



August 25, 2008

Cosponsor the Saving Energy through Public Transportation Act, S. 3380

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I urge you to cosponsor the Saving Energy through Public Transportation Act (S. 3380). Senator Clinton introduced this bill on August 1 in an effort to support mass transit systems, which are reeling from massive fuel price and ridership increases. On June 26, the House version of the bill, H.R. 6052, passed with an overwhelming bipartisan majority of 322 – 98.

The soaring price of gas has forced many consumers to search for transportation alternatives. As a result, demand for mass transit has skyrocketed. However, at precisely the time when ridership demands are at historic highs, fuel costs are simultaneously forcing many transit agencies to consider plans to cut service, raise fares, and lay off workers. The Saving Energy through Public Transportation Act begins to address these problems by authorizing \$850 million in both FY 08 and 09 for grants to allow mass transit systems to lower fares and expand operations. It would also increase the federal share for alternative fuel vehicle equipment from 90 percent to 100 percent.

Transit ridership is at its highest point in five decades. The first quarter of 2008 saw ridership increase nationally by 88 million trips over the same period last year, according to the American Public Transportation Association. This trend is only expected to continue as high gas prices and increasing urban congestion force commuters to turn to mass transit to save money and time.

The combination of increased demand and fuel price inflation have triggered severe budget problems for transit agencies, and many are even considering laying off workers. Transit agencies have historically provided millions of stable, well-paying jobs. Transit is also key to keeping the nation's economy and transportation network stable at a time when our nation's workers are suffering.

Support for mass transit should be one important component in the larger strategic approach to improving our transportation system and stimulating our economy. As Congress considers a possible stimulus package, we urge you to include transit assistance along with support for other modes of transportation. Transit assistance will have a direct, stimulative benefit for the national economy by helping riders save money on public transit and preserving jobs of thousands of workers who might otherwise be laid off. Your support for S. 3380 will send a signal that transit fuel subsidies should be included in a future economic stimulus package.

I urge you to cosponsor this important piece of legislation to assist transit agencies. If you have any questions about TTD's position or need additional information, please contact me or Brendan Danaher at 202/628-9262.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward Wytkind", written over a horizontal line.

Edward Wytkind
President

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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