

ITS SEMINAR

A QUIET REVOLUTION IN TRANSPORTATION FINANCE

Co-sponsored by the
Department of Planning, Policy and Design and the
Program in Transportation Science

Martin Wachs
Institute of Transportation Studies and
Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering and
Department of City & Regional Planning
University of California, Berkeley

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12:00 noon - 1:30 p.m.

Room 408, Multipurpose Academic & Administration Building

For ninety years, the principal means of financing transportation facilities in America has been through user fees, primarily motor fuel taxes and tolls. Motor fuel tax revenues have been plummeting for a variety of reasons, but there is no longer the political will to increase motor vehicle taxes. Rising costs and decreasing revenues have combined to bankrupt the transportation program, especially at the state level. At the same time, local governments all over the country, led by the example of California, have been enacting local option transportation taxes; gradually, the locus of transportation decision making has been shifting to local governments. Is this trend in finance good? Do most Americans even know that it is happening? What does the longer term future hold? In this seminar, Professor Wachs will argue that the recent trend is significant yet not viable in the longer term. While a variety of electronic user fees hold more promise, the transition to this approach will take decades and should be carefully planned starting now.

Martin Wachs is director of the Institute of Transportation Studies (ITS) at the University of California, Berkeley, where he is also professor of civil and environmental engineering and professor of city and regional planning. He earlier spent 25 years at UCLA, where he served for three terms as chair of the Department of Urban Planning. Professor Wachs is the author of 160 articles and four books on transportation, land use and air quality; transportation needs of the elderly; transportation system measurement and evaluation; and the relationship of transportation finance to planning and policy. His research has also addressed transportation equity, crime in public transit systems and the response of transportation systems to natural disasters. Professor Wachs served on the Transportation Research Board (TRB) executive committee for nine years and as Chair of the organization in 2000. He has received numerous honors and awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship, two Rockefeller Foundation Humanities Fellowships and TRB's Pyke Johnson Award. He is a Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) and a Lifetime Associate of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). Dr. Wachs holds a Ph.D. in Transportation Planning from Northwestern University.