

# Introduction

The John F. Kennedy Center is a Congressionally designated national showcase for the performing arts and a living memorial to the late President. In its dual roles, the Center is a powerful attraction for visitors and residents alike, yet the building is removed from the capital city, isolated by natural and man-made barriers. Its surroundings impede the access of more than five million people who attend performances and visit the Center each year.

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) directed the Secretary of Transportation to undertake a comprehensive study of ways to improve access to the Center. During the past year, the Federal Highway Administration has worked in partnership with the Kennedy Center and other federal and local agencies to develop long-term multimodal transportation and land-use improvement options that would facilitate safe traffic flow to and from the Center, improve transit service, and make bicycling and walking around the Center safer, more pleasant, and more direct.

Integrating the Center with its surroundings—the riverfront, the Mall, Georgetown, and Foggy Bottom—is



*The Kennedy Center is isolated from the surrounding city.*



*The Center's physical setting is inconsistent with its mission.*



*Improved multimodal linkages and an enhanced setting have been identified through the study.*

central to improving access. Reestablishing the street grid east of the Center is the best way to meet this goal. In addition, it would serve many other needs identified by this study—enhancing safety; improving bicycle and pedestrian connections; relieving congestion suffered by Center patrons before and after performances; and enhancing the Center's setting. The memorial, which symbolically speaks for America's artistic aspirations and leadership, would finally be connected to the city and the Potomac waterfront.

This report documents the study's findings and presents ways to overcome the physical barriers isolating the Center. The plan includes low-cost traffic safety improvements and large-scale infrastructure enhancements. These improvements, applied as a package, would strengthen the Center's vitality and vibrancy in the 21st Century.