

Statement of Chairman Barbara Boxer

Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

American Public Transportation Association Annual Meeting and EXPO

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I am so pleased APTA chose to hold its Annual Meeting and Expo in the great State of California, and I'm happy to be able to join you today.

When Congress reconvenes in January, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, which I Chair, will have a very full schedule.

Not only will the Committee be working to enact comprehensive legislation to address global warming, but we will also be working to enact the next Federal highway and transit legislation.

I know these pieces of legislation will be of great importance to you because transit is part of the solution to global warming and our transportation problems.

Both of these bills will also be vital parts of the effort to deal with the difficult economic challenges our nation is facing today.

Infrastructure investment is one of the best ways to stimulate our economy - it creates American jobs and helps American businesses. According to the Federal Highway Administration, every \$1 billion in Federal funding for highways supports 35,000 jobs.

There is broad agreement - on both sides of the aisle - that when it comes to our transportation infrastructure, the time to act is now.

The current authorization, SAFETEA-LU, expires on September 30, 2009. This legislation impacts all Americans because it sets the policy and provides funding for surface transportation nationwide. As Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, I am leading the effort to develop the new bill.

The Committee has already begun the authorization process by holding several hearings in Washington, D.C., and last month we held our first field briefings on transportation right here in California. In Los Angeles and Sacramento, we heard from mayors and county supervisors, transit officials, air quality experts, business and labor leaders and other stakeholders.

We heard ideas about funding transportation investments. We heard about the impacts that come from the movement of freight through our communities and ways to address those impacts. And of course we heard about the need for more funding for federal transit programs.

Above all, we heard loud and clear that “business as usual” when it comes to the next transportation bill just won’t do the job.

Over the coming months, I will continue to hold hearings, meetings, and listening sessions here in California, in Washington, DC, and in other cities across the nation. I know we will hear from many of you as we move forward.

I have been working with the bipartisan leadership of my Committee to develop a set of principles for the next bill. These principles include goals such as improving safety, reducing congestion and its impacts, and the efficient movement of people and goods.

We have also selected a title for the bill, “MAP 21” (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century).

One of my primary goals for the next bill is to reduce congestion and its impacts, which includes improving air quality. Transit will play an important role in achieving those goals.

Although it will be a significant part of the new bill, transit is not within the jurisdiction of my committee. Of course, I will work closely with the Chairman of the Banking Committee, who has jurisdiction over the Federal Transit Administration, as we develop the legislation together.

The movement of goods has a serious impact on air quality and global warming. Freight transportation is still largely driven by fossil fuel combustion. With that combustion comes emission of greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and particulate matter.

According to the California Air Resources Board (CARB), approximately 75 percent of diesel particulate emissions in California are related to goods movement.

In addition, CARB has attributed thousands of premature deaths to diesel emissions, and estimates that the cumulative health costs of diesel emissions are tens of billions of dollars.

Reducing congestion will improve air quality and public health. We need to find a way to reduce congestion while our population is growing and placing new and greater demands on the existing transportation systems.

Some of the most cutting edge research on intelligent transportation is going on here at UC San Diego's California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology. This Institute created and runs the California Wireless Traffic Reports aimed at using advanced telecommunications to help reduce the time the average citizen spends in gridlocked traffic. This team is also working on a plan to turn your cell phone into a personal travel assistant that can suggest alternative routes using real time information.

According to the Census Bureau, by the middle of the Century, the Nation will have grown to 420 million people from the 300 million mark hit in 2007. This equates to 11 new Los Angeles metropolitan areas and a population increase of 50 percent in 50 years nationwide.

This means we will also need even more reliable and environmentally friendly alternatives to conventional cars to help move our growing population in the coming years.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, households within ½ mile of BART rail stations produce about half the vehicle miles of travel compared to their suburban counterparts.

Of course, transit is more than a way to clean up our air. People and businesses are attracted to areas with transit connections, and investments in public transit bring increased economic activity to our communities – in the form of new building construction, increased property values, rehabilitated brownfields, job growth, and reduced congestion.

Communities across the nation are reaping the benefits of transit oriented development.

In New Jersey, a recent report found that the New Hudson Bergen light rail line has spurred more than \$5 billion in development.

In Texas, the Dallas Area Rapid Transit system (DART) has generated more that \$4 billion in economic development projects since 1999 and has transformed the urban landscape of Dallas, and that growth is expected to continue.

The Minneapolis-St. Paul area has seen more than 7,000 new housing units built downtown and along its light rail line – a level the city didn't expect to hit until 2020.

And Portland, Oregon has documented over \$4 billion in investment along a four and a half mile stretch of streetcar line.

Studies have also found that residential and commercial properties near transit lines are valued significantly higher than similar properties without that benefit.

MAP 21, our next transportation bill, will represent a major investment in our transportation infrastructure and provide opportunities to incorporate proven approaches that stimulate economic growth. World-class roads, bridges, and transit systems are crucial ingredients for a world class economy.

In addition to addressing congestion and improving our transportation systems, the transportation projects included in our bill will create good jobs and stimulate our economy.

One of the challenges that must be addressed in the next bill is that the Highway Trust Fund, which funds the legislation primarily through gas tax receipts, is running out of funds.

There is good news and bad news when it comes to addressing the financial needs of our transportation systems.

The good news is that people are driving less, and using transit more, and they are driving more efficient vehicles.

The bad news is that less driving means less revenue for the Highway Trust Fund.

Early in September the Federal Highway Administration announced that the Highway Trust Fund was going to run short of funds prior to the end of 2008 unless new revenue could be found. This would have forced states to slow down or stop construction projects already underway and could have meant the loss of thousands of jobs.

I fought hard and helped lead the effort to make sure that Congress passed and the President signed legislation that transferred \$8 billion from general revenues into the Highway Trust Fund to ensure states would continue to be reimbursed for transportation projects currently underway and expected over the coming year.

This year, we also passed a bill containing technical corrections to SAFETEA-LU that will unleash up to \$1 billion into the economy, creating tens of thousands of jobs.

The tragic bridge collapse in Minneapolis was also a wake up call on the need to increase investment in infrastructure. In the Environment and Public Works Committee, we passed a bill to authorize \$1 billion for bridge repair and replacement. The bill also requires the Department of Transportation to develop a national priority system for the repair, rehabilitation or replacement of each structurally deficient or functionally obsolete bridge.

We need to invest in both transit and highways to improve the condition of existing infrastructure and address growing congestion in urban areas.

The report of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission states that, as a nation, we need to invest a minimum of \$225 billion annually over the next 50 years at all levels of government to bring our existing surface transportation infrastructure to a good state of repair and to support our growing economy. We are currently spending 40% less than that amount.

The discussion of funding options will be a key element of the next bill.

As many of you know, we face another significant challenge in the transportation sector -- emissions from the transportation sector are a major contributor to global warming.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), transportation activities accounted for about 33 percent of all CO2 emissions from fossil fuel combustion in 2005.

Increases in vehicle miles traveled, gasoline consumption and population growth are all factors that have resulted in increased emissions.

The transportation sector will play a vital role in any emissions reduction strategy. We will need cleaner, more efficient cars, advanced, clean-burning renewable fuels, more transit and development policies that can reduce the distances Americans need to travel every day.

The links between transportation and clean air must be considered in the Federal highway and transit and highway legislation.

We have already begun our work to address the threat posed by unchecked global warming in the Senate. Addressing global warming is one of my top priorities.

Last December, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works was the first congressional committee to pass comprehensive global warming legislation.

The Boxer-Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act established an economy wide cap-and-trade system to cut global warming pollution and invest in clean energy.

This legislation included strong targets for cutting carbon emissions, more transitional help for businesses and consumers, and greater investments in the new technologies that will solve the global warming challenge.

The Boxer-Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act came to the Senate floor for a historic debate in June 2008, and 54 Senators came down on the side of urgent action to tackle global warming -- up from 38 votes in 2005. This was a new high-water mark for global warming action in the Senate, and the vote provides a roadmap for us as we work with the next President and a new Congress to tackle the threat of global warming.

We all know what challenging economic times we are facing today. I believe strongly that when we address the threat of unchecked global warming by investing in clean energy technologies and reducing our dependence on foreign oil, we also have a recipe for economic recovery.

Britain has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by about 15 percent since 1990, while its economy has grown by over 40%. Britain's environmental industries have been a fast growing sector of the country's economy, growing from about 135,000 to over 500,000 jobs in the last five years.

A 2004 report by the Apollo Alliance found that investments in low-carbon and green technology, as were expected to occur under the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act, could create over three million new American jobs over a ten-year period, while also stimulating \$1.4 trillion in new gross domestic product and producing over \$280 billion in net energy cost savings.

There is no doubt that the next Administration—whoever is elected—will be far more receptive to global warming legislation. But we must be ready to start on day one of the next Congress, because passing a global warming law takes time, and time is not on our side.

In the meantime, my Committee is preparing a report on the steps we can take right away, to begin cutting global warming pollution under current law. The Supreme Court has made clear that the Clean Air Act provides a significant opportunity to address global warming now.

The next President must place global warming, transportation and infrastructure at the top of his priority list.

I am counting on the next President to work with us to rebuild America's transportation systems, and to take strong action to avoid dangerous global warming.

I am counting on you to be partners in this effort.

Investing in our transportation infrastructure and stepping up to the challenge of global warming will help America compete in the global economy and maintain our quality of life. It is that basic. At the end of the day it's a matter of setting the right priorities and crafting innovative and effective means to address them.

Thank you for the opportunity to join you today.

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