

NCIT National Center for Intermodal Transportation

A partnership between the University of Denver and Mississippi State University

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NATIONAL CENTER FOR INTERMODAL TRANSPORTATION TESTIFIES BEFORE U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Professor Patrick Sherry Identifies Five Challenges to Improved Transportation Infrastructure -

Denver, CO, June 28, 2006 – Dr. Patrick Sherry, PhD, Co-director of the National Center for Intermodal Transportation (NCIT) and a Professor with the Intermodal Transportation Institute (ITI) at the University of Denver, addressed the U.S. House of Representatives’ Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and identified five major challenges facing the nation’s transportation system.

Sherry told the panel that Congestion, Competition, Capacity, Conservation and Connectivity are the primary challenges facing the U.S. transportation infrastructure today and identified intermodal connectivity as the solution to the nation’s transportation problems. “Without a national transportation policy with incentives to establish a seamless intermodal transportation system, which would maximize interconnectedness while optimizing the cost efficiencies of the various modes of transportation, these problems will only further stress the U.S. infrastructure in the years ahead,” he testified. Sherry cited the following problems facing the nation:

Congestion – “Population concentration and increasing consumption of goods from Asia will continue to create pressure on the nation’s transportation system,” he said. “This situation will only get worse as projections for the next 20 years suggest a 40 percent increase in population and a 103 percent increase in transportation activity. Data provided by the USDOT also predicts the numbers of containers utilized in the already overburdened area of Southern California alone to increase by 350 percent in the near future.”

Conservation – “Rising fuel costs have once again gotten the nation’s attention. Clearly, it is most advantageous to move cars and trucks off the roads to conserve fuel, and doing so will require policies and incentives to connect buses and light rail to airports for the movement of people and to move freight off the trucks and on to the more fuel efficient railroads.”

Capacity – “Intermodal freight traffic is expected to increase by about six percent a year, which means that productivity at our container terminals needs to improve drastically. Major ports like Singapore, Hong

Kong and Rotterdam are able to move well over 30 containers an hour while our best systems are only capable of handling two thirds that number. Increasing investments in new technologies will help increase productivity and operations within U.S.intermodal and port facilities and free up more capacity.”

Competition – “Our transportation infrastructure contributes greatly to our national economic competitiveness. However, developing economies from Asia and around the world are building intermodal systems and increasing the rate of their economic growth. If the U.S. is to maintain its competitive edge in the global economy, it will have to enhance the economic advantages of its transportation infrastructure.”

Connectivity – “The intermodal solution utilizes modal connectivity to decrease congestion, while increasing fuel conservation, infrastructure capacity and competition. However, our nation’s transportation department plans and funding are lagging behind our 21st century transportation requirements.”

A recent study undertaken by NCIT on state departments of transportation (DOTs) indicated that since the early 1990s, intermodalism and intermodal planning in the U.S. has improved, but may now be leveling off. The study showed that while many state DOTs are more attuned to intermodal issues, as many as 20 states still did not have an office devoted to intermodal freight planning. In addition, staff positions at state DOTs remain largely filled with cadres of highway engineers, with funding still directed to the highway mode and little planning or funding targeted for intermodal projects. Professor Sherry made nine recommendations to the House Committee to help alleviate the U.S. transportation problems:

- Increased research on alternative funding mechanisms is needed at a national level as most funding is still tied to local concerns and mindsets.
- The creation of a single source of multi-modal funding to finance transportation projects should not be tied to mode specific funds, but to an interconnected intermodal system that prioritizes funding based on nationally important projects that would decrease congestion and improve economic outcomes.
- The establishment of an Undersecretary for Intermodal Policy within the federal DOT who will focus on intermodal connectivity and planning central to a strategic national transportation plan.
- A reformation of the federal role that would position USDOT as more user-focused and service-oriented as opposed to being modally focused.
- The creation of improved incentives for collaboration and coordination of planning at the local, regional and state levels.
- The encouragement of public-private partnerships that maximize financial resources and collaboration between planers.
- Research into operational and managerial improvements in transportation with increased funding for the development of best practices or demonstration projects.

- The encouragement of intermodal solutions as a means of improving safety, with an emphasis on improving educational and technological efforts to reduce the risk of accidents.
- The development of conceptual and analytical training programs within the nation's transportation workforce to implement intermodal solutions rather than singular modal solutions. A model program is the master's degree in intermodal transportation management offered by the University of Denver.

“Finding solutions to our nation's growing transportation and security problems will test our ingenuity and creativity,” concluded Sherry. “But addressing the issues I have outlined is the best hope for the future of transportation in this country. The solution will come from the adoption of a truly intermodal transportation system that provides a seamless connection between two or more modes, while ensuring safe, secure, sustainable and cost effective transport for people and goods. The lack of choice, mandated by modal segregation, enhances congestion, decreases productivity, increases resource consumption and exacerbates pollution and is not an option.”

About NCIT

The National Center for Intermodal Transportation (NCIT) is a partnership between the University of Denver and Mississippi State University. NCIT builds upon the activities of the Intermodal Transportation Institute (ITI) at the University of Denver and the activities of the centers with transportation focuses at Mississippi State University. NCIT is a part of the USDOT University Transportation Centers Program and was reauthorized under SAFETEA-LU.

About Dr. Sherry

Dr. Patrick Sherry is a professor with a specialization in intermodal transportation and occupational psychology at the University of Denver. Since 2003 he has served as the Director of the National Center for Intermodal Transportation and a member of the Board of Directors of the Intermodal Transportation Institute at the University of Denver. Dr. Sherry was instrumental in obtaining over \$4.4 million dollars in funding for transportation related research. In addition to scientific research, he has consulted extensively with Fortune 500 transportation companies throughout the US and Canada in the areas of transportation safety, workforce development, and leadership training. He can be reached via email at: psherry@du.edu or by phone at: 303-871-2495.

- * PDF of complete testimony attached
- * Photo attached

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