Missing the Train

How the Bush Administration’s Transportation Proposal Threatens Jobs, Commutes, and Public Transit Ridership
Portland, Oregon, shown here, is hoping to add a north-south light rail line to connect existing east-west rail with Portland State University, the Gateway area, and with Amtrak. Expansion would face more hurdles under a Bush administration proposal.
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Since the last time Congress took up a major transportation funding bill in 1998, public transit ridership has increased 21 percent. New transit lines are greatly exceeding projected ridership in Dallas, Denver, Salt Lake City and elsewhere. New Starts, the federal program that helps promising transit projects get off the ground, has a record backlog of more than 200 projects, reflecting the fact that more and more communities are embracing, and clamoring for, public transportation.

The recent surge underscores an important realization that is taking hold in communities across the country: that public transit fuels economic growth and jobs, and it does so without the smog and other drawbacks of building single mode transportation systems that just put more cars on the road.

Unfortunately, the Bush administration seems to be ignoring what appears obvious to residents of places like Milwaukee, Portland, and Cincinnati, all cities with new transit projects waiting in the wings. Last year, the Bush administration proposed, as part of its six-year transportation plan, a radical change to the ratio for federal matching transit funds. Currently, the federal/state funding match for all new transportation projects is 80:20, however, the Bush administration would like to dramatically increase the state share to 50 percent for all new transit projects. In doing so, this administration would put hundreds of transit projects across the country in jeopardy, and with them, the jobs and economic gains those projects bring locally.

This report seeks to highlight the economic and workforce benefits of public transportation and identify key projects that could suffer as a result of the Bush administration’s attempt to put disincentives on transit projects.

Across the United States, commuters and travelers seek greater transportation choices. Missing the Train shows that the nation can craft a transportation blueprint that creates more vibrant communities, a better environment, and a higher quality of life, while improving job opportunities and economic growth.

Instead of believing that economic prosperity must come at the expense of the environment, and that the preferred road to recovery only involves endless construction of more highways, the Sierra Club believes there is a better way. With leadership from the Bush administration and a serious commitment to public transportation, this nation could make a strong step toward a more environmentally sustainable economic recovery.
These twelve communities—among hundreds scattered across the country—wait in a line for funding of transit projects that would bring economic, environmental and mobility benefits. Inadequate funding means many of these projects will be put off for decades or might never be built.

1 Tampa Bay Regional Rail System
2 Atlanta-Athens Commuter Rail
3 Northeast Indianapolis Corridor Rapid Transit
4 Jefferson, Orleans, and St. Charles Parishes light rail
5 Bethesda to New Carrollton Purple Line
6 Downtown Detroit to Metro Airport Rail Project
7 Lowell-Nashua Commuter Rail Extension
8 Cincinnati Interstate 75 Corridor Light Rail
9 Portland South Corridor Light Rail
10 Houston Light Rail Extension
11 Williamsburg-Newport News-Hampton Light Rail
12 Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Metra Extension
Commuting’s Toll on the Workforce

Traffic congestion is the bane of suburban, urban, and increasingly, more of our traditionally rural commuters nationwide. Any car-bound commuter already knows the conclusion of the Texas Transportation Institute’s 2003 Urban Mobility Report: two out of every three cars experience congestion in their morning or evening trip, and in the past twenty years, peak period travel congestion has doubled. Now, 67 percent of the peak period travel is congested, and 59 percent of the major road system today is congested.1

The costs of traffic congestion are staggering. Based on wasted time and fuel alone, the Texas Transportation Institute estimates congestion costs $69.5 billion per year in 75 U.S. urban areas studied.2

Paul M. Weyrich and William S. Lind of the conservative Free Congress Foundation, have taken a hard-nosed look at transportation in the United States. They have reached conclusions in strong support of public transportation, and argue the benefits not only to transit riders, but to the driving public as well. Their chief message is that “even if you don’t ride it, you will use it,” because when others are riding transit, it saves money, vehicle miles, and offers traveling flexibility to the public.3 Similarly, the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), notes that, “For every $10 million invested in public transportation, more than $15 million is saved in transportation costs to both highway and public transportation users.”4

Unfortunately, too many public officials at local, state and federal levels believe that we can rely on building new highways and widening existing roads to relieve congestion. A critical look, however, shows that is largely a failed concept that only has the opposite effect of increasing congestion. Building new roads and increasing capacity on existing roads brings “induced” traffic – essentially “if you build it, they will come.” Motorists will make longer trips, increase miles traveled, and new roads will encourage more sprawl development. In fact, only three years after new roadways open, traffic fills road capacity between 50 and 100 percent.5 Clearly, congestion is not something we can build ourselves out of with more road construction; it actually perpetuates traffic problems.

Better solutions to traffic congestion include more balanced investment in public transportation choices.

Stressed at the Office

While economists can calculate monetary losses due to congestion, the human cost of congestion has yet to be measured. Although these costs are not as easily quantified, human resource professionals and health care experts have sounded the warning that stress is one of the top barriers to job performance in today’s workplace. And today’s traffic generates stress even among the most steely of drivers.

Indeed, rush-hour traffic can inhibit productivity all day. HR Magazine quotes Steve Stephenson,
senior manager in organization and team development at the Boeing Commercial Airplane Company in Greenbank, Washington. He notes that “people come to work jangled,” and that “a 15-second episode can cause hormonal changes that last for six hours. That infects the whole day.”

While the bulk of drivers simmer impatiently in their cars, for some others, the frustration boils over. Our roadways have, quite literally, become battlegrounds. A 2003 study found that approximately two-thirds of United States drivers have been victims of aggressive driving in the last year, and the United States was among a handful of nations with the most aggressive driving in the world. Simply navigating rush-hour in the United States brings a host of frustrations, annoyances, and confrontations with aggressive drivers.

Increasingly, the stress of traffic is slowly forcing businesses to shift their policies to ease some of the commuting pressure on their employees. “Flex-time,” compressed work schedules, and telecommuting have all become increasingly popular in recent years. This is both because companies are recognizing that it pays to offer work schedules that accommodate people’s other needs – with day-care, after-school activities, and other demands – but also because people are sick of fighting traffic. These tactics may help a select number of employees; however, the root traffic problems continue to grow.

In one example of a company seeking to “beat the traffic,” a Connecticut commercial property company has found it in their interest to work with their tenants on commuting alternatives. Anita Caggiano, Marketing Administrator of W&M Properties, notes, “During rush hour, I-95 is a nightmare…people without alternative commute options arrive at work very stressed and upset.”

W&M Properties discovered the good business practice of promoting transportation choices to their tenant companies and employees. By promoting and offering options, such as a shuttle bus to rail at the Stamford Transportation Center, providing literature about transportation choices, and more, their employees will be less distracted from their commutes and able to perform better at work.

The Commuting Challenge of Low-Wage America

Transportation costs weigh heavily on Americans in the lowest 20 percent income bracket, who spend about 42 percent of their total annual incomes on transportation, compared to 22 percent among middle-income Americans.
Public transit significantly eases that burden. The Center for Transportation Excellence estimates the cost of owning and driving a single-occupant vehicle is between $4,826 and $9,685 per year, depending on the size of the car. In contrast, the annual average cost of public transportation for an adult ranges from $200 to $2,000.10

The availability of transportation choices, or lack thereof, also has a profound impact on employment opportunities, especially for low-wage workers.

Because housing costs are spiraling upward, it is often impossible for workers to live near employment in either the suburbs or the city center. Harvard University’s Joint Center for Housing Studies reports that fully three out of ten U.S. households have difficulty affording housing and that 14.3 million American households spend more than half their income on housing.11 The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines “affordable” as spending no more than thirty percent of income on housing. As a result, many low-income workers have few housing choices and cannot move due to the uncertainties of job security and other risks of the low-wage work world. Affordable public transportation choices are therefore critical to families who are paying too much for housing and cannot live near job centers.

Employment opportunities are often severely limited without access to a reliable auto. Indeed, according to the Center for Transportation Excellence, “an estimated 94 percent of welfare recipients attempting to move into the workforce do not own cars and rely on public transportation.”12

Recognizing the impediment that high transportation costs present for low-income and unemployed individuals to find and maintain jobs, Congress implemented the “Job Access and Reverse Commute” (JARC) program in 1998's Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). The JARC program provides transit funds to assist “welfare-to-work” transitions and to help other low-income workers with transportation costs. This is a good program that begins to address the transportation needs of American workers. However, it should not be a substitute for providing commuters more options to get to work. Expanding public transit would open wider employment opportunities for our workforce.

By helping to reduce traffic for everyone and by providing more commuting choices, public transportation offers an increasingly popular option for getting people to work and strengthening local economies overall.
Transit Creates Jobs and Enhances Local Economies

Today, with 8.2 million people unemployed and the average duration of unemployment lasting over 20 weeks – the worst in two decades – spending federal transportation dollars effectively should be an important component of boosting the economy. Public transportation plays more of a direct role economically than one might expect. According to the Bureau of Economic Affairs, it is the same share of the national Gross Domestic Product as each of the following: coal and metal mining; furniture and fixture manufacturing; textiles; apparel; or tobacco. In 2001, “Local and Interurban Passenger Transit” represented a $19.1 billion share of the Gross Domestic Product.

Yet talk of using transportation dollars to put people to work tends to focus almost exclusively on highway construction jobs. Closer examination, however, reveals that transit projects tend to do better than highway projects when it comes to creating jobs. In a 2004 study, the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) investigated the job returns from investment in transit projects versus highway and bridge projects. The study found that for every $1.25 billion spent on new public transportation projects, nearly 51,300 people are employed. By contrast, only 43,200 are employed per every $1.25 billion spent on new roads and bridges. The STPP data shows that investment in public transportation creates 19 percent more jobs than new road or bridge projects.

Transit Brings Lucrative Development

Transportation creates jobs not only through new construction, maintenance and operation, but also through development and revitalization that occurs as a result of new or improved transportation systems. Public transportation, particularly rail, spurs “transit-oriented development” that helps create a vibrant environment where people can live, work, shop, and use public transportation with ease.

In the Washington, DC area, the public transportation system (Metro) has generated nearly $15 billion in surrounding private development. Between 1980 and 1990, 40 percent of the
region’s retail and office space was built within walking distance of a Metro station. This has led to lively corridors with plentiful restaurants, shops, offices and residences in places like Alexandria, Clarendon and Arlington, Virginia; Bethesda and Silver Spring, Maryland; and the heart of Washington, DC.

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) notes that demand for these transit-oriented neighborhoods far outpaces the supply, and cites studies showing that 30 percent of housing demand is for such communities while less than 2 percent of new housing is put in these areas. APTA states, “Real estate experts and demographers have … concluded the supply of TOD-style living environments, focused on high-quality public transportation, lags far behind demand.” APTA also calculates that the retail market benefits, because for every $10 million invested in public transit, they gauge that local business sales increase by $30 million.

“In Dallas/Fort Worth, APTA asserts that “more than $922 million worth of mixed-use projects have recently emerged along the Dallas DART light rail system, bringing total DART-related development to more than $1 billion.” In St. Louis, transit-oriented development and revitalization has created a surge of $1 billion in property values around their light rail stations since opening in 1993. Tampa Bay’s HARTline bus system has helped spark redevelopment and renovation worth more than $75 million near the city’s transit center. Local governments are clearly seeing the benefits of public transportation as an economic engine, which is one reason so many localities are clamoring for new transit projects.

At the same time revitalization is spurred, however, localities must develop strategies to ensure that affordable housing is preserved. If transit-oriented development is going to work at its best, those struggling at the lowest economic rungs must not be excluded from the benefits.

Labor and Business Groups Embracing Transit

Labor unions are increasingly embracing smart growth and public transportation as they realize the beneficial effects of both on job growth. In a recent study titled The Jobs Are Back in Town: Urban Smart Growth and Construction Employment, Good Jobs First found that “smart growth is in many ways better than sprawl in creating employment for workers who build residential and commercial structures as well as transportation infrastructure.”

Labor leaders like Jerry Butkiewicz, Secretary-Treasurer of the San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council, are finding this true, and are increasingly supporting smart growth. USA Today notes “the building trades unions, usually wary of ‘smart growth’ policies, have become convinced that those development practices hold potential for more jobs and better jobs than sprawl does.”

In the Washington, DC region, the AFL-CIO’s Metropolitan Washington Council has vocally supported the proposed “Purple Line” that would link spokes of the existing Metrorail system in suburban Maryland. In addition, the Maryland/DC AFL-CIO, two UFCW locals, the
Amalgamated Transit Union local, and the Washington DC Building and Construction Trades Council all support building the Purple Line because of its projected economic benefits.

Business, too, is joining with labor in the call for public transportation. They understand that investment in public transportation infrastructure brings transit-oriented development that creates more jobs, vitality and a better business climate. Business leaders representing a half-dozen chambers of commerce and other business organizations stood alongside labor leaders as the President of the Greater Washington Board of Trade noted of the Purple Line, “Transit-oriented development improves our quality of life by giving us alternatives to driving, as well as additional housing and commercial options clustered around transit. And clearly, transit-oriented development spurs economic activity.”

In Cincinnati, similar coalitions have emerged around light rail, bringing together the Cincinnati AFL-CIO Labor Council, several Chambers of Commerce, and corporations like Procter and Gamble and Cintas. Labor and business groups teamed up in Salt Lake City to win a referendum to extend light rail in that city, with the Utah AFL-CIO, the Downtown Alliance, and Salt Lake Area Chamber of Commerce endorsing the ballot measure. Houston voters in 2003 approved a plan to build 8 miles of commuter rail, 72 miles of light rail, and a 50 percent increase in bus service. The $640 million bond measure to begin this process by building 22 miles of the light rail project and expand bus service was backed by the Harris County AFL-CIO and business interests including the Houston Association of Realtors, Greater Houston Partnership, and Central Houston, Inc.

It is becoming more and more clear how public transportation projects are good for a sagging economy. Considering the construction jobs associated with building public transportation infrastructure and new transit-oriented development, in addition to the jobs associated with new retail areas and in maintenance and operation, transit is one of the best investments this nation can make from a jobs perspective. Not all federal spending can boast the economic benefits that transit brings. According to APTA’s report, Dollars & Sense: The Economic Case for Public Transportation in America, “Every dollar taxpayers invest in public transportation generates $6 or more in economic returns.”
The Bush Administration’s Changes Take America Backward

Currently, when the federal government approves any new transportation project, whether it’s a road or transit project, it is supposed to pay for 80 percent of the cost and the state or local community pays 20 percent. The Bush administration has proposed to maintain this 80:20 ratio for roads, while dramatically changing it to 50:50 for transit projects. This means that communities who want transit would have to come up with 50 percent of the cost—a significant increase. This would help to cripple efforts of states and localities to invest in more efficient, cleaner, and more desirable public transportation. The Bush administration proposal creates an obvious disincentive for states and localities to develop any transportation mode other than driving.

What’s more, the overall highway to transit spending ratio remains stagnant in the Bush administration proposal. Under the transportation bill passed in 1991, this transportation funding ratio was 5:1 (roads to transit) which was improved to a 4:1 ratio over the course of the transportation bill that was passed in 1998. With the growing popularity of public transportation, transportation spending should be more balanced. There are hundreds of communities across the country waiting in a decades-long line for public transit funding. Current, inadequate funding levels will mean only a small fraction will be able to invest in multimodal transportation systems. Unfortunately, the Bush administration has ignored the demand.

Inadequate funding for public transportation has resulted in a limited pool of dollars for new transit projects and places more financial burden on localities. Of the 200 new transit projects listed in the Federal Transit Administration’s 2004 Annual Report on New Starts, only a handful will receive full funding for construction and the majority of the rest of the list will be jeopardized by the Bush administration’s unbalanced transportation proposal. These are projects that would increase redevelopment and commerce around transit stations, provide job opportunities, and help to ease commutes in dozens of communities across the nation.
What’s at Stake

Below is a list of important projects that could be hit particularly hard if the Bush administration’s proposed changes go into effect. Some are on the FTA’s New Starts list and some are not, however, this is only a sampling of the many important projects that could be stalled.

Florida

Tampa Bay Regional Rail System – This project would serve 21,980 daily riders. It includes transit in three corridors: 13.4 miles of a Northeast Corridor, 1.5 miles of a Southwest Corridor, and a 5.2 mile West Corridor. This light rail project would serve Downtown Tampa, the University of South Florida, and the Westshore/Airport area. It is in the Metropolitan Planning Commission’s transportation plan.

Georgia

Atlanta-Athens Commuter Rail – This proposed commuter rail line would run along existing freight rail lines. This 72-mile commuter rail could carry as many as 2 million passengers annually and could reduce commuter driving by 73 million miles per year. This would both relieve congestion and help to reduce air pollution in a region that is in severe non-attainment for federal ozone standards. More than 12,000 weekday rides are anticipated on this commuter line, which equals the capacity of 4 highway lanes. This would serve downtown Atlanta and connect the state’s major universities along the corridor, including the University of Georgia, Emory University, Georgia Tech, the Atlanta University Center, and Clayton State. The Centers for Disease Control is also along this corridor as well as redevelopment at Atlantic Station and other, future transit-oriented development opportunities. These are major employment centers and destinations, and the route would include stops between Athens and Atlanta, including Oconee, Barrow, Gwinnett and DeKalb counties.

Indiana

Northeast Indianapolis Corridor rapid transit – The northeast corridor has increasingly become congested with traffic as well as commercial development. The entire Indianapolis area is undergoing a conceptual regional rapid transit system analysis in order to determine if transit investment – in the form of light rail or rapid bus – is needed. This study will also help provide information necessary to submit for federal transit New Starts funding. The Hoosier Heritage Port Authority has purchased the Norfolk Southern rail line from 10th Street in Indianapolis to Tipton, Indiana, to provide the ability to develop transit along that right-of-way. One of the alternatives under consideration would connect downtown Indianapolis to the Indianapolis International Airport. In the year 2000, according to the Texas Transportation Institute, Indianapolis traffic was congested 7.5 hours per day and 29 million vehicle miles were traveled in the Indianapolis area.
Louisiana

Jefferson, Orleans, and St. Charles Parishes East-West Corridor light rail – This 13-mile project would connect the New Orleans central business district with Louis Armstrong International Airport. It is projected to carry approximately 19,000 daily riders and would follow an existing, abandoned heavy rail right-of-way. This would link and improve transportation to major employment and activity centers in the region and encourage sustainable development, jobs and housing in the urbanized areas of New Orleans and Jefferson Parish. The light rail would make the trip from New Orleans’ CBD to the airport in 27-29 minutes and would help to relieve congestion and address travel demand in the corridor. All jurisdictions along the corridor are revising their comprehensive plans to focus on sustainable, transit-oriented development.

Maryland

Bethesda to New Carrollton Purple Line, or “Bi-County Transitway” – As originally envisioned, this would be a light rail line that would serve areas of the Washington, DC suburbs. Estimates place the Purple Line’s ridership at 70,000 trips daily. Aligned through the inner-Beltway areas of Maryland, it would connect four of the region’s existing Metrorail spokes, three commuter rail lines, and serve major employment centers like the University of Maryland and downtowns like Bethesda and Silver Spring. This line would make it more efficient for commuters to reach Metrorail to downtown Washington, DC destinations as well as help to make inner-Beltway suburb-to-suburb trips quicker and easier. It would help many service sector workers who have few transportation alternatives reach their employment.

Michigan

Downtown Detroit to Metro Airport Rail Project. This proposed project, still in the study stage, would connect Detroit Metro/Wayne County Airport with downtown Detroit as part of a larger regional transit plan. The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) is currently considering transit options, including light rail and heavy rail along an existing Amtrak line. SEMCOG is also studying potential routes in this 20-mile corridor. Depending on the route selected, possible stations could include Dearborn locations such as Ford Motor Company, the University of Michigan-Dearborn, Henry Ford Community College and Greenfield Village. Downtown destinations may be Corktown, near the old Tiger stadium, the New Center, and General Motors World Headquarters in the Renaissance Center on the Detroit River. The route chosen should maximize rider access to work, housing and recreation.
New Hampshire

Lowell-Nashua Commuter Rail Extension – At the beginning of service, this project is estimated to make 900 weekday boardings in a major corridor where the roads are congested up to 150 percent their practical capacity in areas. It will give New Hampshire commuters to the greater Boston area a transportation option along the Route 3 corridor. This project would be a 12-mile extension of an existing rail line in Lowell, Massachusetts.

Ohio

Cincinnati Interstate 75 Corridor Light Rail – The Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments voted overwhelmingly in October 2003 to add this light rail system into the region’s long-range transportation plan. This proposed light rail would help to provide long-term road congestion relief by running frequent trains, and a study funded by Ohio’s Department of Transportation and the Regional Council of Governments found that passenger rail in this area is the “only sustainable solution to the congestion problem.” Cincinnati’s air quality is poor as the region is out of compliance with federal smog standards. The light rail’s alignment would likely serve downtown Cincinnati’s central business district and run north to West Chester Township. One of the proposals would have the rail system link with Xavier University, the University of Cincinnati, and the Medical Center. Analysis of light rail service projected more than $900 million in net benefits over the next 30 years, with an 8.5 percent rate of return on the investment. The economic benefits of train service include time savings, affordable mobility, and a decrease in air pollution, among other benefits. The light rail’s projected weekday ridership is estimated at 20,000 per day.

Oregon

Portland South Corridor – This proposed extension of Portland’s light rail system would increase transit ridership by 60,600 on an average weekday. It would provide a fourth spoke in the regional rail system and would connect the central city of Portland with several regional and town centers. This light rail would connect Portland State University, Clackamas Town Center, and the Gateway area to downtown Portland, Union Station and Amtrak. Currently, light rail does not connect to Union Station and Amtrak, but this additional light rail line would tie all of the rail lines together – light rail, the downtown streetcar (in two places), and heavy rail. This line would run north-south, whereas existing light rail runs east-west, making for better service that crosses the light rail lines and connects sections of the Portland area. This line would provide more opportunities for transit-oriented development, including housing, and help to economically revitalize existing, underutilized areas of the Portland region.
Texas

Houston Light Rail Extension – In January 2004, Houston opened its first segment of METRORail, a 7.5-mile line from downtown to Reliant Park. The initial segment was funded entirely through non-federal funds. They are looking to construct more segments, eventually totaling a 73-mile system over the course of the next 25 years. One of the corridors being looked at is the “Southeast-Universities-Hobby” corridor. This section would serve the Central Business District, two universities (Texas Southern and University of Houston), Texas Medical Center, and Hobby Airport. The “activity centers” in this corridor contain nearly half the current and projected employment in Harris County. Despite raising local funding through bond measures, Houston would find it difficult to construct the rest of the light rail system without help from the federal government, and METRO officials are concerned about the prospect of dwindling available federal dollars. According to the Houston Chronicle, “Shirley DeLibero, Metro’s outgoing president and chief executive officer, said the [federal] money needs to start flowing right away. Metro lost out on $162 million in matching funds by paying for the Main Street line on its own, she noted.”

Virginia

Williamsburg-Newport News-Hampton Light Rail – This proposed 32-mile light rail corridor would run between Williamsburg and downtown Newport News, serving the downtowns and commercial centers of Hampton and Newport News, including the Airport/Oyster Point area. The Hampton Roads Metropolitan Planning Organization has included the light rail project in the region’s long-range transportation plan. This is a region that had been out of compliance for federal ozone standards for much of the 1990s, although it is now classified as in “marginal attainment.”

Wisconsin

Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Metra Extension – This proposed 33-mile project would extend the Metra commuter rail along the I-94 corridor. It would connect the central business districts of Kenosha, Racine and Milwaukee. There is strong support for the project among businesses, the public, and local officials. What’s more, 147,500 jobs exist within walking distance from the proposed rail station and this commuter rail would link with Amtrak in Milwaukee. Conservative estimates place ridership at 4,100 to 5,100 per day, or 1.1 to 1.5 million annually.
Conclusion: A Better Way to Invest in America

Few sectors of our nation’s economy can contribute so much to improving our workforce’s quality of life and to creating more job growth opportunities than the transportation sector. At the same time, few sectors of the economy can do so much harm to our quality of life and degrade our economic environment as poor transportation services and a lack of transportation options.

Whether it is an office worker stuck in traffic, a car-less worker in need of transportation choices, or someone conducting an employment search that is hindered by limited commuting options, our transportation system significantly affects how we as a nation will prosper or languish economically. Our daily lives are intertwined with transportation because it limits us from, or frees us up for, making better use of our time and resources.

Unfortunately, the Bush administration proposal maintains a severe imbalance between overall road and transit funding where roads receive $4 for every $1 spent on public transit. The administration’s short-sighted proposal keeps transit funding at insufficient, stagnant ratios and the poorest communities that need public transportation the most are those that will be least able to afford it under the Bush administration plan.

From Oregon to Virginia, and from Texas to Wisconsin, the public is eager for transportation choices. Yet, the Bush administration is listening to its backers in the road lobby and pushing roads over transit.

There is a better way to invest in America. We can move our workforce more efficiently and generate more jobs in the transportation, construction, retail, and housing sectors through greater investment in public transportation choices. We will also enjoy benefits including better air and water quality, greater public health, less sprawl, and more independence for our aging population. A more balanced transportation system that creates opportunities for transit-oriented development and revitalization of urban cores is a winning combination for the economy, for families, and for individual commuters’ quality of life. Regardless, as the job market remains sluggish, the Bush administration has again failed to maximize opportunities for economic growth that benefits both the workforce and the environment.
Endnotes


2. Ibid.


5. For example, see studies located at: www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/transportation/seven.asp.


16. Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.


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“Missing the Train” can be found on the Sierra Club’s web site at: sierraclub.org/sprawl/report04

The Sierra Club’s members are 700,000 of your friends and neighbors. Inspired by nature, we work together to protect our communities and the planet. The Sierra Club is America’s oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization.

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