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Smarter state transportation investments can provide taxpayers better ‘bang for the buck’

Innovative policies and practices demonstrate how Departments of Transportation can overcome budget crunches while enhancing service

CONTACT: Thomas Madrecki, 202-215-2258, tmadrecki@smartgrowthamerica.org
Eric Sundquist, 608-265-6155, erics@ssti.us

WASHINGTON — Faced with revenue shortfalls and shrinking budgets, state transportation officials can employ a wide range of innovative transportation reforms to improve service while making the most of limited funding, according to a new policy and practice report from Smart Growth America (SGA) and the State Smart Transportation Initiative (SSTI).

The Innovative DOT: A handbook of policy and practice surveys best practices nationally and takes stock of the ways in which state Departments of Transportation can provide taxpayers and travelers with a better return on their investments and better accessibility to destinations.

“Fundamentally, it’s about looking at all the ways to solve a problem so you can pick the one that provides the most benefits for the least cost—which is essential with budgets so tight,” says Geoffrey Anderson, President and CEO of Smart Growth America. “Transportation is not an end in and of itself — rather, it’s a path to our nation’s economic prosperity and to a better quality of life for all Americans. Adopting this mindset changes the focus from delivering projects to delivering outcomes.”

“By engaging local partners and conducting more thoughtful cost-benefit analyses early in project development, we can get more for our transportation dollars,” says Joel Rogers, Director of the State Smart Transportation Initiative. “Our research shows more than 25 reforms and initiatives that can be taken to streamline state DOT investments and which can help agencies meet their service mandates but at less cost. These are proven steps that are already being taken in states across the country; it’s a roadmap for transportation agencies on how they can adapt to and overcome the financial challenges they’re facing in the 21st century.”

The Innovative DOT is broken into eight focus areas, but a number of common themes run through the report. Increasing collaboration between state agencies and local partners, breaking down government silos, “right-sizing” transportation projects, investing in multi-modal solutions and streamlining processes are some of the primary ways state DOTs are extracting more value from limited funds.

“DOTs across the country are changing the way they do business,” says Al Biehler, former Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. “Knowing that America’s transportation network is crucial to economic growth and our everyday lives, agencies are taking new approaches to transportation that fit the unique demands of their states and that provide greater benefits at less cost. DOTs must change their strategic approaches to make smarter

investments, to wring more and better performance out of our existing system, and to critically evaluate the full range of possible future investments. We must focus on those that do the most good for the least money.”

To download a full copy of *The Innovative DOT: a handbook of policy and practice*, visit <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/the-innovative-dot/>

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Smart Growth America is the only national organization dedicated to researching, advocating for and leading coalitions to bring smart growth practices to more communities nationwide. From providing more sidewalks to ensuring more homes are built near public transportation or that productive farms remain a part of our communities, smart growth helps make sure people across the nation can live in great neighborhoods. For additional information visit www.smartgrowthamerica.org.

The State Smart Transportation Initiative, a network of 19 state DOTs, promotes transportation policies and practices that advance environmental sustainability and equitable economic development, while maintaining high standards of governmental efficiency and transparency. Housed at the University of Wisconsin, SSTI operates in three ways: as a community of practice, where participating agencies can learn together and share experiences as they implement innovative smart transportation policies; as a source of direct technical assistance to the agencies on transformative and replicable smart transportation efforts; and as a smart transportation resource to the wider transportation community, including local, state, and federal agencies. Learn more at www.ssti.us.

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