Transit Fact Sheet

America Needs More Transit

While we have made real progress as a nation since the days when federal transportation policy was devoted almost entirely to highway construction, Americans are stuck in increasing amounts of congestion but have no real choice than to waste valuable time in traffic. In addition, increasing numbers of cars, roads, and miles driven have tremendous impacts on public health and the environment. As a new transportation policy is being prepared to bring us through the end of the decade, we can redirect our nation's resources into a cleaner, healthier, and more efficient transportation system.

To relieve congestion and protect public health, we can:

- **Double America's investment in transit to $14 billion per year by 2009**
- **Increase transit's share of overall federal funding to 3:1—for every $3 spent on highways, transit should receive at least $1**
- **Maintain 80/20 federal/state funding match for new transit projects**

Impacts of Insufficient Transit Funding

Congestion

- The average rush-hour commuter spent **62 hours stuck in traffic** in 2000, compared to just 16 hours per year in 1982.
- Traffic congestion in small urban and rural areas is increasing 11% per year—twice as fast as in urban areas.

Building more roads is not the answer

- Road building is keeping pace with population growth: on average, highway networks expanded faster than increases in population.
- Communities with the highest amounts of road-building actually have *higher* amounts of congestion. New and wider roads attract more drivers, which could result in a loss of 50 percent of the new road capacity
- In 2000, federal, state and local governments spent more than $127 billion—or more than $1,000 per U.S. household—to expand, maintain and patrol the nation's roads. As all this spending has not effectively reduced congestion, this enormous amount of public money is poorly spent.

Endangering public health

- Nearly half the population—**49 percent**—live in areas where smog pollution makes the air unsafe to breathe.
- Tens of thousands of Americans die prematurely every year from air pollution.
- Every summer, high smog levels cause millions of asthma attacks and thousands of trips to the emergency room and hospital admissions.
  - 159,000 trips to the emergency room
  - 53,000 hospital admissions
  - 6 million asthma attacks

Lack of choice

- Approximately 140 million Americans live farther than a quarter-mile from a public-transportation stop
- In small urban and rural communities, 41 percent do not have access to transit at all

Undue burdens on families

- Americans in the lowest 20 percent income bracket spend about **42 percent of their total annual incomes on transportation**, compared to 22 percent among middle-income Americans.

- The estimated cost of driving a single-occupant vehicle is between $4,826 and $9,685 per year. By contrast, the annual average cost of public transportation for an adult ranges from $200 to $2,000.

Transit Solutions: smarter transportation choices

Reducing congestion & providing alternatives

- Transit-related congestion relief saves the nation nearly **$20 billion annually**.

- Transit users save time for themselves and for all other road users: a Federal Transit Administration study of six light-rail corridors found savings of:
  - Over 17,000 hours for transit riders each day
  - 22,000 hours daily for the remaining automobile drivers on the corridor itself
  - $225 million in total savings annually

- 30,000 passengers can be carried on a single U.S. subway line in one hour. 10 additional highway lanes would be needed if those riders drove instead.

- In Denver, 50 percent of light-rail commuters previously drove to work, and ridership on the light-rail system is 60 percent ahead of projected levels.

In response to concerns about congestion, safety and air quality in the Salt Lake City region, the Utah Transit Authority (UTA) established a comprehensive transit plan, including a new light-rail system, TRAX LRT. TRAX opened in 1999.

Use of TRAX and UTA's transit system has soared:

- **Ridership on TRAX has exceeded projections by over 40%**
- **In November 2000, voters approved a sales-tax increase in order to fund further rail expansion**
- **In 2001, UTA extended the system to serve the University of Utah. Today, ridership along the new line is double initial projections**
- **During the 2002 Winter Olympics, TRAX helped carry 4 million passengers**
- **Overall, the UTA has seen an 18.5% increase in ridership system-wide since 1996**

Today, TRAX system is still expanding, as they are building a third TRAX line and increasing service hours.

Reduces air pollution emissions

- Transit emits only 5 percent of the carbon monoxide, less than 8 percent of the volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and half as much carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxides (NOx) per mile as compared to automobile use. This amounts to 70,000 tons less VOCs and 27,000 tons of NOx—the main smog-causing pollutants—from the air annually.

Economic benefits of transit

- Every dollar taxpayers invest in public transportation generates $6 or more in economic returns.

- Public transit reduces roadway-related costs by an estimated $1 - $1.7 billion per year. From 1980-94, Atlanta's transit system saved $2.2 billion by providing motorists a public transit alternative.

- The DC-area Metro has generated nearly $15 billion in surrounding private development. Between 1980 and 1990, 40% of the region's retail and office space was built within walking distance of a Metro station.