

**STATEMENT
BY
PATRICK D. JONES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, IBTTA**

**Field Hearing
National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission
Dallas, Texas
September 20, 2006**

Madam Chair and members of the Commission, it's a pleasure to offer these remarks to you today, at the start of the Commission's first Field Hearing outside of Washington, D.C. I'm delighted to be part of this forum, which is dedicated to hearing new ideas – from voices “beyond the Beltway” – and to explore new approaches to transportation funding.

My name is Pat Jones, and I'm the Executive Director of the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association – IBTTA. We're the worldwide alliance of toll-road operators and associated industries with members in 25 countries on six continents. We're pleased to be one of the co-hosts of this hearing, along with APTA, ITS America and Texas DOT.

This Commission's task could not be more timely, or more critical for the future of our nation. The chronic erosion of our transportation network is leading to the decay of our economic strength. The intensifying gridlock on our highways is steadily undermining our quality of life. And the inability of our traditional policymaking bodies to deal with this deepening crisis has been wearing down public confidence in government.

The success of this Commission's work can help strengthen that confidence. By July of 2007, when you present your report to Congress and the White House,

your recommendations can help our lawmakers break free of the straitjacket of status-quo thinking.

At this pivotal moment – when Americans are thirsting for new ideas – lawmakers need far more than a dry re-hashing of familiar policy options. Your report can help inspire an entirely new way of thinking about our nation’s mobility – why we depend on it, how we should plan for it, where we should invest in it, and who should pay for it.

Your report can summon the nation to a new civic mission, and to a new sense of realism about our future.

America needs a wake-up call from you.

As a nation, we’re resourceful and inventive. We are blessed with dynamism in our people and our economy. But we’re also prone to inattention and complacency, as if we imagine that chronic problems will somehow solve themselves.

We sometimes believe we can ignore a problem until the very last minute – until a World War reveals that we need a vast Manhattan Project.

Yet no impulsive “crash program” can be a substitute for steady, sustained investment – over time – in something as fundamental as our infrastructure.

Your report can sound the clarion call: We must invest today, to avoid paralysis tomorrow. We must reject stagnant ways of thinking, to face the new realities of a changing economy.

At IBTTA, we've been battling against an array of weary old myths that have kept America's transportation policy gridlocked. We must dispel these myths once and for all.

- The myth that there's a difference between a "free road" and a "toll road." The reality is: There are no free roads. Somebody, somewhere has to pay to build and maintain our highways.
- The myth that tolling is a radical new idea. The reality is that Colonial America relied on networks of toll roads.
- The myth that a toll is a tax, or that paying a toll constitutes "double taxation." The reality is that tolls are the perfect example of a "user fee."

These myths hold back the ideas that lead to progress.

Enough of these old myths! It's time to recognize new realities.

One new reality is that other nations are speeding into the future while the U.S. States has been puttering along in the slow lane.

- Other nations' investment banks have taken the lead in raising capital to invest in public works.
- Other nations' motorists enjoy the benefits of free-flowing traffic along roads equipped with all electronic open road tolling.
- And other nations' urban planners use "congestion pricing" to ease big-city traffic.

Another new reality is that most experts agree that the fuel tax, by itself, is no longer a reliable long-term source of funding for roads, and that tolling is a major part of the solution.

Right here in Dallas, the North Texas Tollway Authority is one of the leaders in the trend toward open road tolling – removing toll barriers and allowing motorists to pay their toll while moving at highway speed.

And in Houston, the Harris County Toll Road Authority operates the Westpark Tollway – the nation’s first all-electronic toll road. Westpark is a model of innovation for cities across the country.

Like Dallas and Houston, there are pockets of innovation all around the country. They’re ready to explode with innovation – if we get political and institutional barriers out of their way.

This Commission can be a catalyst for innovation – creating conditions where good things can happen

Madam Chair, we believe that re-shaping transportation policy is not just about assembling bricks and mortar. It’s about sustaining the flow of ideas that link people with progress – ideas that improve our quality of life and secure our prosperity.

Madam Chair, thank you again for this opportunity.

#