

STATE OF NEVADA

BLUE RIBBON TASK FORCE
TO EVALUATE
NEVADA DEPARTMENT
OF TRANSPORTATION
LONG-RANGE PROJECTS

2008 – 2015



December 5, 2006

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☒ Entire document provided.

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Executive Summary

Nevada faces many challenges in the coming years. Growth of unprecedented proportions in population, housing, economic development, and virtually every other facet of life in the state is predicted to continue into the foreseeable future. Travel demand is growing even faster than the population, and highway revenue sources have not kept up with inflation.

Consider these statistics:

- From 1990 to 2003 Nevada's population grew by 92 percent, the fastest rate of growth in the nation. During the same time period, the vehicle miles of travel on all of Nevada's streets and highways more than doubled from 9 billion to 19.46 billion, also the fastest rate of growth in the nation.
- Nevada's population is expected to grow to 2.8 million people by 2010, and vehicle travel in Nevada is expected to increase by 80 percent by 2010, to 35 billion miles of travel annually.
- Nevada's per capita highway travel has increased 6.8 percent and per capita fuel use has declined 8.3 percent since the state's fuel taxes were last raised in 1992. Ultimately, Nevada's highways are being traveled more heavily, using less fuel per capita, and at a tax rate that does not account for 14 years of inflation.
- The rate of inflation in the highway construction industry has risen nearly 44 percent in the past three years, greatly exceeding general inflation. The cost of fuel to operate vehicle and equipment has also increased sharply.

And consider the impacts of this and future growth:

- The average daily two-way traffic volumes on I-15 south of Sloan Road are forecast to nearly quadruple from 42,000 vehicles in 2003 to 156,000 by 2030.
- The average daily two-way traffic volumes on I-15 north of Blue Diamond Road are forecast to increase more than six-fold from 67,000 vehicles in 2003 to 420,000 in 2030.
- The average daily two-way traffic on I-15 from Tropicana Avenue to just south of Sahara Avenue is expected to more than double from 230,000 vehicles in 2003 to 500,000 in 2030.
- The average daily two-way traffic on I-15 at Lamb Boulevard is expected to more than quintuple from 23,000 vehicles in 2003 to 123,000 by 2030.
- A major foundation recently concluded that Las Vegas is the 10th most congested city in the United States, and that unless major steps are taken, by 2030 driving times during peak travel hours will be far worse than even present-day Los Angeles. The

same report also concluded that Reno's driving times during peak travel hours will increase 680 percent in 25 years.

- Portions of I-15 and I-515 in Las Vegas are already at level of service (LOS) F, which represents a traffic jam, during peak hours. Without improvements, by 2015 additional Las Vegas area freeways will descend to LOS F, including I-15 from Cheyenne Avenue to Craig Road; I-515 from Eastern Avenue to Russell Road; US 95 from Rainbow to the Centennial; and portions of the Bruce Woodbury Beltway.
- By 2030, with the exception of a short segment of the northeastern Beltway, all other freeways in Las Vegas will fall to LOS F. Further, the Boulder City Bypass will be needed to address truck traffic on US 93 with the 2009 completion of the Hoover Dam Bypass. In the Reno area, the LOS on I-80 and US 395 area will deteriorate significantly without improvements. Also, Pyramid Highway corridor improvements are needed to address worsening congestion and safety issues on State Route 445, which serves the growing north valleys of Sparks and Washoe County.

The Task Force unanimously supports construction of the Nevada Department of Transportation's ten "Super and Mega Projects," pavement and bridge preservation projects, two-lane highway widening projects, and intelligent transportation system projects planned for 2008-2015. This would require, at a minimum, an additional \$3.8 billion in revenue, which, if bonded, would be about \$280 million per year for 24 years. Project estimates are based on 2006 costs and do not account for inflation.

A more immediate concern, however, is the impending shortfall of funds to carry out NDOT's current program of projects. NDOT has projected that the State Highway Fund will go into deficit by July 2008 without additional revenue sources. NDOT had initially projected that a one-time reduction in funding for its pavement preservation program for FY06 would restore cash balances in the State Highway Fund. However, with highway construction costs and right-of-way acquisition prices continuing to rise, the Department has delayed another \$70 million in State-funded projects, mostly for pavement preservation, beginning in late FY2006. Similar reductions in the Department's pavement preservation program are likely in FY08 and 09. This prolonged reduction in the Department's pavement preservation program will significantly increase the backlog of highways needing pavement overlays and will have serious consequences in future costs.

In summary:

- *Increased highway funding must be addressed now.*
- *Nevada's current highway revenue structure will not meet the pressing funding needs.*
- *Solutions to Nevada's highway funding challenge will require non-traditional highway revenue sources.*
- *State highway system needs by 2015 are \$11 billion, with a projected shortfall of \$3.8 billion, without accounting for inflation.*
- *The Nevada Department of Transportation's proposed "Super and Mega Projects" are needed to address congestion and safety.*

The Blue Ribbon Task Force strongly suggests that the Governor, members of the Nevada Legislature, and the general public seriously consider *with a sense of urgency* the following recommendations for funding the shortfall, as well as the other findings and recommendations.

Unless action is taken now to substantially increase funding for and hasten construction of the State highway system, the safety, quality of life, and economy of Nevada and its residents and businesses will suffer for years to come.