

Legislative Issue Briefing

March 2010

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION'S ROLE IN ENERGY AND CLIMATE LEGISLATION

Greenhouse gas emissions from transportation accounts for 28% of U.S. emissions, and transportation accounts for seventy percent of U.S. oil consumption. Transit use produces a significant net reduction in both greenhouse-gas emissions and fuel consumption. It is critical that any legislation that generates revenue from a “cap-and-trade” program or carbon tax include investments for public transportation.

- 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 equal to more than three times the amount of oil we import from Kuwait each year.

In 2009, several federal “cap and trade” bills were developed that would generate significant revenue for public transportation. The U.S. House of Representatives approved the “American Clean Energy and Security Act” (H.R. 2454), which made transit eligible for a small portion of revenues under the cap and trade system, but did not guarantee any transit investment. In the Senate, the Environment and Public Works Committee approved the “Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act” (S. 1733). That bill directed that 2.5 percent of allowances to transportation investment, generating \$2 billion or more annually. Half of that revenue was for transit formula programs, and the remainder would provide funds for a multi-modal competitive grant program for “green” transportation investments, including public transportation infrastructure, land use planning, development of new emission-reduction technologies.

Currently, opposition to a “cap and trade” system in the U.S. Senate appears strong, and progress on a climate bill has stalled. In recent weeks, Senators John Kerry (D-MA), Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Joe Lieberman (I-CT) have worked to develop a compromise bill. Their proposal is likely to eliminate a transportation emissions cap, and instead create a carbon tax on motor fuels that could generate significant revenue for transportation investment.

APTA POSITION

- **Energy and climate legislation should provide substantial new investment in public transportation and other strategies that reduce growth in vehicle miles of travel.**
- **Revenue from a carbon tax or cap and trade system must be reinvested in transportation infrastructure that reduces fuel consumption and carbon pollution.**
- **Since public transportation systems provide a net reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, they should receive funding to offset increased operating costs associated with a carbon tax or cap and trade system to reduce the need for fare increases or service reductions.**