



A bold voice for transportation workers

February 2, 2012

Vote YES on Carnahan Amendment #60 to Preserve Public Transportation Service

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I urge you to vote in favor of Rep. Russ Carnahan's amendment (#60) to provide transit authorities with targeted and temporary flexibility to use some federal funds for operating costs. This amendment is identical to the Local Flexibility for Transit Assistance Act (H.R. 3200), introduced by Reps. Carnahan and LaTourette with 150 cosponsors, including 18 Republicans.

Transit systems across the country are in an economic crisis. While ridership is the highest it's been since the Eisenhower Administration, transit agencies are suffering from a lethal combination of high fuel prices and shrinking state and local revenue. Transit systems are in the untenable position of having to cut vital services, lay off workers, or impose steep fare hikes at a time when growing demand is placing an unprecedented strain on these systems. Instead of cutting back service and laying off skilled employees, transit agencies should be expanding service or at least maintaining current operating levels. Making matters worse, transit systems in urban areas over 200,000 are barred by law from using federal funds to cover fuel, employee and other costs.

The Carnahan amendment offers a responsible and balanced approach to help transit agencies weather this economic storm. Specifically, the amendment would allow public transportation systems to use some of their federal Urbanized Area Formula Program funds (Section 5307) to pay for operating costs. This amendment would provide this flexibility only to communities that are suffering from sudden spikes in fuel costs or high unemployment. If unemployment dropped or fuel prices stabilized, the agencies would need to transition away from using this flexibility. By making the flexibility targeted and temporary, this bill would strike an important balance between maintaining service and employment on one hand and investing in transit planning, engineering and replacement of buses on the other.

This proposal is not new. Congress provided transit agencies with flexibility to use 5307 funds to cover operating expenses in the Fiscal Year 2009 Supplemental Appropriations Act. Upon passage of that bill, transportation systems around the country immediately embraced the flexibility to save jobs and service.

Today, over 80 percent of transit systems nationwide have been forced to reduce services, slash jobs or raise fares – all at a time when demand is growing. Rep. Carnahan's amendment will help to address these challenges. Again, I urge you to vote in favor of Carnahan Amendment #60, and protect public transportation service and jobs throughout the country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Wytkind', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Edward Wytkind
President

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

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