



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION POLICY PROJECT

Transit: The Time is Right for Getting it Right

by David Burwell
STPP Executive Director

The terrorist attacks of September 11 shocked the world. They also shocked our transportation system as air travel was grounded and local streets, tunnels, and bridges in Washington, D.C. and New York City were closed. Through the horror, however, the nation's two most-used transit systems kept operating, reuniting workers with loved ones and evacuating both cities without panic. Good transit is now a national security issue.

"Transit Rules the Road," proclaimed *The Washington Post*, when it reported that transit ridership in the DC area increased 11 percent from June 2000 to June 2001. Everywhere, turnstiles are spinning, projects are breaking ground, and existing transit systems are extending lines and improving core capacity. Ridership broke records in 2000. Skeptics claim this is a "blip," driven by high gasoline prices and a souring economy; they are wrong. The economy grew five percent in 2000 and gas prices were well below historic highs on an inflation-adjusted basis. Yet transit ridership grew nearly five percent nationwide while growth in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) was flat. As gas prices fell in 2001, transit grew another 2.8 percent while VMT grew only 0.6 percent. No precedent exists for this massive shift in traveler behavior.

What is the explanation? This edition of *Progress* argues that transit is providing *value*, like faster, cleaner and more convenient service reducing the impact of things like pollution, landscape destruction, and soaring personal transportation costs. And communities are responding. More transit referenda are passing, the queue for new starts is getting longer, and polls consistently place transit improvements over new highway capacity in the hearts and minds of the community.

Let's not blow it. If there is one lesson to be learned, it is that *how* you locate, design, develop and implement transportation systems is as important as *what* you develop. Community needs must be integrated with technical issues of system design and efficiency. Location of appropriate land uses near transit is critical to success, and customers must be provided real-time information on system performance. Transportation systems are large and complex, with feedback loops that complicate analysis. This complexity makes effective community participation – and thus, trust in the decision-making process – key.

Transit supporters must learn these lessons. Often, choices in technology, location, and design do not reflect the function or character of surrounding communities. The result is what Hank Dittmar calls "auto-oriented transit"—acres of parking surrounding transit stations, or "development-adjacent transit"—high-density development that makes mixed-use, mixed-income development unlikely. Instead, transit stations must be *multi-modal nodes* designed for excellent pedestrian and cycling access, as well as useful commercial and institutional facilities such as banks, day-care centers, shops and post offices. When it is well planned, transit supports, even creates community. Poorly planned, transit can tear communities apart.

This is a defining moment for transit, the "tipping point" where transportation can work for community outcomes. Read on for good ideas on help make the most of this unprecedented opportunity.

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Bipartisanship Key to Finalizing Airport Security and Economic Stimulus

As Congress heads for the Thanksgiving Day recess, key transportation-related proposals are at various stages of negotiation, each characterized by partisan positioning that departs dramatically from the successful bipartisanship and bicameral legislative efforts immediately after the September 11 attacks .

Airport Security

Foremost is the effort by a House/Senate conference committee to reach agreement on airport security legislation. Negotiators seek consensus on how much “federalization” of passenger and baggage screeners is needed at the nation’s airport checkpoints. The Senate, led by Senators Fritz Hollings (D-SC) and John McCain (R-AZ), approved its version of the legislation (S. 1447) on a 100-0 vote, a measure that establishes a full federal force at all hub airports and allows the use of federal and state law enforcement personnel at non-hub airports. The House, led by House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair Don Young (R-AK), rejected the Senate’s approach 218-216, largely along party lines and with strong backing from House Republican leaders and President Bush, opting instead for increased federal oversight of airline-directed contracts with private security firms. This is the core conflict between the two sides as public pressure mounts to reach an agreement on this priority legislation.

Transportation Investment in Economic Stimulus

Similarly, efforts to move forward with an economic stimulus package have broken down along party lines, with House Republican leaders successfully pressing for approval of a stimulus package that includes only tax provisions. For its part, Senate Democratic leaders have been seeking agreement on a package that would target tax relief and benefits provisions to individuals and others affected by the economic fallout from the attacks. In addition, key Senate leaders, including Senators Robert Byrd (D-WVA) and Harry Reid (D-NV), are championing proposals that would increase spending on homeland security as well as infrastructure investment as part of the Senate’s stimulus package. Senator Byrd’s plan calls for \$15 billion for homeland security, including \$1.1 billion for airport security and \$2.2 billion in security funding for the ports, ferries, public transit and Amtrak. Also in the Senate plan is a provision that would support \$7 billion in tax credit-backed bonds to accelerate investment in high-speed rail. Senate Republican leaders, backed by the Bush Administration, have been opposed to any increased spending as part of a stimulus plan.

Where Are They Now?

Bob Peck Leads Capital’s Board of Trade. In October, Robert A. Peck became President of The Greater Washington Board of Trade, the capital region’s premiere business organization. In addition to his service on the STPP Board, Peck served as chief of staff to former New York Senator and ISTEA architect Daniel Patrick Moynihan, where he worked closely with STPP to formulate the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991.

Emil Frankl to Direct U.S. DOT Policy Efforts. Former STPP Board Member Emil H. Frankl, has been nominated by President Bush to serve as the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy. Frankl championed multi-state efforts to preserve the core principles ISTEA during his tenure as Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Transportation. Once confirmed, Frankl will be influential in shaping the Bush Administration’s work on TEA-21 renewal.

Roy Kienitz Heads Maryland Planning Department. Former STPP Executive Director Roy Kienitz is now the Secretary of the State of Maryland’s Department of Planning. Appointed by Governor Parris Glendening in June, Secretary Kienitz is advancing Maryland’s nationally-recognized smart growth program. During his five years at STPP, Kienitz oversaw the strategy that preserved ISTEA during its 1998 renewal. STPP looks forward to Roy’s continued leadership in transportation reform and smart growth.

Kevin McCarty Joins STPP as Senior Director for Federal Policy. Kevin McCarty, formerly Assistant Executive Director of The U.S. Conference of Mayors, became STPP’s Senior Director for Federal Policy in November. McCarty will be strengthening the organization’s federal policy committee in preparation for renewal of TEA-21. In addition, McCarty, who has been connected to mayors and local governments for more than 20 years, will build stronger partnerships with cities and other leaders in support of STPP’s advocacy efforts.

If at First You Don't Succeed...

Transit Strategies CAN Win the Second Time Around

**by Kelly Nordini, Associate Director, and
Lauren Martens, Executive Director,
Transit Alliance**

Just two short years after voters in the Denver metro region soundly defeated a proposal to build a regional rail system, a light rail measure was approved by an overwhelming 66% margin. How did the turnaround occur?

In 1997, the Regional Transportation District (RTD) proposed a four-tenths-of-a-cent sales tax increase to fund rail and bus projects in seven major transportation corridors. Broadly supported by the business community, local elected officials and environmental and other community groups, supporters raised about \$650,000 for the campaign.

Ironically, the opposition was led by a member of the RTD Board with ties to a libertarian-leaning think tank. The ballot measure had been approved by the RTD board with only a narrow margin. When other Board members vacillated, the opposing RTD member was able to get Board resolutions passed that were helpful to project detractors. As a result, the measure lost by a 56% margin. Post-election polling found, not surprisingly, a lack of confidence in the RTD Board and a perception that the plan was too big and too vague (some corridors did not have specific projects identified).

Despite the defeat, the pro-transit coalition stayed together. In 1998, it succeeded in electing a strong, pro-rail majority to the RTD Board. Meanwhile, the Colorado Department of Transportation (DOT) moved ahead with an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the Southeast corridor – on of the seven corridors proposed in the original ballot measure. A coalition of business groups, local governments and environmentalists was formed to support the Southeast Corridor strategy, and a similar coalition called Transit Alliance came together in support of the overall regional transit plan.

In 1999, a unified RTD Board put another proposal on the ballot. The measure was limited to the one light-rail project on the Southeast Corridor. Unlike the 1997 initiatives, it was very specific and involved no new taxes. It also ran in tandem with a statewide highway bonding measure that accelerated construction on a number of projects, including the additional lanes needed for the Southeast Corridor rail project.

The coalition in support of the referendum now included Governor Bill Owens, who, as State Treasurer, had opposed the earlier 1997 proposal. Over one million dollars was raised in support of each ballot measure. Light rail won with two-thirds of the vote, and the highway measure won by 62%.

A Full Funding Grant Agreement is now in place for the Southeast Corridor (now called T-REX – the Transportation

Expansion Project). A light-rail connection to the South-west suburbs, which had been funded by federal funds, opened last year, on-time and on-budget, with ridership that is 50% over projections.

Major Investment Studies are now complete for the six remaining corridors. A recent public opinion survey by Transit Alliance, CDOT and RTD found 78% support to fund a proposed mix of rail, bus and highway projects. An equal number supported a four-tenths-of-a-cent sales tax increase for RTD for the rail and bus elements of the plan.

This public support for light rail funding, combined with a track record of successful light rail projects, a unified RTD board of directors, and well-defined projects in each transportation corridor, bode well for passage of a transit sales tax proposal in the next couple of years.

Transit Alliance is a coalition of 36 local governments, business associations and citizen groups dedicated to public transit as part of a balanced, multimodal transportation network for Metropolitan Denver. For more information, call the Alliance at 303-573-1496 or visit www.transitalliance.org.



Englewood, Colorado, pedestrian bridge - part of Denver's regional transit system

OP/ED: A Light Rail Letter to the Editor

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Editor's note: Much of the debate about transit development will be waged in the media. Progress is reprinting this sample "letter to the editor," prepared by the Center for Transportation Excellence. Feel free to use it in support of your local rail initiatives!

As representatives of cities with new light rail systems, we'd like to share our successes with your citizens. Soon, voters in your community will be making an important decision. They will not only be voting on light rail, but, quite directly, on the quality of life and economy of your city. In our cities, the voters said yes and we can say with certainty that light rail has been pivotal to our communities' mobility and economic health. Light rail is helping us keep pace with growth and protect our regions' livability. Here are a few samples of the *real* benefits of light rail development:

St. Louis: Before MetroLink Light Rail service began in 1993, ridership was projected at 17,000 people per day. In the system's *first month of operation*, approximately 26,500 passengers rode MetroLink each day. By 2000, the average weekday ridership averaged 41,766 commuters. In addition:

- The average commuter saves about \$1500 and 200 gallons of gas yearly, simply by using public transit instead of driving.
- A full MetroLink train removes 125 cars from the highway.
- Metro Link boosts civic pride and brings people together on the train.
- And Metro Link stimulates economic development and helps sell St. Louis as a wonderful place to live.

Salt Lake City: Ever since the TRAX system began operation in December 1999 (a year ahead of schedule and under budget), residents have flocked to use it. Projecting average weekday ridership of 14,000 people, actual ridership has greatly exceeded projections, with a high of 19,742 trips per day in March, only three months after the system opened. Those numbers have continued to rise to more than 20,000 riders per day. It is standing room only during peak hours and often in the evening, as people use the system to visit the many entertainment venues in downtown Salt Lake City. Saturday ridership is even higher, with a high of 25,621 trips per day last April. Surveys found that 45 percent of TRAX users were new to public transportation and more than 47 percent has used one of the system's free park-and-ride lots. Light rail is a success in Salt Lake City and is helping to protect Utah's quality of life for generations to come.

Denver: Growth in the Denver metro area continues at a rapid pace with population forecasts continuing to increase. Like Austin, Texas, people are coming to Denver and to Colorado because it's a great place to live and the economy is healthy. While growth brings greater opportunities, it also puts tremendous pressures on local and regional transportation systems. Recognizing this, local voters decided to invest in public transit. The resultant Southwest Corridor Light Rail is now 56 percent ahead of ridership projections. Of all commuters into downtown Denver, 25 percent use transit, while an additional 15 percent carpool, bike or walk. We have found that light rail offers a fast, efficient and cost competitive alternative to the automobile.

The decision the voters in your community make will be an important one. Federal funds for light rail are limited and the competition is great. Forty-seven of 50 metropolitan areas have some type of rail planning underway, with many of them looking at rail in particular. We encourage voters to do what voters did in Salt Lake City, Denver and St. Louis – and numerous other communities - vote yes for light rail and yes for the health and vitality of your community!

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Bi-State Development Agency
St. Louis, Missouri

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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Metropolitan Chambers Urge Transit Investment

**by Amy Anderson Day, Director,
Government Relations Division,
Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce**

For the business community, traffic congestion is a growing threat to the economic “bottom line.” When it takes longer for employees to get to work – and they arrive frustrated – productivity is reduced, tardiness increases, and turnover rises. Likewise, traffic congestion causes delays in shipping goods through and around metropolitan areas, raising the price of doing business...and often, the price of goods to the consumer. In short, business productivity and efficiency is at risk in an auto-only transportation environment.

For the business community in our nation’s major metropolitan areas, rapid-transit funding is seen as an essential infrastructure investment, one necessary to tackle the congestion problem. Transit can bring employees to work quickly and efficiently, taking cars off the roads and freeing space for delivery vehicles. Recent polling of the business community in the Chicagoland area shows that traffic is one of the issues of greatest concern, second only to finding qualified workers. Some business leaders argue that these two issues are very directly linked.

Lack of transportation infrastructure in Illinois has been a growing problem. In 1997 the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce worked with the Metropolitan Planning Council and Chicago Metropolis 2020 to form *Business Leaders for Transportation (BLT)*. BLT is a regional advocacy group, consisting largely of local chambers of commerce, that supports increased investment in transportation infrastructure. This group was a catalyst for Governor George Ryan’s *Illinois FIRST* program which passed the state legislature in 1999. This \$13 billion spending program brought a necessary infusion of funding to Chicago-area transit systems.

Building upon the success of BLT, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce is now focusing on increased *federal* funding for transit systems. With the re-authorization of TEA-21 just around the corner, the Chamber has begun working with sister organizations in other metropolitan areas where significant transit funding is being sought.

As a result of these efforts, the National Business Coalition for Rapid Transit (NBCRT) was launched. Current members of the NBCRT are Chambers of Commerce from metropolitan areas including San Francisco, Los Angeles, Oakland, San Diego, Denver, Minneapolis, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, New Orleans, Miami, Pittsburgh, Boston, and Lancaster (PA), and other business groups like the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group and downtown alliances in Salt Lake City and Minneapolis. These regions are among many across the country competing for New Starts funding.

The mission of NBCRT is to serve as the business voice for increased transit funding during the federal appropriations process. The Chamber has hired Steve Schlickman, of Schlickman & Associates in Chicago to serve as NBCRT manager. Mr. Schlickman has years of experience in federal transportation funding, and has served as the Chairman of the New Starts Working Group, based in Washington, DC.

The General Accounting Office has reported a significant shortfall of TEA-21 New Starts Funds for existing and proposed rapid transit projects. Under federal law, at least 20 percent of project costs must be funded locally. Currently, only approximately 50 percent of transit projects include New Starts funding. Nationally, New Starts program funds have been over-committed, making it very difficult for projects to obtain critical federal matching funds to build the necessary transit capacity needed in our nation’s metropolitan regions.

Working with other advocacy groups such as the American Public Transportation Association, the New Starts Working Group and the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the NBCRT hopes to add credibility to this debate by ensuring federal lawmakers understand the importance of transit investment for the business community in metropolitan areas.

In October, NBCRT leaders met with federal transportation officials and key Congressional members, to weigh in on this issue. Strategy meetings were also held with partner advocacy organizations. With a Republican administration in the White House and a Republican majority in the House, the business community can certainly be an effective partner in this debate.

The next step for the NBCRT will be to collect and disseminate information on the economic benefits of transit investment in metropolitan areas to help make the case for increased federal transit investment. Over the next few years, the coalition is committed to increasing its membership, growing its voice, and continuing to influence the federal appropriations process.

The Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce was the first regional chamber in the nation, founded in 1946. The Chamber serves as the unified voice of area businesses and provides its members with advocacy services, educational programs and networking opportunities. For more information on the National Business Coalition for Rapid Transit, please contact Amy Anderson Day at 312/494-6725 or aanderson@chicagolandchamber.org, and/or NBCRT coalition manager Steve Schlickman at 312/920-0132 or steveschl@aol.com.

Lessons from the Ballot Box

by William W. Millar, President, American Public Transportation Association

The public transportation industry is in the midst of a true renaissance, experiencing the highest ridership levels in more than 40 years. To put this growth into perspective, use of public transit has grown by 21 percent since 1995 – faster than highway use, domestic airline travel, or the U.S. population. The first quarter 2001 ridership numbers are equally robust, showing another increase of 2.8 percent. And recent U.S. Census data shows that the number of workers commuting by transit between 1990 and 2000 increased by 8.3 percent.

This level of demand for transit services demonstrates that when people are given a viable choice, they will ride public transportation. People want transit now and they will want transit tomorrow. The American Society of Civil Engineers issued a report card on the nation's infrastructure earlier this year that predicts transit will experience the sharpest growth of any form of transportation this decade. To accommodate current needs and future growth, investment in transportation infrastructure is crucial.

Grassroots support is essential for major transit projects. Public opinion polls in Tampa, Columbus (Ohio), Minneapolis/Saint Paul, and Honolulu, as well as voters in Phoenix, Houston, Salt Lake City and Santa Clara (California) demonstrate that people are willing to tax themselves to receive quality transit services. Many grassroots coalitions, cities, and transit agencies have advanced local votes on transit ballot measures. To learn from their experiences, the Mineta Transportation Institute and APTA conducted a workshop in July in San Jose (California) for 130 people representing every major transit voter referendum held over the past ten years.

The workshop – *Lessons Learned: A Conference on Transit Referenda and Why they Succeed or Fail* – brought together key campaign strategists, researchers, policy analysts, community activists, business and labor leaders, municipal and transit officials, and others from around the nation. Some of

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Commuter Choice Program: Everybody Benefits

by Michael Replegle, Transportation Director, Environmental Defense

The Alliance for Clean Air and Transportation – a unique partnership of road builders, the transit industry and auto industries, environmental and community groups, and transportation agencies – has launched the National Cooperative Commuter Choice Marketing initiative to help make non-taxable transit and commuter benefits widely available. Maryland DOT, Illinois DOT, EPA, and others have invested over \$1.4 million to create and launch three commuter-oriented, 30-second TV ads; employer-directed print ads appropriate for distribution anywhere in the nation; a media/organizing toolkit; and other research-based public education and marketing materials. TV spots encourage transit riders to become advocates for employer-supported transit benefits, and stress that commuter choice saves employees money, reduces commuter stress, and provides a tax break for their employers. These spots first aired in Baltimore in September and October.

Commuter Choice is designed to offer customized regional marketing, and links to local and national benefit service providers, transit agencies, and program advocates. In addition, national coverage for one-stop, outsourced administration and marketing of these benefit programs is available through a new website developed by the Association for Commuter Transportation, www.commuterchoice.com, which also offers more details on the marketing campaign. View all three TV ads at: <http://www.commuterchoicemaryland.com/home/media.html>. For a sample video cassette, and to find out how your region can gain access to these exciting new marketing tools for Commuter Choice, contact Melinda Schnare, Executive Secretariat of Clean Air and Transportation, at 301-272-2428 or MSchnare@equals3.com.



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Michael Replegle is an officer of Clean Air and Transportation, Environmental Defense and can be reached at 202/387-3500, michaelr@environmentaldefense.org.

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the recommendations emerging from the workshop focused on:

The transit project itself – A successful project needs to be well researched, technically sound, cost effective, and meet specific needs of the community. Speakers at the workshop stressed polling residents early and often while developing transit plans to assess voter support and test the message.

The campaign message – Keep all public messages simple and focus on the project's benefits rather than its cost. Other suggestions emphasized building a broad coalition and base of support representing different local viewpoints. A campaign needs a local leader with name recognition and a good campaign advisor who understands how to win referenda. And project proponents should develop rapport with local media long before the vote takes place. As voters become more educated with the proposal, they are more likely to approve it, even if an earlier version failed in a previous election.

Dealing with critics. Workshop participants encouraged transit ballot proponents to challenge their critics' charges. While ballot initiatives require absolute certainty to pass, opponents need only create seeds of doubt to have them defeated. For ideas about responding to critics, read "Twelve Anti-Transit Myths: A Conservative Critique," by Paul Weyrich and William Lind, Free Congress Foundation. The report was presented at the *Lessons Learned* conference and is available upon request from APTA by emailing info@apta.com.

These are only a few of the many recommendations that emerged from the workshop. APTA's new education, outreach and investment initiative known as (PT)² – the Public Transportation Partnership for Tomorrow – will serve as

an ongoing source of ideas and materials on how to build support for transit and transit ballot measures.

The demand for public transportation is apparent. Many cities want to establish or expand rail services to meet increased public demand. Already, approximately 200 fixed-guideway projects – rail transit or buses using a separate right-of-way – are in the federal pipeline for funding support. A recent survey by the U.S. Conference of Mayors found that all but *three* of the nation's top 50 metropolitan economies either have or are planning some type of rail investment.

Likewise, *metropolitan* areas see effective public transportation as an integral part of a balanced regional transportation system. They know public transportation can and does make a difference in our overall quality of life, and that it is key to sustainable economic growth. Public transit, and resulting transit-oriented development, also contribute to improved air quality by reducing vehicle miles traveled on our roads. All these factors help keep communities strong and economically vibrant.

Through (PT)² and other APTA initiatives, our message will resonate among *many* audiences: Public transportation is clearly the Smart Choice!

The American Public Transportation Association is a nonprofit international association of more than 1,400 public and private member organizations including transit systems and commuter rail operators; planning, design, construction and finance firms; product and service providers; and academic institutions, transit associations and state departments of transportation. Over 90 percent of the people using public transportation in the United States and Canada are served by APTA members.

Information is Power: Resources for Responding to the Critics

The Center for Transportation Excellence is *the* information clearinghouse for transit proponents. Looking for arguments to use in local debates? Visit the CFTE website and click on "Responding to Critics." Or, for information on transit ballot measures, go to "Election Issues." And for details? Don't miss CFTE's "Resource Library." The Center for Transportation can be found at <http://www.cfte.org>.

CFTE Welcomes Betsy Jackson as New Executive Director

Betsy Jackson joined the Center for Transportation Excellence as Executive Director on November 1. Betsy is the Principal and Founder of The Urban Agenda, an urban development consulting firm. Prior to forming her firm, Jackson was President of the International Downtown Association. "With downtowns coming back and suburbs suffering from traffic congestion and diminishing quality of life, transportation choice will be the critical link to reclaiming our communities," Ms. Jackson said. "It's a great time to participate in the next American Revolution - inter-modal transportation."



STPP Announcements

STPP has welcomed several additional members to its national and field offices during 2001.

Andrea Broaddus joined STPP as the State and Local Campaign Manager this spring, bringing four years of advocacy experience in transportation and smart growth through her work at the Wisconsin Bicycle Federation and the New Transportation Alliance.

STPP's New Mexico office opened in June under the leadership of **DeAnza Valencia**. DeAnza worked as the Senate Majority Analyst for the New Mexico Senate, where she handled press and media communications.

Karin Cicelski assumed the newly created position of Director of Operations this August. Karin manages administration, finance, human resources and IT functions at STPP – all activities devoted to making our professional lives easier and more fulfilling.

STPP California welcomes **Kristi Kimball** as Program Director for the San Francisco Bay Area and the Central Valley. She comes to STPP with four years' experience in policy analysis and a Masters in Public Affairs from Princeton University.

This September, STPP celebrated the marriage of data wizard **Michelle Garland** and Dan Ernst. The newlyweds began their first conversation over a happenstance copy of Jane Jacobs' *Death and Life of American Cities*. Our congratulations to Michelle Ernst and her groom!

Local Funding is Needed, from page 4

for transit supporters heading into TEA-21 reauthorization.

Thus, we are faced with unprecedented demand for transit nationwide while federal budget resources are increasingly constrained. There are a number of options currently available, as well as several that Congress could consider during TEA-21 reauthorization. Without handicapping their likelihood for success, I would suggest that Congress consider the following :

- Raise the gasoline tax by a nickel from 18.4 cents a gallon to 23.4 cents a gallon. Assuming that transit continues to receive approximately 15.5 percent of the gasoline tax revenues, the hike would generate an additional \$775 million annually for transit.
- Increase the *share* of the gasoline tax that transit receives to 25 percent of any increase. Combined with the five cent increase described above, the increased share would generate an additional \$450 million for public transit.
- Dedicate additional General Fund revenues to transit, either separately or in addition to any gasoline tax increase.
- Promote additional flexibility in the highway program by suballocating to the metropolitan areas a portion of the National Highway System (NHS) Program, in the same manner as the Surface Transportation Program. Additionally, expand the definition of what is considered to be the "NHS corridor," to include acknowledgement that rail service does not need to be immediately adjacent to the NHS corridor in order to favorably impact congestion in that corridor.

- Develop a program similar to S. 250, the High Speed Rail Investment Act, which, as proposed, allows states to leverage highway funds to provide capital to upgrade Amtrak Equipment and rail lines, while also allowing states to expand high speed rail service. A similar program for transit would permit comparable capital investments in rail transit service through the leveraging of highway funds in the same manner.

The prognosis for each of these options is uncertain. Each faces its own set of challenges in today's federal budgetary climate. Yet, the *political* environment is very favorable. A growing number of communities are expressing their support for more transportation options at the ballot box. And more members of Congress are becoming aware that voters expect federal funding to be provided for rail projects in their communities. It is community support – and the effectiveness of local citizens to *express* their support – for transportation choices that will result in Congress considering and adopting some or all of these options as part of TEA-21 reauthorization.

Jeffrey F. Boothe is partner in the law firm of Holland & Knight, LLP. For the past five years, Mr. Boothe has chaired the New Starts Working Group which advocates support for new rail projects on behalf of transit authorities, metropolitan areas, engineering firms and rail car manufacturers. He can be reached at jboothe@hklaw.com.

¹ American Public Transportation Association Survey, November 1999.

² Annual Report on New Starts: Proposed Allocation of Funds for Fiscal Year 2002, Federal Transit Administration, May 2001.

Winning Transit Elections: Keys to Success

by Alan C. Wulkan, Principal Consultant, PBConsult

How many times have you heard the story of a community losing a transit election despite polls that show the vast majority of people support public transit? One of the most difficult elections to win is a transit tax election. Between 1998 and 1999 there were 29 transit elections of various types nationwide. Eighteen failed. However, in 2000, 70% of similar referenda passed (see chart). What is turning the tide in favor of transit? First and foremost, campaigns are getting smarter and campaign leaders are following some basic principles.

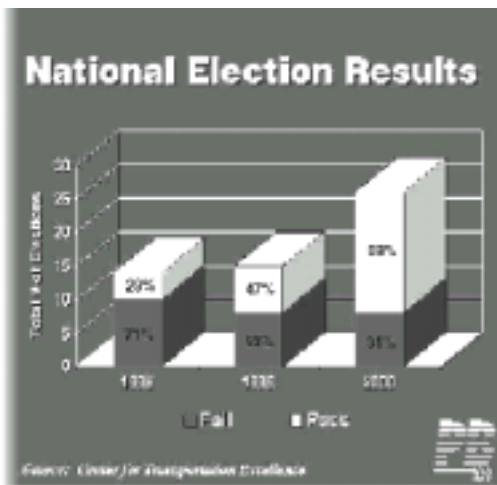
Each election is different. Campaigns to support transit programs with rail systems are different than all-bus election campaigns. Communities which already have successful transit programs need a different campaign strategy than communities without a long history of transit support. However, there are some basic principles that apply to all transit campaigns:

Focus on winning. Simple, right? Too often, people confuse planning the best transit system with winning an election. Opponents often know little about transit; but they do know how to win elections because they understand which negative issues resonate with the voters. Transit supporters must do a better job of understanding what voters want from their transit system; but they must also be able to answer the question every voter asks, "What is in it for me?". That is why the next principle is critical.

Survey early and often. You must know what the public is thinking, not only about your plan, but about *all* the issues which might impact the election. In Tempe, Arizona, for example, early polling showed that the community loved bus pull-outs. But transit operations people hated them. The plan that ultimately went to the voters had numerous bus pull-outs and the election passed with a 54 percent majority.

Raise funds early. Adequate funding is critical to a successful election. In many campaigns money comes in too late to purchase television and radio spots, both of which need long lead times. It is also critical to know the fund raising laws, which can differ from state to state. The amount of funding needed for a campaign will depend on the size of the community, the campaign approach to media buys and many other variables. However, whenever possible, fund raising should begin six to nine months before the money will be needed.

Keep it simple! Despite all the publicity surrounding an election, most people will make up their mind on how to vote during the last week of the campaign. A confused voter is a no vote, so the wording of the ballot must be clear and simple. Remember: The majority of the people you are asking to approve funding for a transit system will *never* use the system. Again, your communications strategy must answer the question, "What's in it for me?" Of course, the answers are numerous and could include the importance of choice, or economic development, or environmental protection, or something as self-interested as "getting other people out of their cars so I can drive faster."



Use the three keys to a successful election. These three keys are similar to a three-legged stool: take one leg away and you will stumble or fail. The keys to success are:

- Finding Champion(s)
- Employing Professional Political Consultants
- Developing Grass Roots Support

Champions. These are the people in a community who are household names with credibility and have nothing to personally gain from the success of the election. Ideally, you will have many champions but it is critical that a well-known public figure leads the campaign. Ideally, champions are *not* currently serving elected officials who would have to put their political futures on the line. However, in cities like Charlotte, North Carolina, and Phoenix, Arizona, voters overwhelmingly approved new transit taxes with seated mayors and councilmen as the strongest champions.

Winning Transit Elections, from page 10

Professional Political Consultants. To win an election you should secure professional help; it is sure that your opponents will. The best team is a combination of local consultants who know how to win “issue” campaigns in the community and “outsiders” who have won transit elections in other jurisdictions. The key is *experience with issues*: transit campaigns are very different than elections to public office. You are selling an *idea*, not a person, and in most cases, it is an idea with which relatively few people in the community are familiar. As important as hiring the right consultants is *listening* to them. Too often campaign committees, which by their nature attract strong-willed and opinionated individuals, overlook or undervalue the advice of their campaign managers. It is the job of the consultants to incorporate the experience and influence of the local leadership into a campaign strategy that reflects local values and tested techniques.

Grass Roots Support. Successful elections are built from the community up. Neighborhood groups, the business community and community organizations like the League of

Women Voters should be involved in *creating the plan*, not just selling it. Grassroots initiatives can be time consuming and messy, but the communities that have tried to take shortcuts have failed. There is nothing harder than building grassroots support *after* you’ve snubbed the community and failed with the first ballot attempt.

Even if you follow all the keys to success, there is a good chance the transit election will not pass the first time. Transit election issues are complex and it is easy for opponents to succeed with a “no new taxes” message. Therefore, there is one final ingredient that every successful election must have... a little luck!

Alan Wulkan is a Senior Vice President and Transit Program Area Manager with Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc. He is nationally recognized for his work on legislative issues affecting the transit industry and speaks to local and national audiences on transportation issues. Alan can be reached at wulkan@pbworld.com.

Ten Years of Progress: Commemorating a Decade of Transportation Reform

This December marks the ten year anniversary of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. Signed into law by President George Bush on December 18, 1991, the landmark transportation law launched a decade of transportation investments built on principles of improved performance, economic efficiency, environmental stewardship, and community involvement.

The Surface Transportation Policy Project and the Ten Years of Progress Event Committee are commemorating this anniversary by hosting an awards dinner on December 12 in Washington, DC and honoring two of ISTEAs greatest champions – Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan and U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta. Co-sponsored by more than 25 organizations including the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the American Public Transportation Association, the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials, and the Transportation Funders Group, the awards dinner will be followed by the declaration of a New Transportation Charter and an Advocates Roundtable on December 13.

Please join us on December 12th in Washington, DC or in your local community the following week, to celebrate how far our nation has come in improving transportation and quality of life over the last decade. For more details about the Ten Years of Progress Awards Dinner and local events taking place between December 13 and 21, visit STPP’s website at <http://www.transact.org>.



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The goal of Surface Transportation Policy Project is to ensure that transportation policy and investments help conserve energy, protect environmental and aesthetic quality, strengthen the economy, promote social equity, and make communities more livable. We emphasize the needs of people, rather than vehicles, in assuring access to jobs, services, and recreational opportunities.

The work of STPP is made possible by grants from the Ford Foundation, the Gund Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the Prince Charitable Trusts, the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, the Surdna Foundation, the Rauch Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Turner Foundation, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

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