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Contact:  
Sean Crowley, 202-572-3331, [scrowley@edf.org](mailto:scrowley@edf.org)  
Dan Cronin, 202-572-3354, [dcronin@edf.org](mailto:dcronin@edf.org)

## **Congressional Leaders Welcome Report Highlighting Model Transit Projects for Transportation Bill**

*Study details new generation of innovative transit in 45 communities of all sizes in 30 states*

(Washington, DC – April 23, 2009) Transportation leaders from both houses of Congress today welcomed a new report for showcasing a new generation of innovative transit systems. The report is timely because the six-year federal transportation bill, which sustains transportation initiatives like these transit projects across America, expires September 30, and will be the subject of near-term congressional action.

House Transportation Committee Chairman James Oberstar, MN; the Acting Deputy Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Matthew J. Welbes; and Congressman Earl Blumenauer, Portland, OR; spoke at a Capitol Hill news conference/webcast today to unveil the video and written version of the report.

The report, *Reinventing Transit: American communities finding smarter, cleaner, faster transportation solutions*, cites transit innovations already operating in 45 metropolitan, suburban and rural communities in 30 states across America that are creating jobs, cutting traffic congestion, and reducing air and global warming pollution. It also provides case studies of more than a dozen of these transit innovations. Transportation -- primarily cars and trucks -- accounts for 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States.

Brief case studies of 10 of the innovative public transit systems highlighted in *Reinventing Transit* include:

- **Chicago, Illinois:** The McDonald's *Cycle Center* is an essential part of Millennium Park, with 300 secure indoor parking spaces for bicycles, showers, lockers, bike repair services and solar panels.
- **Connecticut:** *Statewide van pool service* for commuters that offers more than 300 routes transporting 3,000 riders daily and even goes into New York, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts.
- **\*Kings County, California:** *Van pool service* that ensures access to schools, jobs and medical services and reduces air pollution in this heavily polluted, yet very rural **San Joaquin Valley**.
- **\*Los Angeles, California:** *Bus rapid transit* that connects the residents and employment centers of San Fernando Valley with the end point of LA's main highway in North Hollywood, and reduces traffic.
- **\*Manassas/Prince William County, Virginia:** *Flexible bus route system that uses modern global positioning technology (GPS)* to pick up passengers up to ¾ mile off route in this exurban area.

- *\*Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota:* Operating on *highway shoulders reconstructed for bus use*, Metro Transit riders can safely zip past stalled traffic, saving people time and frustration.
  - *Mobile, Alabama:* *Shuttle service* that picks up people at home and brings them downtown and back.
  - *\*Orlando, Florida:* *Bus rapid transit system* that has helped spur development of five new downtown office buildings (each 1 million square feet) and six new apartment communities.
  - *Eugene, Oregon:* The bus rapid transit line called EmX features hybrid buses with a dedicated bus lane and a partnership with local universities and schools to provide low-cost service to students.
  - *Portland, Oregon:* *Streetcar system* serves 13,000 riders daily, cutting traffic, pollution and spurring economic development and a new local industry manufacturing streetcars at Oregon Iron Works.
- \*TV stations:* You can obtain an electronic press kit of these five transit projects (including raw footage with soundbites from transit operators, users and EDF transportation experts) at [www.edf.org/transit](http://www.edf.org/transit).

*“Reinventing Transit* provides a roadmap that links metropolitan, suburban and rural commuters in Connecticut and across the country to their current and future jobs,” said Senator Dodd, chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, which has jurisdiction over transit (Senator Dodd was scheduled to attend the news conference, but had to cancel because of an 11<sup>th</sup> hour scheduling conflict). “The extraordinary demand and response to these innovations shows that Americans welcome transit when it’s fast and convenient.”

*“Reinventing Transit* makes the case that reinventing the transportation bill to fund transit innovations in Minnesota and nationwide will deliver new jobs, new connections to jobs and economic development for communities of all sizes,” said Congressman Oberstar. “Given our economic and environmental challenges, ‘business as usual’ transportation investments are not good enough. *Reinventing Transit* sets the standard for transit investments in the upcoming transportation bill to fuel America’s economic recovery.”

“Our national transportation policy should be supporting exactly the kinds of innovations found in *Reinventing Transit*, so innovative transit technology is not an exception, but a routine occurrence in communities of all sizes,” said Congressman Blumenauer, the Vice Chairman of the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming. “These technologies have proven their power to reduce gridlock as well as greenhouse gas emissions, while at the same time increasing quality of life for communities in Oregon and around the country. I hope that Congress can promote these technologies in the climate legislation and transportation reauthorization currently under consideration.”

*“Reinventing Transit* demonstrates how communities of all sizes have implemented cutting edge transit quickly and cost-effectively to meet their specific needs,” said Michael Replogle, a civil engineer, transportation director for Environmental Defense Fund and a former transportation coordinator for Montgomery County, Maryland. “Now it’s time for Congress to boost opportunities for similar transportation investments through the upcoming transportation bill, and hold states and regions accountable for spending funds wisely to revitalize our economy, cut traffic congestion, and reduce air and global warming pollution.”

To see detailed case studies of the 10 transit projects cited above, case studies of three other transit projects, the video or print version of the report, or our new *Reinventing Transit* blog, go to [www.edf.org/transit](http://www.edf.org/transit).

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*Environmental Defense Fund, a leading national nonprofit organization, represents more than 500,000 members. Since 1967, Environmental Defense Fund has linked science, economics, law and innovative private-sector partnerships to create breakthrough solutions to the most serious environmental problems. For more information, visit [www.edf.org](http://www.edf.org).*

## Reinventing Transit Case Studies

- **Chicago, Illinois:** The McDonald's Cycle Center is an excellent example of innovative bike parking. It is state-of-the-art and an essential component of Millennium Park, with more than 300 secure indoor parking spaces for bicycles, showers, lockers, bike repair services and solar panels. The facility has proven very popular and in its first two years, is already meeting its 500-member capacity. Since cyclists can travel farther and faster than pedestrians, bikestations enable access to transit over an area 35 times larger than pedestrian access would allow. They also cost only a fraction to build and operate compared to park-and-ride lots.
- **Connecticut:** To help connect transportation needs of businesses and workers, the Connecticut Department of Transportation created the Easy Street<sup>®</sup>. The program is a statewide commuter van service operated by The Rideshare Company, which offers more than 300 routes transporting 3,000 riders daily. The program gives passengers the flexibility to design their own routes to work and pick-up schedules. Communities enjoy the benefits of less congestion and less pollution from automobile exhaust.
- **Eugene, Oregon:** The bus rapid transit line called EmX features hybrid buses with a dedicated bus lane and a partnership with local universities and schools to provide low-cost service to students. EmX also has created local jobs by hiring local contractors to design and construct key infrastructure components, including bus shelters. To make EmX use practical, the buses run every ten minutes during peak hours and every 20 minutes off-peak time. Public bus ridership in Eugene, including on EmX hybrid buses, has increased 35-40 percent during the last three years, and now exceeds 20-year ridership projections.
- **Grand Rapids, Michigan:** Known locally as The Rapid, the Grand Rapids transit system's success is attributed to its large array of transit options, including curb-to-curb pickup service, rideshare programs, and a free shuttle between the Grand Valley State University's two campuses. Routes are focused on job creation and economic development, while suburban areas are served by vanpools and the PASS shuttle service that connects suburban residents with The Rapid's regular bus routes. Today, the system is a vital piece of Grand Rapids' economy, with 80 percent of riders using The Rapid to commute to work. A recent study by Michigan Department of Transportation for the Governor's Transportation Funding Task Force shows that every \$10 million spent on transit capital investments, such as The Rapid, creates 300 jobs and every \$10 million spent on transit operations creates or sustains 570 jobs. In contrast, every \$10 million spent on highway projects creates only 142 jobs, according to the study.
- **Kings County, California:** The Kings County Area Public Transportation Agency's innovative system of vanpools and rural buses ensures access to schools, jobs and medical services in the rural reaches of California's San Joaquin Valley. The vanpools provide affordable, safe transportation alternatives to rural residents while reducing global warming emissions and other air pollutants. Businesses throughout the state, including casinos and ski resorts, are turning to the transit agency for advice.
- **Los Angeles, California:** The Metro Orange Line connects the residents and employment centers of San Fernando Valley with the end point of Los Angeles' main subway in North Hollywood. This bus rapid transit (BRT) line has proven to be a huge success and relieves traffic congestion on Highway 101, one of the most congested highways in the nation. A January 2006 survey showed that 85 percent of riders save time by leaving their car at home and using the Orange Line every day. Transit-oriented development is beginning to sprout up at several stations along the BRT line. The success of the Orange Line in one of the United States' most car-focused cities illustrates the ability of BRT to fill the gap between urban and suburban transportation options.

- **Manassas/Prince William County, Virginia:** The sprawling suburbs surrounding our nation's capitol present a challenge to developing public transportation that works. But local authorities in Prince William County, Virginia devised a clever solution: flexible bus routes that can drive off-route to pick up passengers a short distance away from the main line. Modern global positioning system (GPS) technology keeps bus drivers from getting lost, and helps manager's track bus locations. Now, more than half of riders choose the system to get to work.
- **Maplewood, New Jersey:** To cut congestion during peak commute times, NJ TRANSIT's Community Shuttle Program uses 20-passenger minibuses to pick up 50,000 monthly commuters in 20 municipalities, including Maplewood, within a few blocks of their homes. The shuttle buses bring the passengers to NJ TRANSIT commuter trains or buses that deliver them to New York City's central business district. NJ TRANSIT's Community Shuttle Program uses federal funds to purchase the minibuses. The agency then offers no-cost leases to municipalities that provide the shuttle service. During the first three years of operation, the agency also offers seed money to fund part of the shuttle service's operating costs.
- **Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota:** By reconstructing highway shoulders for bus use, Metro Transit riders can safely zip past stalled traffic, saving people time and frustration. Shoulder lane buses have now been successfully implemented in 10 states including Ohio, Florida, Washington, California, Kansas and Virginia. State departments of transportation nationwide can look to these as examples of infrastructure that can increase mobility without needing road expansion.
- **Mobile, Alabama:** To help spur economic growth and encourage ridership, in 2005 the Wave Transit System started 1) using new buses featuring electronic fare cards; 2) created a "taxi-style" bus service to pick people up from their homes and take them to downtown or shopping centers; and 3) implemented routes centered around a new steel mill. As a result, since 2005 ridership has increased 40 percent and hit a record 1 million passengers in 2008.
- **New York, NY:** New York City has the highest bus ridership of any transit system nationwide, but its buses must deal with high levels of traffic congestion and long boarding lines, which frequently make them late. To combat this problem, the city's Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Transit Authority created Select Bus Service. It has several new time-saving features, including designated bus lanes, a system for passengers to pay their fare in the station before boarding, and the ability for passengers to board through any door on the bus. The system debuted in June 2008, and has already shown remarkable improvements. On the new Fordham Road Select Bus Service in the Bronx, ridership has increased 25 percent and trip times are shorter.
- **Orlando, Florida:** In 1997, using a federal grant, Orlando converted the free downtown circulator bus into the LYMMO Bus Rapid Transit system. The City of Orlando has cited LYMMO as part of a development strategy that led to five new downtown office buildings (each 1 million square feet) and six new apartment communities, and it wants to expand LYMMO to connect to hospitals, new entertainment venues that are under construction and nearby residential communities.
- **Portland, Oregon:** The Portland Streetcar has spurred extensive development and is a central part of the city's transportation network serving 13,000 riders daily and helping to cut traffic and pollution levels around the city. The program's success gave birth to a new industry, as a local manufacturer, Oregon Iron Works, began building the first U.S.-made streetcars in modern history. In addition to creating new manufacturing jobs, the project has helped stimulate \$3.5 billion in new development with the construction of five-million square feet of new buildings, including 10,000 housing units.