and a half.

The Las Vegas monorail recently began serving The Strip, and an expansion to downtown is already in the works. When completed, the Monorail will reach from McCarran Airport to northern Las Vegas. This service will be invaluable to thousands of tourists and residents alike, and will help relieve traffic on The Strip while reducing pollution.

Our nation needs a world class rail system to relieve crowding on our highways and in our airports. I have been working hard to modernize Amtrak and provide it with the resources to develop a new high-speed rail corridors between Los Angeles and Las Vegas. I remain strongly committed to developing this alternative form of fast, affordable, and reliable transportation.

I also have worked hard to improve bus service throughout the state, including the Regional Transportation Commission's MAX program, which combines the quality of rail service with the economy and flexibility of a bus. I secured \$5 million for MAX last year, and the first MAX route recently began operating between downtown and North Las Vegas, improving the daily commute of thousands of Nevadans.

I also secured \$6 million for improvements to the Reno/Sparks bus transfer facilities, and additional funds for rural transit buses and facilities. Expanding and improving bus service throughout the state will reduce congestion and provide another much-needed transportation choice for senior citizens, students and other Nevadans who are unable or prefer not to drive.

Meeting Rural Nevada's Transportation Needs

As a native of Searchlight, I understand the transportation challenges facing smaller and rural communities. I have long been a supporter of rural transportation programs and I have worked hard to secure increased funding for rural transportation, including millions of dollars for the Minden, Elko, and Ely airports.

In this past year's Transportation Appropriations bill, I secured \$400,000 to support small urban and rural public transportation needs in Nevada. An additional \$500,000 is also provided in the bill for purchase of rural transit vehicles and construction of facilities to support rural transit programs in the state. Unfortunately, these federal funds require a 50 percent match from localities. Current state law prohibits the use of state funds for this purpose. I have been working to reduce the local match to five percent in the new six-year transportation bill.

After hearing about the need for new school buses in rural areas during a meeting with all of Nevada's 17 school superintendents, I introduced legislation to help rural counties buy new school buses. The Bus Utility and Safety in School Transportation Opportunity and Purchasing Act—or BUS STOP—authorizes a \$50 million grant program to help rural local educational agencies pay for up to 75 percent of the cost of new school buses.

Transportation Means Jobs

Investing in infrastructure not only improves our quality of life – it also creates good jobs. For every billion dollars we spend on our nation's surface transportation system, we create over 47,000 well paid skilled jobs. As a principal author of the new six-year transportation bill, I have been working hard to bring these improvements and new jobs to Nevada as soon as possible.

The Senate passed a bipartisan \$318 billion bill that would meet our nation's transportation needs and substantially boost our economy. This bill doesn't raise taxes and it doesn't increase the deficit – the funds have already been set aside from federal fuel taxes. I will continue to work with my colleagues in the House and the Administration to reach a good compromise measure.

Safety Programs

Nevada is the fastest growing state in the country, and our rapid growth has placed tremendous demands on our entire transportation system. We need to remember the old adage, "Safety First," and continue to make improvements that will keep our families safe whenever they travel.

I helped secure \$70 million for the Safe Routes to Schools program in the new six-year transportation bill. This important program will provide grants to states and local communities to assist with planning, development, and implementation of projects to improve safety in the vicinity of schools. Eligible projects will include traffic-calming and speed-reduction projects as well as pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements.

For more information visit my Web-Site at <http://reid.senate.gov>