



NEVADA BRINGS NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION TO LAS VEGAS



A federal commission recently met in Las Vegas to discuss creative ways to keep freeway traffic, and funding, running smoothly in the future.

The national transportation spotlight recently focused on Nevada with a Las Vegas hearing of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission to discuss vital transportation issues.

“The Nevada Department of Transportation has taken the lead in identifying the transportation needs for the state, especially in the Las Vegas Valley, and it is quite an accomplishment for NDOT to bring this hearing to southern Nevada,” Governor Jim Gibbons said.

NDOT Director Susan Martinovich was the first presenter, discussing environmental, right-of-way and federal funding impacts on project delivery. Pointing out that major retail and residential developments can often be planned, zoned, designed and built in the time it takes a highway project to simply complete National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review, NDOT’s director expressed how federal review requirements can slow vital road construction.

“The reason why this is of such concern is that time is money,” Martinovich said. “Delays result in inflation cost increases, materi-

als costs exceeding inflation, extra costs to mitigate project impacts and additional right-of-way costs.”

Other presenters, such as Arizona Department of Transportation Director Victor Mendez, spoke to transportation needs created by skyrocketing population growth, as well as creative financing options for highway projects, including public-private partnerships.

The 12-member commission of federal, state and local government officials and metropolitan planning and transportation industry experts, chaired by U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters, has the momentous task of examining the condition and needs of the nation’s surface transportation system. They are also exploring short- and long-term alternatives to replace or supplement the fuel tax as the federal Highway Trust Fund’s principal revenue source. The commission’s deadline for submitting recommendations is later this year. Log on to www.surfacecommission.gov for more information.



NDOT RECOMMENDATIONS

NDOT Director Susan Martinovich offered recommendations to speed up the federal review process, while recognizing federal agencies as vital NDOT partners:

- Evaluate federal funding processes to remove duplicate/unnecessary steps
- Develop a risk/analysis checklist to determine what type of NEPA involvement will be necessary for all projects
- Set timelines for Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) review and approvals
- Allow state departments of transportation to develop NEPA documentation, with final legal review by the FHWA

Other recommendations stressed flexibility in federal funding and review procedures.