

William Millar
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Welcome

Good afternoon. I am pleased to be here.

Recognitions

I want to thank Alice Yates from Senator Levin's office.

Thanks also to Carol Werner and EESI, the House and Senate Smart Growth Caucuses for sponsoring this event, and Senator Carl Levin for helping with arrangements.

We're going to talk about America's "addiction to oil" - not just foreign oil --- and offer some ideas of how public transportation can address this issue.

We've just concluded the 2006 APTA Legislative Conference and this very issue was discussed.

Let me begin by way of some background.

Public transportation is a \$41 billion a year business in the United States. There are currently more than 6,000 transit systems in the U.S. The top 30 systems provide 70 percent of the boardings.

Annually, 9.6 billion trips are taken on public transit.

This past year we saw ridership take off. Ridership is up 25 percent since 1995, and up 3.3 percent in the third quarter of 2005. Vehicle miles traveled is down 0.2%.

Even after gas prices came down, dozens of commuters saw increases including in the double digits.

Benefits of Public Transportation

The benefits of public transportation are many. It benefits the general public, the economy and the environment.

Every \$1 invested in public transit on average generates \$6 in benefits.

Every \$10 million in capital investment in public transportation yields \$30 million in increased sales and business activity.

A recent Texas Transportation Institute study revealed that using public transit saves travelers in America's most congested cities 1.1 billion hours in travel time.

Without public transportation, nationwide delays would have increased by 27 percent, costing residents in 85 urban areas an additional \$18 billion in lost time.

In addition, energy is wasted when cars sit stuck in traffic jams. Public transit gets people out of cars, and saves them money and time.

Transit Part of National Energy Policy

America is growing. This year, we will cross the 300 million population milestone. In another 30 years, we will surpass 400 million.

Today, 97.5 percent of the primary energy consumption for transportation is from using petroleum.

So we have to deal with transportation issues if we are serious about beating our addiction to oil.

The goal is to increase people's mobility and decrease oil consumption to support a growing economy.

What I want to discuss is what I believe should be a part of our national energy strategy, i.e. conserving fuel as a nation by **decreasing** number of auto trips, and **increasing** amount of trips on public transportation as we maintain people's mobility and continue to support a vibrant economy.

A study by economists Robert Shapiro and Kevin Hassett found that per person and per mile, traveling by public transportation uses significantly less energy than comparable travel by private vehicles.

Per passenger mile, public transportation at today's usage level is twice as fuel efficient as private automobiles, and three times as efficient as SUV travel. If transit were used more, fuel efficiency would rise. The study also concluded that efforts to reduce our dependence on foreign oil should address the way Americans travel.

In addition, public transit saves more than 855 million gallons of gas a year. These savings equal about one month's oil imports from Saudi Arabia and three months of the energy that Americans use to heat, cool and operate their homes.

In addition, boosting our investment in public transportation will ensure mobility even in times of energy shortage. A balanced, overall system is always important, but even more critical in times of an uncertain energy supply.

If Americans used public transportation at the same rate as Europeans -- roughly 10% of their daily travel needs -- the U.S. would reduce its dependence on imported oil by more than 40%, or nearly the amount of oil we import from Saudi Arabia each year.

Imagine if we had started that policy in the 1970s! We would use much less foreign oil today and face a much less bleak balance of payments picture.

What does all this say: energy independence is a national priority and public transportation is a large part of the solution!

Strategies to Encourage Use

There are many strategies to encourage use of public transportation. What Americans want is freedom. And public transit gives them freedom.

Americans are smart. But most do not have a decent grasp of public transportation. And many do not have adequate transportation options.

People make travel choices in a rational manner. If transit is infrequent, or is not a choice at all due to the unavailability of service, a person is unlikely to use transit.

New IT technology is making it easier to use public transportation. We have Smart Cards, 511 technology. What if your driver's license was a Smart Card?

We also need to eliminate the fear people have of transit, such as where do I need to change buses, what time does it arrive, will I get lost, etc. Transit in the future will be much easier to use.

And, when sufficient investments have been made to make public transportation options more accessible, and more attractive, people will make the choice to use transit.

Referenda Passed

The public wants more transportation options. This we know.

Last year, voters around the country approved state and local ballot initiatives to support public transit 84% of the time, even when it meant local taxes would be raised or continued.

All around the country people are saying they want more transit. A recent HarrisInteractive poll showed that 44 percent wanted more commuter trains and 11 only percent wanted more travel by car.

We can see a trend. A recent poll by APTA revealed that 81 percent wanted more public transit.

Also, my staff monitors Governors' State of the State messages. And this year, there appears to be a greater emphasis on transportation.

About half of the speeches had transportation as a theme.

Summary

In summary, we need to make good on the commitment of the recent transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU, and increase our investments in public transportation.

Conclusion

Certainly, public transportation needs to have a still larger role in our transportation future, and in our energy future.

Another energy bill is possible this year. A landmark transportation bill is on the horizon. Let's take advantage of those opportunities to make some real progress. Thank you.