



Finding ways to stimulate demand for new, more environmentally friendly buildings, power facilities and factories will deliver significant environmental benefits. At the same time, investing in new public infrastructure will ease pollution-causing traffic congestion and ensure safe and healthy supplies of drinking water for decades to come. You can't wish for a green future – you have to build it.

The nation's built environment sustains our quality of life and our economic productivity, but our infrastructure and our lifestyles also directly impact the natural environment. The Associated General Contractors of America has discussed how contractors and other partners in the building professions have responded to the call to reduce the impact of the built environment on our natural environment.

In the article entitled "Building a Green Future," the AGC takes a deeper look at ways to reduce the impact of buildings and other man-made creations on the natural environment. According to the article, we need a comprehensive and coordinated national strategy for building a greener future.

The AGC provides suggestions and recommendations for federal, state and local governments, government agencies, developers and professionals in design and construction fields to embrace in order to realize a greener future:

- 1) **Make Buildings Greener** – improving the environmental performance and energy efficiency of existing and new buildings and industrial facilities
- 2) **Make Transportation Greener** – reducing transportation congestion and pollution through expansion and improvements to these vital infrastructure and the construction of mass transit options
- 3) **Make Water and Land Resources Greener** – cleaning up and protecting our communities through renewed commitments to water treatment, updating failing water systems and the remediation of contaminate sites
- 4) **Make Power Generation Greener** – increasing the availability and efficiency of energy production through upgrades to existing power plants and the construction of new and diverse sources of energy that will also bring us to greater energy dependence

According to the article, nearly 40 percent of the energy used

in the U.S. is used to power buildings, for lighting, heating and cooling purposes, etc. Buildings also account for 35 percent of the nation's total man-made greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2008. By 2013, the amount of non-residential construction starts in the green market is expected to grow 20-25 percent.

In order for environmental performance of buildings and building materials and products to be improved, policymakers and industry need to support new research. The industry would also benefit from: tax incentives; supporting the Building STAR; modernizing government buildings; establishing local incentives for green buildings; preempting the Clean Air Act for Greenhouse Gas Emissions; and funding green building research and programs.

The transportation infrastructure literally carries our economy through the transport of goods and people. However, transportation currently counts for 27 percent of the total U.S. energy consumption almost exclusively through the combustion of fossil fuels. Fortunately, transportation agencies and the construction industry are expanding efforts to increase transportation options while doing the right thing for communities and the environment.

To create a better transportation environment, policy makers can work to: double investment levels in federal highway, transit, aviation, freight and rail programs; right size the Federal Gas Tax and transition to Vehicle Miles Tax; make use of the Harbor Maintenance Fund; reform the current "New Starts" program; streamline environmental reviews for infrastructure projects; and preserve the U.S. Department of Transportation's authority for Transportation Planning.

The nation's drinking water and wastewater infrastructure is aging, and is in critical need of attention. New treatment facilities, pipe replacement and rehabilitation, and replacements of sanitary and combined sewer systems are needed.

In order to make environmental resources better, it is necessary to: reauthorize and expand federal contribution to state revolving loans; establish a dedicated trust fund for water infrastructure; increase funding for water resources programs of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation; support long-term investment for water resources navigation, flood control and environmental restoration; reform and expand current laws that address contaminated sites; and continue to support jobs training for environmental cleanups.

In 2008, the emissions for electricity generation accounted for 34 percent of GHG emissions. This statistical data shows that new technological developments need research and support. The AGC states that it is important to develop a comprehensive National Energy Plan and to accelerate the licensing of new nuclear power plants.

The AGC recognizes that the construction process affects the environment, and that careless practices can lead to unnecessary pollution. The following are steps to make practices greener:

- 1) Invest in construction equipment
- 2) Reduce waste from construction and demolition
- 3) Increase use of recycled materials and industrial materials in construction
- 4) Incorporate environmental stewardship into day-to-day operations

For more information about utilizing greener practices in the construction industry, please visit www.agc.org.