

Legislative Issue Briefing

March 2009

Public Transportation's Role in Climate Change and Energy Legislation

Greenhouse gas emissions from transportation sources account for one-third of emissions in the United States, and transportation accounts for seventy percent of U.S. oil consumption. Transit use results in a significant net reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions and fuel consumption, and increased transit use must be a central strategy in federal climate and energy legislation.

- U.S. public transportation saves 37 million metric tons of carbon dioxide annually — equivalent to the emissions from the electricity generated for the use of 4.9 million households or every household in Washington DC; New York City; Atlanta; Denver; and Los Angeles combined.
- Public transportation use saves the U.S. the equivalent of 4.2 billion gallons of gasoline annually — and more than 11 million gallons of gasoline per day. That amount of savings is equivalent to more than three times the amount of oil we import from Kuwait each year.

In the 110th Congress (2007 – 2008), the Senate's Lieberman-Warner bill proposed investing up to 2.75 percent of revenues from a "cap-and-trade" system in public transportation, and several House bills proposed lower levels of investment in transit and smart growth strategies (Dingell-Boucher, Markey and Dogget bills). None of these proposals is expected to be advanced in the 111th Congress without significant changes. In the Senate, Democratic leaders will work to gain more support for a climate bill. In the House, the Energy and Commerce Committee, which has primary jurisdiction over climate issues, is now chaired by Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA).

- **Climate change and energy legislation should provide substantial new investment in public transportation that supplements existing current federal transportation funding.**
- **Future revenue from emission allowances related to transportation fuels under a "cap-and-trade" system or similar program should be reinvested in transportation infrastructure and operations that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and fuel consumption.**
- **Public transportation systems and other public entities that provide a net reduction of greenhouse gas emissions should receive funding to offset any increased operating costs associated with a "cap-and-trade" system or other climate or energy program.**
- **Public transportation systems should be eligible for assistance to address adaptation costs associated with a warming environment.**