



**Monday, October 8, 2007**

**Exclusive articles on state policy, politics and trends from the staff of Stateline.org**

Tuesday, October 2, 2007

## **Missouri puts bridges on fast track**

**By Eric Kelderman, Stateline.org Staff Writer**

In Minnesota, where a major bridge collapsed in August, the governor and legislators are locked in a battle over how to finance the state's backlog of transportation repairs. But Missouri is moving forward with a novel plan to fix or replace more than 800 of the state's bridges within five years.

Missouri's plan has a team of contractors financing the \$400 million to \$600 million in repairs and maintaining the bridges for another quarter century. In turn, the Show-Me State will use a portion of its federal bridge funds to pay back the companies over 25 years.

Already in the works before the Minnesota tragedy, the Missouri plan is now being touted as a model for the rest of the nation.

"With this innovative new approach to transportation, we will do in five years what would have taken us 20 years before," said Missouri state Rep. Neal St. Onge. (R). "We are getting maximum value for taxpayers and keeping the public safe as well."

In addition to getting a lot of bridges fixed in a short time, Missouri's approach has a short-term political benefit. Lawmakers don't have to sell the public on the need for higher gasoline taxes or new tolls — proposals that have stopped transportation funding packages in other places, including Minnesota and Pennsylvania.

Missouri's plan also appealed to contractors who could recoup as much as twice their construction costs as the state repays the companies over the 25 years. The state essentially will pay back a loan for the building costs, profit and interest that the winning bidder has included in the proposal, said Jeff Briggs, a spokesman for the Missouri Department of Transportation.

The nation's bridges have been under intense scrutiny since a 458-foot span over the Mississippi River collapsed in downtown Minneapolis on Aug. 1, killing more than a dozen motorists and sending politicians into frenzy. The 40-year-old bridge was just one of more than 73,000 across the country in need of significant structural repair, according to the Federal Highway Administration.

The nation's governors immediately ordered inspections of their states' bridges and decried the lack of money to fix the nation's crumbling infrastructure. Congress also reacted quickly, approving \$250 million in emergency funds to help replace the Minnesota bridge, one of the state's most heavily traveled.

Missouri has accepted bids from two teams of construction firms, which will pay to repair or replace nearly 80 percent of bridges in the state that are in poor condition. The private firms also will be required to keep those bridges in good shape for 25 years after the repairs.

But the plan has its limitations. Besides the large payout, the program is targeting only smaller, rural bridges — from 100 feet to 300 feet long. None of Missouri's 11 steel-deck truss bridges, which resemble the Minneapolis span, is slated to be repaired under the plan, said Briggs of the Missouri Department of Transportation.

In addition, few companies could commit to completing such a statewide project. Two of the four original teams to bid on Missouri's plan dropped out because they could not meet the program's requirements.

Despite those issues, there was little opposition to the plan in a late summer special legislative session, where lawmakers passed a bill to change Missouri's bonding requirements to make way for the bridge projects.

But in Minnesota, a recent special legislative session ended without a hoped-for package of road and bridge funding. While federal funds are expected to cover the cost of replacing the Minneapolis bridge, the state will have to pay for the costs upfront in order to be reimbursed. Without an infusion of new money, some worry the state may have to sideline other projects to begin rebuilding the Minneapolis bridge.

Democrats charge that Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty has backed away from earlier promises to consider gas tax increases to pay for bridge and road repairs. Pawlenty accused legislative leaders of loading up their proposal with too many extra fees and has insisted that a gas tax hike be offset by a corresponding cut in income taxes.

Earlier this year, Pawlenty vetoed a \$5 billion transportation package that would have been financed in part with a hike in the state's 22-cent gas tax, last raised in 1988.

Proposals to pay for bridge and road repairs with tolling is not faring much better in Pennsylvania, where Democratic Gov. Ed Rendell's plan to add tolls to a section of Interstate 80 has hit a buzz saw of opposition within the state and on Capitol Hill.

Rendell and the Pennsylvania General Assembly agreed to the tolling plan as a way to collect \$950 million a year for transportation projects. The state has more than 9,500 bridges that need significant repairs or are inadequate for the amount of traffic they carry — the highest number in the nation, according to federal data.

But a slew of civic groups fear the tolling will discourage tourism and trucking along the I-80 corridor and are asking state and federal lawmakers to reconsider their plans. The General Assembly has adjourned until next year, but two Pennsylvania congressmen already have attached language to a transportation funding bill to prohibit tolls on that stretch of interstate.

Rendell has said that if the current toll proposal falls through, he will revert to a plan to lease the Pennsylvania Turnpike to a private company.

Related stories:

[Bridge collapse points to national problem](#)

registering with [Stateline.org](http://Stateline.org), or e-mail your feedback to our Letters to the editor section at [letters@stateline.org](mailto:letters@stateline.org).

Comment on this story in the space below by

Contact Eric Kelderman at: [ekelderman@stateline.org](mailto:ekelderman@stateline.org)

Wednesday, October 3, 2007

## Colleges go on offense against binge drinking

By Pauline Vu, [Stateline.org](http://Stateline.org) Staff Writer

Image courtesy of Outside The Classroom, Inc.

More than 200 universities require incoming freshmen to take AlcoholEdu, an online course that informs students about drinking's impact on the mind and body, before enrolling in school. To many college students,

binge drinking and everything that goes with it – beer pong, keg stands and \$1 shots – are a rite of passage, as integral a part of the college experience as midterms and all-nighters.

But to college administrators, drinking too much is a hazard to students' health and safety. As a result, officials are addressing excessive drinking with tactics such as moving classes to Friday to prevent "Thirsty Thursdays," convincing nearby communities to limit drink specials like ladies' night, and requiring incoming students to take online classes about alcohol use.

"The academic and social consequences are just very high, to say nothing of the value of human life," said University of Mississippi spokesman Mitchell Diggs, who listed a litany of potential ailments that go along with binge drinking: crime, falling grades and death.

Alcohol abuse by college students is a rampant problem. A March study by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University reported that 3.8 million full-time college students, or 49 percent, regularly abuse drugs or binge drink, which is defined as five or more drinks at a time for men, and four or more drinks for women.

Even the federal government is worried. In March, the U.S. surgeon general issued the office's first call to action to stem underage drinking, with recommendations for parents, schools, colleges, communities, governments and even the alcohol industry on how to stop the abuse. The surgeon general asked colleges to end alcohol advertising in campus newspapers, provide more alcohol-free late-night events, and shift more classes to Friday to "shorten the elongated weekend" that has students binge drinking by Thursday night.

The University of Iowa — ranked 12th on the Princeton Review's list of top party schools — is answering that particular call. Starting in the fall of 2008, the school will move more classes to Friday.

The move was discussed for years, but the decision was cemented with the July release of a University of Missouri study that found students with Friday morning classes are less likely to over-imbibe on Thursday. This spring, the University of Iowa averaged 2,438 classes daily Monday through Thursday but had only 1,404 classes on Friday.

Associate Provost Tom Rocklin said more Friday classes are just one strategy in the fight against binge drinking. "There is no single thing that will make a dramatic change," he said. Friday classes aren't "going to make binge drinking go away. But it's one thing that will help the problem, so it's worth doing."

Another tactic to cut extreme intoxication looks at advertising. Two years ago, the California State University (CSU) system put tighter controls on alcohol advertising, such as banning promotion on campus of two-for-one drink specials. This summer CSU-Fullerton hired a student to take down unauthorized campus fliers that advertise drink specials.

Several colleges also sponsor alcohol-free events, such as Late Knights at the University of Central Florida, Wildcat WILD Nights at the University of Kentucky, and Friday Night Live events at the University of Cincinnati.

But if incentives don't work, there is always punishment. In recent years, more schools have instituted a two- or three-strikes policy to punish students for public drunkenness or possession of alcohol by a minor. The final strike can result in a semester's suspension. The University of Mississippi began a two-strikes policy in November, with five suspensions so far.

"Ole Miss," currently No. 2 on Princeton Review's party-school list, had long discussed curbing alcohol abuse. But the school began its crackdown in earnest when a campus officer, Robert Langley, died in October after pulling over a car driven by a student with alcohol, cocaine and marijuana in his system; the student took off, dragging Langley to his death.

Mississippi also joined more than 200 colleges in requiring that incoming students take a three-hour online AlcoholEdu course, which surveys students on their drinking habits and explains alcohol's impact on the mind and body. At Ole Miss, athletes and fraternity and sorority members also have to take the course.

But experts say universities' attempts to cut binge drinking also must involve local communities. The American Medical Association (AMA) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which provides grants to improve health and health care, are nearly finished with a decade-long experiment at 10 universities to cut student drinking by encouraging partnerships with their communities.

"When we first went in, communities were angry with universities, as if universities had landed from outer space and brought all these drinking students with them," said Richard Yoast, the director of the project. Colleges and communities "realized they needed to work together. The finger-pointing really stopped."

Cities have taken steps such as requiring more training for bartenders, tightening penalties for bars caught serving minors, restricting liquor licenses and banning cheap drink specials, Yoast said.

The University of Wisconsin, one of the schools in the project, split costs with the city of Madison, Wis., to hire an alcohol policy coordinator. Last month, the Madison City Council approved the plan by former "bar czar" Joel Plant to limit the number of new bars allowed in downtown Madison, where there are already about 120 bars packed in less than one square mile.

In March 2006, Louisiana State University worked with the East Baton Rouge Metro Council to ban "all-you-can-drink" specials and deeply discounted drinks after 10 p.m.

This year, Utah became the 28th state to enact a law prohibiting happy hours or drink specials like unlimited drinks. Enforcement of these laws varies from state to state, however, and bars can get around regulations by offering, for example, an all-day drink special that's not specifically banned, instead of a happy hour.

The AMA also partnered with the Center for Science in the Public Interest to ask universities to ban print and broadcast ads for alcohol when promoting sporting events. Since the campaign began three years ago, 248 schools and two conferences, the Big South and the Ivy League, have signed on, including athletic powerhouses like the University of Florida and Ohio State. Last month, the Big 10 conference launched its own sports channel, BTN, which will not accept any alcohol advertising.

Although most of the action has been taken by college officials, states also have gotten tough on underage drinkers this year. South Carolina enacted a law that could take state-funded scholarships away from offenders. Iowa and Nebraska have new statewide keg registration requirements to check the identification of keg buyers, and Oregon, Utah, and West Virginia enacted or tightened laws to suspend the driver's licenses of the underaged for alcohol-related offenses.

Comment on this story in the space below by registering with Stateline.org, or e-mail your feedback to our Letters to the editor section at [letters@stateline.org](mailto:letters@stateline.org).  
Contact Pauline Vu at [pvu@stateline.org](mailto:pvu@stateline.org).

See related story:  
[Underage drinking laws take aim at parents](#)

Thursday, October 4, 2007

## Graphic anti-meth ads catching on

By John Gramlich, Stateline.org Staff Writer

Stateline.org

### The Meth Project

The Meth Project, a private advocacy organization, has developed a series of TV commercials to discourage the use of methamphetamine among young people. One of the commercials appears below. Visit the organization's Web site to see more.

Quicktime is needed to view all videos.

When Comedy Central fans in A Show with Jon Stewart," they may be greeted instead by images of a teenager being savagely beaten in an empty parking lot at night, his assailants kicking him until one of them raises a cinder block above his head and brings it down upon the helpless victim.

MTV fans in Illinois can turn on the network in search of music videos but may instead see a clip in which a hooded young man rushes into a neighborhood Laundromat, brutally assaults a middle-aged customer and robs him while a family — baby in tow — watches in horror.

In Idaho, plans are in the works for a number of TV channels to show, during primetime hours, images of a teenage girl stepping into the shower only to discover her own hollow-faced, scab-covered likeness covering on the floor of the bathtub.

All three states are replicating a highly touted advertising campaign that began in Montana and centers on a series of shocking and graphic TV commercials intended to grab the attention of viewers — especially young people — and warn them about the dangers of methamphetamine, a highly addictive drug that has been identified by law enforcement officials as a leading cause of crime nationwide.

The states have jumped at the chance to debut the ads at home, largely because of what many consider a success story in Montana. The state last month announced a nearly 50-percent drop in reported meth usage among high school students since the Montana Meth Project, a private advocacy organization founded by billionaire businessman and philanthropist Tom Siebel, introduced the ads two years ago.

According to a report by the Montana Office of Public Instruction, 4.6 percent of the state's high schoolers now say they have tried meth, compared with 8.3 percent in 2005. State leaders have directly connected that decline with the ad campaign, despite the already decreasing use of meth in state high schools between 1999 and 2005, as documented by the Office of Public Instruction in the same report.

“If it'll work in Montana, it'll work anywhere,” U.S. Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) said at a news conference Sept. 18 in Washington, where the state's congressional delegation joined Siebel and Julie Gerberding, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to announce the state's meth decline and tout the ads.

At least seven other states — Alaska, California, Iowa, Indiana, Oregon, Kentucky and Washington — also could start airing the ads as part of an anti-meth initiative announced last month by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. Utah, meanwhile, decided against the shock campaign in favor of its own public awareness drive against meth, unveiled by Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. (R) on Sept. 24 and aimed specifically at women ages 12 to 45, whose use of meth has increased in that state.

Funding for the anti-meth ads varies from state to state, but comes from private backers as well as state and federal grants.

The ads now being aired in Arizona and Illinois and soon to air in Idaho are the same as those created in 2005 by Siebel's Montana Meth Project. The organization, which has since grown into a national group simply called The Meth Project, covered the cost of developing and producing the ads and provides them to states for free, though states must pay for air time, said Executive Director Nitsa Zuppas.

Image courtesy of The Meth Project

The Meth Project created print ads to accompany TV commercials warning viewers about the dangers of meth. [Click here to see all 11 print ads.](#) The campaign consists of 12 separate TV commercials — often aired during primetime on channels popular with young people — accompanied by billboards, print ads and radio spots.

The TV commercials take various approaches to warn viewers about meth's dangers. In "Jumped," one of four commercials now airing in Arizona, for example, a narrator explains that he would rather be the victim of a brutal parking-lot assault — shown during the commercial — than be involved with meth.

Other ads portray the sickly faces of supposed meth addicts, who assault and steal from others to support their habits during the 30-second TV clips. The commercials, which are only being shown at night to prevent children from seeing the graphic images, all feature a simple slogan meant to prevent young people from ever wanting to try meth — "Meth: Not Even Once."

"You've got to hit these kids between the eyes because they think they're invincible," said Greg Sullivan, executive director of the Illinois Sheriffs' Association, which helped bring the ads to the state. "You've got to show them what this drug will do to them."

Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter (R) has made the anti-meth campaign a top priority of his administration, contacting Siebel about bringing the ads to Idaho just days after taking office in January.

Otter wants the campaign to be funded entirely by private donors and has lobbied businesses around the state to contribute, according to the governor's spokesman, Jon Hanian, who was optimistic about Otter's chances of raising the estimated \$2.7 million needed to run the TV, radio, print and billboard ad campaign for one year in the state.

"It's hard to say no to Butch," Hanian said.

Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard (D) also approached Siebel and helped create the state's own Meth Project — a sister organization to the state-level group founded by Siebel. Arizona's multimedia ad campaign is expected to cost \$5.3 million and has been partially funded by the Legislature, according to Andrea Esquer, Goddard's spokeswoman.

Illinois has funded its campaign primarily through federal dollars delivered by U.S. Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.), Sullivan, of the Illinois Sheriffs' Association, said.

The ads are not without controversy. Sullivan said he has received some complaints about the graphic nature of the ads. Utah, meanwhile, decided against using the commercials because officials there wanted to target women up to 45 years old instead of teenagers, and wanted to convey a different message.

Utah's \$2 million, state-funded campaign, called End Meth Now, is intended to dispel stereotypes about meth users by focusing on women in their child-bearing years, who increasingly are turning to the drug in the state, according to Mary Lou Emerson, director of the Utah Substance Abuse and Anti-Violence Coordinating Council.

"There's a lot of pressure in Utah for women to be the perfect wife or the perfect mother, and there's something attractive about meth (to them)," Emerson said. "It may appear attractive at the beginning, but it's a very addictive substance. Part of the campaign is trying to get the accurate facts and information about meth out." Comment on this story in the space below by registering with Stateline.org, or e-mail your feedback to our Letters to the editor section at [letters@stateline.org](mailto:letters@stateline.org). Related stories:

Buyer beware of toxic meth-lab homes

Meth abuse lands more kids in state care

States fight meth plague with registries

War on meth epidemic targets cold medicines

States confront rising meth use and production

Contact John Gramlich at [jgramlich@stateline.org](mailto:jgramlich@stateline.org).

Friday, October 5, 2007

## **WORTH NOTING: Students get an eyeful**

**By Pauline Vu, Stateline.org Staff Writer**

An Ohio high school senior class got an eyeful when a state lawmaker giving a computer presentation on the legislative process accidentally flashed pictures of a topless woman. "It took me probably a second or so to look at it and say, 'That's not the Power Point,'" state Rep. Matt Barrett (D) tells The Morning Journal. He quickly closed the computer and removed the flash drive that contained the pictures. Later reports said a minor child in the lawmaker's house downloaded the pictures. Barrett called the incident "an internal family matter."

Who says chivalry is dead? Certainly not the Calhoun County GOP in Alabama. They awarded state Sen.

Charles Bishop (R) a trophy for punching fellow senator Lowell Barron (D) in the face on the Senate floor, an act caught on video. Bishop said he threw the punch after Barron called him a “son of a (expletive).” According to The Associated Press, the GOP group gave Bishop the trophy for his “defending of womankind.”

Four Democratic lawmakers in Wisconsin, the only state that hasn’t yet passed a budget this year, proposed arresting lawmakers who don’t come to budget meetings after July 1 if a state budget isn’t passed by that date in the future, according to The Capital Times (Madison). The punishment, though, isn’t jail, but something legislators might find only slightly more tolerable: forced attendance at these budget meetings that could eventually run 10 hours a day for six days a week.

A New Hampshire lawmaker is proposing to make public urination a misdemeanor — and he’s doing it for the perpetrators’ own good. One who urinates in public now can be prosecuted under a variety of state and local statutes including those prohibiting indecent exposure, which is considered a sex crime and can result in landing on the sex offender registry. State Rep. Steve Shurtleff (D), who proposed the change, said that law didn’t seem a good fit for the offense of urination, the Concord Monitor reports.

The selling of sex toys is illegal in Alabama, now that the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear a constitutional challenge to the 1998 state law banning these devices. But sex toy store owners aren’t too worried. The law includes exemptions for “bona fide medical” purposes. The Love Stuff stores now require customers to sign a receipt saying they will use the toys only for legal purposes, The Birmingham News reports. “Customers can use these products to maintain or reach a healthy sex life,” said Love Stuff attorney Amy Herring. “Really all of this is for medical use.”

Comment on this story in the space below by registering with Stateline.org, or e-mail your feedback to our Letters to the editor section at [letters@stateline.org](mailto:letters@stateline.org).

Contact Pauline Vu at [pvu@stateline.org](mailto:pvu@stateline.org).

Friday, October 5, 2007

## States turn to seniors for help in classrooms

By Christine Vestal, Stateline.org Staff Writer

Photo by Christine Vestal, Stateline.org

After a 41-year career in Maryland state government, Dorothy Johns is a volunteer teacher’s aide at Medfield Heights Elementary School in Baltimore. Students’ grades have gone up and teacher turnover has gone down since Johns and others started helping out in classrooms. BALTIMORE - Dorothy Johns, 74, volunteers as a teacher’s aide at a Baltimore elementary school and says the kids help her stay active and healthy. Elizabeth

DeSell, the teacher she helps, says she doesn't know what she would do without her. The kids say they like reading with Johns, and studies show their grades have improved. They are all beneficiaries of in an inner-city volunteer program designed to pair retired elders with schools in need of extra help.

As baby boomers reach retirement age and begin to leave the public schools' teaching ranks in droves, states are launching programs like Baltimore's to fill mounting classroom vacancies.

Maryland, California, Virginia and other states are recruiting retirees to work in public schools as volunteers and salaried employees, offering boomers what they say they want — meaningful second careers.

In Maryland, first-term Gov. Martin O'Malley (D) plans to take the successful Baltimore program statewide. California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) this summer launched a statewide program that partners with high-tech companies to recruit, train and place retiring employees in the state's public schools. Virginia and other states use federal money to train retirees for volunteer work in classrooms and with students who need extra help.

The Baltimore program has improved teacher retention, raised student scores and boosted the overall health of the senior volunteers, according to studies by Johns Hopkins University. It has expanded from three to 16 schools since 1998 and now includes nearly 300 volunteers, said program director Sylvia McGill.

Photo by Christine Vestal, Stateline.org

First-grade teacher Elizabeth DeSell (left) says her classroom runs much more efficiently with the help of teacher's aide Dorothy Johns. "We need to look at more ways older adults can share the knowledge that can only be gained through experience as we look to develop a better skilled workforce," said O'Malley, who championed the Greater Homewood Community Corporation's program when he was mayor of Baltimore.

Johns brings her life experience as a mother and professional experience from a 41-year career in Maryland's vital statistics department to her new teaching job at Medfield Heights Elementary School. "I started out signing babies' birth certificates and now I'm back, helping the children learn," she said. Johns works 15 hours per week in a first-grade classroom for a stipend of \$112.50 every two weeks.

DeSell is grateful to have her there. "Everyone else is jealous," she said, explaining that Johns not only teaches kids to read, but helps them catch up when they miss class, works as a proctor during standardized testing sessions and sets up classroom activities.

Volunteer programs like Baltimore's, based on a non-profit model called Experience Corps, also have been launched in 12 other states: Arizona, California, Connecticut, Ohio, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas and Utah.

In California, Schwarzenegger recently authorized a statewide teacher certification program called EnCorps aimed at replacing a critical shortage of math teachers with newly certified full- and part-time professionals who have retired from careers in the state's technology, engineering and science industries.

California's current teacher shortage is expected to worsen as the school system loses some 100,000 baby boomers — one-third of the teacher workforce — over the next decade, according to the governor's office. The EnCorps program is aimed at helping the state find more than 33,000 new science and math teachers.

Virginia's volunteer teaching and mentoring program is part of a federally funded network of volunteer projects, called Senior Corps. Some 2,000 older volunteers there mentor special needs students and help run before- and after-school programs, said program specialist Jean Taylor Payne. Volunteers, who receive orientation and periodic training, focus primarily on literacy and reading skills, Payne said.

Nationwide, public schools are expected to lose about a million teachers over the next decade, according to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. Federally funded programs similar to Virginia's have so far placed more than 54,000 volunteers over age 55 in classrooms in all 50 states, according to the Corporation for National and Community Service, which funds the Senior Corps program. Total grants to states last year under the program came to \$214.7 million.

Comment on this story in the space below by registering with [Stateline.org](http://Stateline.org), or e-mail your feedback to our Letters to the editor section at [letters@stateline.org](mailto:letters@stateline.org).

Contact Christine Vestal at [cvestal@stateline.org](mailto:cvestal@stateline.org).

See related stories:

[Boomers answer call to service](#)

[Baby boomers augur old age, new needs](#)

Sunday, October 7, 2007

## 'Growing cooler' &mdash; an inescapable challenge

By Neal Peirce, Special to [Stateline.org](http://Stateline.org)

WASHINGTON — Increasing the fuel efficiency of the cars we drive — the environmentalists' perennial battle to get Detroit to improve vehicle gas mileage — is a great cause.

But it's not enough. We have to go a giant step further with sharp cuts in how far, and how often, we drive. If we don't, there's virtually no chance we can reduce our cars' massive greenhouse gas emissions — now responsible for 45 percent of automobile carbon emissions worldwide.

The message and the math are incorporated in a just-released report — "Growing Cooler" — issued by the prestigious Urban Land Institute in collaboration with Smart Growth America and allied organizations (<http://smartgrowthamerica.org/gcindex.html>).

The problem is complex and fierce. There's now broad agreement among scientists that to restrain an upward spiral in global warming — with dangerously rising seas and spreading deserts — global temperature rise must be limited to 2 degrees Celsius. And that to reach that goal, the U.S., up to now the world's champion polluter, must cut its carbon dioxide emissions between 60 percent to 80 percent by 2050, relative to their 1990 levels.

The authors projected that even if stiffer new fuel economy standards currently now before Congress are approved, and even if there's progress on hybrid cars and lower-carbon fuels, the nation's transportation-related CO2 emissions in 2030 would be 12 percent above the 2005 level and 40 percent above the 1990 level, casting a deep shadow across the 2050 goal.

So is there (BEG ITAL)any(END ITAL) way out? Yes, they reply: cut back sharply on the miles we drive our vehicles. Since 1980, total miles driven by Americans has grown three times faster than the rise in our population, even twice as fast as vehicle registrations. The vast majority of new development is laid out assuming people will use cars for virtually all trips. Homes have been built ever farther from workplaces. Shopping malls, big retail boxes, office parks and new schools are routinely built without a thought to pedestrians or public transit. The net result: more and longer auto trips, most often driving alone.

But what if we switched to develop more compactly? Surveys show at least a third of us would now prefer more compact communities in which homes, town centers, shops, parks and schools are in walking or biking distance. It's true that many young families feel obliged to "drive till you qualify" — ever-longer commutes for an affordable mortgage. But 88 percent of household growth from 2000 to 2025 is expected to be by elderly people or childless families. Aging baby boomers will be driving less and looking for walkable environments; one survey shows Gen Xers tend to value diverse, compact communities and show disillusionment with "bland vanilla suburbs."

"Growing Cooler" offers a "smart growth" recipe of walkable, transit-served and "New Urbanist"-style developments, more compact new housing, shops and offices filling in vacant lots or sites of failing shopping centers rather than replacing forests or farmland. In such

developments, people typically drive 20 percent to 40 percent less than on the suburban edge.

The chance for change could be great because there'll likely be a massive two-thirds turnover of the nation's building stock by 2050 — close to 90 million new or replaced homes, and 190 billion square feet of new offices, stores and institutions.

If only 60 percent of that development is clustered in compact, mixed-use areas, the "Growing Cooler" authors calculate vehicle miles traveled would be cut back enough to slash transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions by a significant 7 percent to 10 percent.

But declaring such a vision and achieving it won't be easy. As Rick Cole, urban author and city manager of Ventura, Calif., observes, our predominant dream "remains a suburban one, enforced by rigid zoning codes and churned out by developers on autopilot."

And changing it will churn the political waters. Cole cites the political firestorm set off when California Attorney General Jerry Brown sued rapidly growing San Bernardino County and pressured other counties to show how their development plans will reduce greenhouse gases. Brown's San Bernardino suit spurred opposition from the building industry and the state Chamber of Commerce, as well as local officials and Republicans in the state's legislature. But the county recently did agree to devise strategies to reduce CO2 emissions.

Beyond court suits, Cole suggests that cities themselves must be more proactive by finding room for more people in their already developed footprint, and assuring prospective new residents the attractions Americans are sure to demand — "far greener urban building, far better urban schools, far more attractive urban parks, far safer urban streets."

Plus, I'd add, develop the same kind of comprehensive, reliable rail and bus systems that Europe and Japan offer — real alternatives to the private car.

Carbon-saving communities may be a 21st-century imperative. But the transition to them is likely to be one of the most challenging adjustments Americans have ever made.

Neal Peirce's e-mail address is [nrp@citistates.com](mailto:nrp@citistates.com).

(c) 2007, The Washington Post Writers Group