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**Studies in the News:
Environment, Growth Management and
Transportation Supplement**

Contents This Week

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

[Economics of climate change](#)
[Groups challenge new Sierra logging rules](#)
[New endangered species rules clear hurdle](#)
[US carbon offset market growing](#)
[Amphibian extinction](#)
[Conditions at wildlife refuges](#)
[Trading energy conservation for toxic mercury emissions?](#)
[Navy settles on whales and sonar](#)
[Royalties in hardrock mining](#)
[More work needed on coastal zone management](#)
[Problems estimating the oil spill](#)
[Strategy needed for CAFO operation](#)
[Climate change adaptation strategies](#)
[Climate change impact on water resources](#)
[Tropical storms getting stronger](#)
[Sierra fires have become larger](#)

TRANSPORTATION

[Hazardous airport pollutants](#)
[The case for active transportation funding](#)
[Fitness to drive and voluntary reporting](#)
[Traffic safety for teen and older drivers](#)
[Use of in-vehicle technology](#)
[Raising the age for driver's license](#)
[Local taxes help transportation programs](#)
[Performance of state highways](#)
[Evaluating the federal Highway Bridge Program](#)
[Evaluating surface transportation plans](#)
[Federal approval of transit projects needs improvement](#)
[Rails won't save America](#)
[Santa Clara Valley transit needs changes](#)

Introduction to Studies in the News

Studies in the News is a current compilation of items significant to the Legislature and Governor's Office. It is created weekly by the California State Library's [California Research Bureau](#) to supplement the public policy debate in California. To help share the latest information with state policymakers, these reading lists are now being made accessible through the California State Library's website. This week's list of current articles in various public policy areas is presented below. Prior lists can be viewed from the California State Library's Web site at www.library.ca.gov/sitn

- When available, the URL for the full text of each item is provided.
- California State Employees may contact the State Information & Reference Center (916-654-0261); csinfo@library.ca.gov) with the SITN issue number and the item number [S#].
- All other interested individuals should contact their local library - the items may be available there, or may be borrowed by your local library on your behalf.

The following studies are currently on hand:

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

CLIMATE CHANGE

Preparing for Our Common Future: Policy Choices and the Economics of Climate Change. By Peter Orszag, Congressional Budget Office. (The Office, Washington, DC) October 27, 2008. 50 p.

Full text at: <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/99xx/doc9901/10-27-PresentationWellesley.pdf>

["Requiring that firms meet an inflexible cap could substantially increase cost while providing little additional benefit. Design features can allow timing flexibility. Selling allowances would allow policymakers to capture their value, which could help to lower overall economic costs and offset costs to low-income households. Freely allocating allowances would be equivalent to selling them and distributing the revenues to producers."]

[Request #S08-49-2979]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Sierra Forest Legacy, et al. v. U.S. Forest Service, et al. U.S. District Court, Northern District of California. Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief. September 9, 2008. 19 p.

Full text at: http://www.earthjustice.org/library/legal_docs/mis-amendment-complaint.pdf

["Environmental groups accused the Bush administration in a lawsuit of changing the rules for protection of threatened wildlife to promote logging in national forests that cover nearly 10 million acres in the Sierra.... The animals and plants are considered 'indicator species' that reflect the overall health of the forest. By law, the Forest Service must study the populations of each species and set goals to maintain the creatures and their habitats before considering tree cutting and road building in 10 national forests in the Sierra. The new rules reduce the number of species to be monitored from 60 to 13 and allow the Forest Service to approve logging before studying any indicator species in the area, the suit said." San Francisco Chronicle (September 10, 2008) 1.]
[Request #S08-49-2863]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

Draft Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Modifications to Regulations Implementing Interagency Cooperation Under the Endangered Species Act. By the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service. (U.S. Department of Interior, Washington, DC) October 2008.

[The Bush administration said that the changes it wants to make to endangered species rules will have no significant environmental consequences. The draft assessment represents one of the last remaining hurdles for the regulations to become final before Jan. 20. The administration in August proposed letting federal agencies approve power plants, dams and other projects without consulting government wildlife experts in some cases. Current regulations require government biologists to be consulted in all cases -- even when a project is unlikely to harm threatened wildlife or the places they live.... Environmentalists, however, say the review -- which was completed by lawyers and political appointees rather than scientists -- failed to consider all of the environmental repercussions." San Francisco chronicle (October 28, 2008) 1.]
[Request #S08-49-2974]

Draft Assessment. 26 p.

http://www.doi.gov/issues/new%20final%20Comments_on_NEPA_draft_EA_final_version_10-27-08.pdf

Press release. 1 p.

http://www.doi.gov/news/08_News_Releases/102708a.html

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

GREEN HOUSE GASES

Carbon Offsets: The U.S. Voluntary Market Is Growing, but Quality Assurance Poses Challenges for Market Participants. By the U.S. Government Accountability Office. GAO-08-1048. (The Office, Washington, DC) August 2008. 65 p.

Full text at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d081048.pdf>

["The scope of the U.S. voluntary carbon offset market is uncertain because of limited data, but available information indicates that the supply of offsets generated from projects based in the United States is growing rapidly. Data obtained from a firm that analyzes the carbon market show that the supply of offsets increased from about 6.2 million tons in 2004 to about 10.2 million tons in 2007. Over 600 organizations develop, market, or sell offsets in the United States, and the market involves a wide range of participants, prices, transaction types, and projects. The federal government plays a small role in the voluntary market by providing limited consumer protection and technical assistance, and no single regulatory body has oversight responsibilities."]

[Request #S08-49-2920]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

HABITAT PROTECTION

"Are We in the Midst of the Sixth Mass Extinction? A View from the World of Amphibians." By David B. Wake and Vance T. Vredenburg. IN: Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, doi:10.1073. (August 11, 2008) 8 p.

Full text at: <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2008/08/08/0801921105.full.pdf+html>

["Researchers find that frogs and other amphibians worldwide need help because they are dying at alarming rates. Some frog populations are at 2 to 5 percent of their former size, which they argue is a warning sign of a larger global issue. Wake said the die-off can be pinned to three factors -- habitat destruction; a naturally occurring fungus, which researchers say is not unique to dead frogs they found in the Sierra; and introduced species, which present an imbalance in amphibious habitats. 'The 'fourth punch,' Wake said, is climate change, which is showing dramatic effects on water-dwelling species worldwide. 'There is no place in California where frogs are still thriving,' Fewer frogs eating insects is just one example of how a major blow to global ecology could cause a shift in the food chain." San Jose Mercury News (August 13, 2008) 1.]

[Request #S08-49-2789]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

Wildlife Refuges: Changes in Funding, Staffing, and Other Factors Create Concerns about Future Sustainability. By the U.S. Government Accountability Office. GAO-08-797. (The Office, Washington, DC) September 2008. 131 p.

Full text at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08797.pdf>

["Our survey showed that the quality of habitat management and visitor service programs varied across refuges during our study period. Habitat conditions for key types of species improved about two times more often than they worsened, but between 7 percent and 20 percent of habitats were of poor quality in 2007. Certain habitat problems increased at more than half of refuges during this period, and managers reported that they increased the time spent on certain habitat management activities, such as addressing invasive plants, despite declining staffing levels. However, several managers we interviewed told us that staff were working longer hours without extra pay to get work done, and managers expressed concern about their ability to sustain habitat conditions."]

[Request #S08-49-2909]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Spatial Assessment of Net Mercury Emissions from the Use of Fluorescent Bulbs. By Matthew J. Eckelman and others. IN: Environmental Science and Technology, 10.1021/es800117h. (October 1, 2008) 7 p.

Full text at: <http://pubs.acs.org/cgi-bin/sample.cgi/esthag/asap/pdf/es800117h.pdf>

["A team of Yale scientists has found that certain countries and some U.S. states stand to benefit from the use of compact fluorescent lighting more than others in the fight against global warming. Some places may even produce more mercury emissions by switching from incandescent light bulbs to compact fluorescent lighting.... Much of South America, Africa, the Middle East and parts of Europe, along with Alaska, California, Oregon, Idaho and several New England states, would actually increase their mercury emissions by making the switch from incandescent to fluorescent lighting. The results depend on a complex relationship between a number of factors, including how dependent a region is on coal-powered energy generation, the chemical makeup of the coal used in those plants, and existing recycling programs for CFLs." Science Daily (October 3, 2008) 1.]

[Request #S08-49-2984]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

MARINE MAMMALS

Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc., et al. v. Carlos Gutierrez, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce, et al. U.S. District Court, Northern District of California. 07-4771. Stipulated Settlement Agreement. August 12, 2008. 18 p.

Full text at: http://docs.nrdc.org/water/wat_08081201A.pdf

["The Navy agreed to restrict loud sonar blasts from anti-submarine vessels in large areas of the world's oceans to protect whales and other vulnerable creatures.... Scientists say sonar damages the hearing organs of sea mammals, disrupts their lives and has caused many whale species to strand themselves on shores....The Navy can use low-frequency sonar only in certain areas near the Philippines and Japan, with seasonal restrictions, and in another region 50 miles north and south of Hawaii, far removed from two Hawaiian sanctuaries for marine life.... The settlement allows the Navy to use sonar in a restricted area when necessary to track submarines during actual operations. That exception does not apply during training." San Francisco Chronicle (August 13, 2008) 1.]
[Request #S08-49-2788]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

MINING

Hardrock Mining: Information on State Royalties and Trends in Mineral Imports and Exports. By the Government Accountability Office. GAO-08-849R. (The Office, Washington, DC) July 2008. 3 p.

Full text at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08849r.pdf>

["Western states have statutes governing hardrock mining operations on lands in their state. However, unlike the federal government, these states charge royalties that allow them to share in the proceeds from hardrock minerals extracted from state-owned lands. In addition, most of these states charge taxes, such as severance taxes, mine license taxes, or resource excise taxes, on hardrock mining operations that occur on private, state, and federal lands.... Although states may use similar names for functional royalties they assess, there can be wide variations in their forms and rates."]
[Request #S08-49-2806]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

OCEAN RESOURCES

Coastal Zone Management: Measuring Program's Effectiveness Continues to Be a Challenge. By the U.S. Government Accountability Office. GAO-08-0145. (The Office, Washington, DC) September 2008. 59 p.

Full text at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d081045.pdf>

["NOAA awards coastal program grants to states generally according to the requirements of the CZMA [Coastal Zone Management Act] and congressional direction provided through the annual appropriations process.... NOAA's periodic evaluations of states' coastal management programs and its performance measurement system have weaknesses that limit the agency's ability to determine the effectiveness of the National Coastal Zone Management Program. NOAA's evaluations of state programs are of limited value because they do not provide the agency with independent information to assess program performance against performance goals."]

[Request #S08-49-2922]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

OIL SPILLS

Office of Spill Prevention and Response: It Has Met Many of Its Oversight and Response Duties, but Interaction With Local Government, the Media, and Volunteers Needs Improvement. By the California Bureau of State Audits. (The Bureau, Sacramento, California) August 2008. 73 p.

Full text at: <http://www.bsa.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2008-102.pdf>

["The spill office has met many of its oversight responsibilities; however, the California Oil Spill Contingency Plan is outdated and missing required elements. Only six of 22 local government contingency plans were revised after 2003 and local participation in joint planning efforts has been low. The spill office, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, and private entities responding to the November 2007 Cosco Busan oil spill met their fundamental responsibilities. The spill office's shortage of trained liaison officers and experienced public information officers led to communication problems during the Cosco Busan oil spill. The spill office's lack of urgency in calculating the spill volume from the Cosco Busan may have delayed the mobilization of additional resources."]

[Request #S08-49-2827]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

WATER POLLUTION

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations: EPA Needs More Information and a Clearly Defined Strategy to Protect Air and Water Quality from Pollutants of Concern. By the U.S. Government Accountability Office. GAO-08-944. (The Office, Washington, DC) September 2008. 85 p.

Full text at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08944.pdf>

["This report discusses, 1) trends in CAFOs over the past 30 years, 2) amounts of waste they generate, 3) findings of key research on CAFOs' health and environmental impacts, 4) EPA's progress in developing CAFO air emissions protocols, and 5) effect of recent court decisions on EPA's regulation of CAFO water pollutants.... To more effectively regulate CAFOs, GAO recommends that EPA complete its inventory of permitted CAFOs, reassess the current nationwide air emissions monitoring study, and establish a strategy and timetable for developing a process-based model for measuring CAFO air emissions. EPA partially agreed with GAO's recommendations."]

[Request #S08-49-2908]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

WATER RESOURCES

Managing An Uncertain Future: Climate Change Adaptation Strategies for California's Water. By the California Department of Water Resources. (The Department, Sacramento, California) October 2008. 34 p.

Full text at:

<http://www.water.ca.gov/climatechange/docs/ClimateChangeWhitePaper.pdf>

["Climate change is already affecting California's water resources. Bold steps must be taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, even if emissions ended today, the accumulation of existing greenhouse gases will continue to impact climate for years to come. Warmer temperatures, altered patterns of precipitation and runoff, and rising sea levels are increasingly compromising the ability to effectively manage water supplies, floods and other natural resources. Adapting California's water management systems in response to climate change presents one of the most significant challenges of this century.... While the exact conditions of future climate change remain uncertain, there is no doubt about the changes that have already happened."]

[Request #S08-49-2986]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

National Water Program Strategy: Response to Climate Change. By the Office of Water, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (The Office, Washington, DC) September 2008. 114 p.

Full text at:

http://www.epa.gov/water/climatechange/docs/TO5_DRAFT_CCR_Revised_10-16.pdf

["A long-term, international investment in scientific study of the Earth's climate is now resulting in a scientific consensus concerning climate change and its impacts on water resources. This report provides an overview of the potential effects of climate change on water resources and the Nation's clean water and safe drinking water programs. It also describes specific actions the National Water Program will take to adapt program implementation in light of climate change.... Climate change will have numerous and diverse impacts, including impacts on human health, natural systems, and the built environment. Many of the consequences of climate change relate to water resources, including: 1) warming air and water; 2) change in the location and amount of rain and snow; 3) increased storm intensity; 4) sea level rise; and 5) changes in ocean characteristics"]

[Request #S08-49-2985]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

WEATHER

"The Increasing Intensity of the Strongest Tropical Cyclones." By James B. Elsner and others. IN: Nature, vol. 445, no. 7209 (September 4, 2008) pp. 92-95.

Full text at: <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v455/n7209/abs/nature07234.html>

["As the world's oceans get warmer, the strongest tropical storms get stronger. 'If the seas continue to warm, we can expect to see stronger storms in the future,' Elsner said. 'As far as this year goes, as a season, we did see the oceans warm and I think there's some reason to believe that that's the reason we're seeing the amount of activity we are.'... The heat engine theory suggests all storms should strengthen as the ocean's surface gets hotter, but in reality, few tropical cyclones achieve their full maximum potential intensity. A cyclone's intensity can be cut by other factors, such as where they form, how close they are to land, El Nino patterns and solar activity." Reuters (September 4, 2008) 1.]

[Request #S08-49-2849]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

WILDFIRES

"Quantitative Evidence for Increasing Forest Fire Severity in the Sierra Nevada and Southern Cascade Mountains, California and Nevada, USA." By J.D. Miller and others. IN: Ecosystems, 10.1007/s10021-008-9201-9. (October 2008) Various pagings

Full text at:

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/31p8137172h14274/?p=f920d42975b94ab584e91f3211752612&pi=9>

["Forest fires in the Sierra Nevada have grown larger, more frequent and more damaging in the last two decades, according to a study that suggests much of the blame rests with the government's century-long war on wildfire.... 'This just blind effort to continue to put everything out is probably backfiring on us,' said Hugh Safford, a U.S. Forest Service ecologist and one of the study's authors. 'We've created our own nightmare.' Blazes in mid- and low-elevation forests have grown more severe in large part because there is more to burn. A jump in average annual precipitation across the range since 1908 has promoted forest growth, while a rise in temperature is diminishing the mountain snowpack and lengthening the fire season." Los Angeles Times (October 29, 2008) 1.]
[Request #S08-49-2982]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

TRANSPORTATION

AIRPORTS

Aircraft and Airport-Related Hazardous Air Pollutants: Research Needs and Analysis. By Ezra Wood, Aerodyne Research, Inc., and others. (Transportation Research Board, Washington, DC) July 2008. 65 p.

Full text at: http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/acrp/acrp_rpt_007.pdf

["This report provides guidance on the most important projects to the airport community in the area of hazardous air pollutants (HAPs). It examines the state of the latest research on aviation-related HAP emissions and identifies knowledge gaps that existing research has not yet bridged. These gaps and related research needs are then prioritized based on the ability of research in those areas to provide airports a better understanding of the relationship of the type and amount of HAPs being emitted and their impacts."]
[Request #S08-49-2792]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

BICYCLING AND PEDESTRIANS

Active Transportation for America: The Case for Increased Federal Investment in Bicycling and Walking. By the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. (The Conservancy, Washington, DC) October 2008. 48 p.

Full text at:

http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/whatwedo/atfa/ATFA_20081020.pdf

["In this era of traffic congestion, high gas prices, climate change, an obesity epidemic, and fiscal constraints, federal transportation funding has reached a critical crossroads. Decades of car-centered transportation policies have dead-ended in chronic congestion, crippling gas bills, and a highly inefficient transportation system that offers only one answer to most of our mobility needs -- the car. Investment now in a more diverse transportation system -- one that provides viable choices to walk and bike, and use public transportation in addition to driving --will lead to a far more efficient use of transportation resources. Active transportation is the missing piece in our transportation system. Half of the trips in America can be completed within a 20-minute bike ride, and a quarter of trips are within a 20-minute walk."]

[Request #S08-49-2977]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

DRIVERS

Medical Fitness to Drive and a Voluntary Reporting Law. By Thomas M. Meuser, University of Missouri, St. Louis, and others. (AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, Washington, DC) October 2008. 160 p.

Full text at: <http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/MedicalFitnessToDriveReport.pdf>

["The report explores the functional impact and efficacy of Missouri's Voluntary Reporting Law (HB-1536) for drivers considered as potentially unfit due to real or suspected medical-functional deficit or compromise. Passed in 1998, HB-1536 provides a voluntary, legal process whereby concerned family members, police officers, physicians, license office staff, and others can report a driver for re-evaluation and possible license revocation." TRB Newsletter (October 28, 2008) 1.]

[Request #S08-49-2976]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

Generational Perspective on Teen and Older Drivers on Traffic Safety in Rural and Urban Communities. By Michael Manser, University of Minnesota, and others (Minnesota Department of Transportation, St. Paul, Minnesota) September 2008. 94 p.

Full text at:

<http://www.its.umn.edu/Publications/ResearchReports/reportdetail.html?id=1664>

[“Data indicate that traffic safety is a major public health issue within the United States, especially for rural areas. The treatment of this public health issue must focus on the driver, given that most crashes are the result of driver impairment or high-risk driving behavior.... The purpose of this project was to further explore the nature of beliefs and attitudes about risky driving behavior and traffic safety interventions between urban and rural drivers as a function of age cohort.... Results suggest crash risk and associated risk factors are different for young and senior driver cohorts and areas of residency which further suggest that traffic safety policy for teen drivers should focus on distraction amongst teens (especially in urban areas) and sensory-motor functioning amongst senior drivers.”]

[Request #S08-49-2903]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

Use of Advanced In-Vehicle Technology by Younger and Older Early Adopters. By AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. (The Foundation, Washington, DC) September 2008. 72 p.

Full text at: <http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/In-VehicleTechnologyReport.pdf>

[“The five mail-out surveys described here were designed to assess drivers’ experiences with backing aids (proximity sensing systems, rear-view video cameras, adaptive cruise control, advanced high-intensity discharge headlamps), and built-in vehicle navigation systems (they do not address portable navigation units that are sold as aftermarket devices). All of these technologies are still relatively new to the U.S. passenger vehicle fleet and the purpose of the study was to learn about early adopters’ experience using these systems.... The overarching goal of the study was to learn more about the extent to which in-vehicle technologies enhance or detract from safety, particularly with respect to the capabilities and limitations of older drivers.”]

[Request #S08-49-2904]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

DRIVERS' LICENSES

Effects of Age and Experience on Young Driver Crashes: Review of Recent Literature. By Anne T. McCartt, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, and others. **AND: Licensing Age and Teenage Driver Crashes: A Review of the Evidence.** By Allan F. Williams, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. (The Institute, Arlington, Virginia) September 2008.

["Taking aim at a longstanding rite of passage for 16-year-olds, an influential auto safety group is calling on states to raise the age for getting a driver's license to 17 or even 18. Adrian Lund, president of a research group funded by the auto insurance industry, acknowledged the idea is 'a tough sell,' but noted that car crashes are the leading cause of death among teenagers. 'The bottom line is that when we look at the research, raising the driving age saves lives,' Lund said.... Among other things, institute researchers have compiled decades worth of data from New Jersey, the only state that issues licenses at 17. Various studies have shown that the overall rate of teens killed in crashes in New Jersey has been consistently lower than in some nearby states." Associated Press (September 9, 2008) 1][Request #S08-49-2860]

Effects of Age and Experience. 35 p.

<http://www.iihs.org/research/topics/pdf/r1037.pdf>

Licensing Age. 18 p.

<http://www.iihs.org/research/topics/pdf/r1092.pdf>

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

FINANCING

The Self-Help Program: A Better Way to Deliver Local Transportation Projects. By William G. Hamm and Heather Schmidt, LECG, Llc. (American Council of Engineering Companies, Sacramento, California) September 9, 2008. 55 p.

Full text at: <http://www.acec-ca.org/userdocuments/File/LECG-SHC-HammRpt-9-9-08-final.pdf>

["The success of transportation improvement programs requires more than money. Success also depends on having effective project delivery systems -- the methods used to fund, design and construct specific projects.... The 'self-help' county program is a local voter-approved special sales tax that raises money for county transportation programs. Current California law authorizes the state's 58 counties to enact such programs.... All participants in our survey agree that having the flexibility to use private engineering and management consultants has resulted in more transportation projects being delivered on time and within budget. If other public agencies had as much flexibility with project delivery as the self-help counties, that would enable them to realize more of these benefits as well."]

[Request #S08-49-2884]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

HIGHWAYS

**17th Annual Report on the Performance of State Highway Systems (1984–2006).
By David T. Hartgen, Reason Foundation, and Ravi K. Karanam, Qualcomm
Incorporated. (The Foundation, Los Angeles, California) August, 2008, 66p.**

Full text at: <http://www.reason.org/ps369.pdf>

["Despite welcome progress, the study highlights continuing problems. Just under one-quarter of all bridges remain deficient; 50 percent of urban interstates remain congested; accident rates are stubbornly high; and substantial urban interstate mileage remains in poor condition. The recent sharp increases in highway construction costs mean that fewer repairs can be made from the same dollars. This study also found wide variations among the states in road performance. Just six states (Alaska, Michigan, New York, California, New Hampshire, and Louisiana) have over half the poor rural interstate mileage in the country. And three states (California, Minnesota, and North Carolina) have more than 70 percent of their urban interstates congested."]

[Request #S08-49-2801]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

INFRASTRUCTURE

**Highway Bridge Program: Clearer Goals and Performance Measures Needed
for a More Focused and Sustainable Program. By the U.S. Government
Accountability Office. GAO-08-1043. (The Office, Washington, DC) September
2008. 58 p.**

Full text at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d081043.pdf>

["Based on information gathered during bridge inspections that are generally conducted every 2 years, the Highway Bridge Program classifies bridge conditions as deficient or not; assigns each bridge a sufficiency rating reflecting its structural adequacy, safety, serviceability, and relative importance; and uses that information to distribute funding to states to improve bridges.... The report examines how the HBP addresses bridge conditions, how states use HBP funds and select bridge projects for funding, and what data indicate about bridge conditions and the HBP's impact."]

[Request #S08-49-2896]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Programs: Proposals Highlight Key Issues and Challenges in Restructuring the Programs. By the U.S. Government Accountability Office. GAO-08-843R. (The Office, Washington, DC) July 29, 2008. 23 p.

Full text at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08843r.pdf>

["Congress established two commissions to address the challenges facing the federal surface transportation program -- the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission and the National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission.... This report (1) identifies key themes emphasized in proposals by stakeholders, including associations and research organizations, for restructuring and funding surface transportation programs and (2) discusses the extent to which the Policy Commission's recommendations align with principles we have developed for evaluating proposals to restructure and fund surface transportation programs."]

[Request #S08-49-2771]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

TRANSIT

Public Transportation: Improvements Are Needed to More Fully Assess Predicted Impacts of New Starts Projects. By the U.S. Government Accountability Office. GAO-08-844. (The Office, Washington, DC) July 2008. 67 p.

Full text at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08844.pdf>

["FTA primarily uses cost-effectiveness and land use criteria to evaluate New Starts projects, but concerns have been raised about the extent to which the measures for these criteria capture total project benefits. FTA's current transportation system user benefits measure, which assesses a project's cost effectiveness, focuses on how proposed projects will improve mobility by reducing the real and perceived cost of travel. Experts that GAO consulted with raised concerns that certain benefits are not captured. As a result, FTA may be underestimating transit projects' total benefits, but it is unclear the extent to which this impacts FTA's evaluation and rating process."]

[Request #S08-49-2809]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

Rails Won't Save America. By Randal O'Toole, Cato Institute. (The Institute, Washington, DC) October 7, 2008. 16 p.

Full text at: <http://www.cato.org/pubs/bp/bp107.pdf>

["Rising gas prices and concerns about greenhouse gases have stimulated calls to build more rail transit lines in urban areas, increase subsidies to Amtrak, and construct a large-scale intercity high-speed rail system.... Contrary to popular belief, rail transit does not save energy. Many light-rail operations use more energy per passenger mile than the average sport utility vehicle, and almost none uses less than a fuel-efficient car. People who respond to high fuel prices by taking transit are not saving energy; they are merely imposing their energy costs on someone else.... People who want to save energy should plan to buy more fuel-efficient cars and encourage cities to invest in traffic signal coordination, which can save far more energy at a tiny fraction of the cost of building new rail transport lines."]

[Request #S08-49-2958]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority: It Has Made Several Improvements in Recent Years, but Changes Are Still Needed. By the California Bureau of State Audits. (The Bureau, Sacramento, California) July 2008. 83 p.

Full text at: <http://www.bsa.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2007-129.pdf>

["Capital budgeting could be improved by including clearer information about the timing of expected project costs. Such an understanding could help the organization manage debt, investments, and cash flows more effectively. Although VTA specifies the assumptions behind its operating forecasts in its short-range transit plans, it does not do so for its capital program forecasts. VTA is working to improve its long-term planning by establishing two debt reduction funds and updating its forecasting tools. While VTA meets most best practices for project planning, it has not always identified funding for future operating costs or estimated the potential project revenues for some capital projects."]

[Request #S08-49-2795]

[\[Back to Top\]](#)