

**SMART GROWTH AMERICA
IN-DISTRICT ADVOCACY MEETINGS
OCTOBER 2008**

Talking Points

- I. **Intro and Thanks:** Introduce yourselves and your organization(s), mention briefly what your organization works on.
- II. If possible, thank the member or staffer for something, like cosponsoring or voting for good legislation. Or just thank them for meeting with you.

Lay out your agenda for the meeting and ask how much time you have.

- II. **Federal transportation issues** (Include state/local examples, statistics, etc. that help reinforce these messages)
 - In the next transportation bill, Congress needs to invest in more affordable, more efficient transportation choices to provide people with options other than driving in the face of high gas prices. Our investments in the last 50 years have left many Americans in communities that require driving to get to the services or jobs we need. Transportation spending is now the second highest expense for Americans, and a particularly large burden for the lowest income people. For people unable to drive—our grandparents and children and people who can't afford it—the current system does not provide adequate transit, or safe places to walk and bike.
 - The current system favors building roads over providing a variety of transportation options such as transit, bike lanes and sidewalks because the majority of the money goes towards roads (over 80%) and a community that wants to build a transit project has much higher standards to meet and more local money is needed.
 - We need to remain competitive in the global economy while responding to current national challenges of oil dependence, climate change, aging Americans, and the obesity epidemic. Our current system spends billions of dollars every year without any accountability for addressing those issues. Instead, the system actually gives more transportation funding to states that consume more oil and have bridges and roads in poor condition, without any strings attached to spending the money to solve those problems.
 - The next federal transportation bill gives us an opportunity to change this, and create a modern system for the 21st century.
 - Mention your organization's recommendations for the next transportation bill, or use the points below:

1. Invest in a world-class rail system for the country, by building out inter-city rail and ensuring that our cities and towns have quality public transportation.
2. Make the system goal-based and more accountable, so that states and localities have an incentive to make progress on important national goals, like reducing oil consumption, increasing safety, and creating more choices, for example.
3. Put a greater emphasis on maintaining the investments we've already made in our transportation system to ensure our roads and bridges are in good quality and safe condition.

III. Discussion about Federal Transportation Legislation

- Ask what their thoughts/feedback are on reforming the federal transportation bill
- What are their biggest priorities related to transportation?
- What are the opportunities and challenges they see to pushing this agenda in Congress?
- How can transportation and infrastructure investment be used to stimulate the economy and create jobs?

IV. Short Term Transportation Asks

There are several bills currently in Congress that would help solve some of the problems we talked about that exist in our current transportation system. With so little time left in session we know that these bills likely won't pass this year but feel it is important to continue to build support for these pieces of legislation, which we expect to be reintroduced next year. By supporting these bills you would also show your support for reforming our transportation system and providing Americans with more transportation choices.

HOUSE

1) The Complete Streets Act of 2008 (H.R. 5951)

- We need to provide for the one-third of Americans who do not drive, as well as for the many Americans who no longer can afford to drive due to high gas prices—many of these people are elderly, poor, or young—and without walking, biking, or transit, they have no opportunities for mobility.
- Millions of Americans are forced to walk and bike and catch the bus along roads that are not properly designed – most everyone has seen the pathways tramped in the grass alongside a major roadway.
- Complete streets mean streets that are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities must be able to safely move along and across a complete street.

- With Complete Streets policies, transportation agencies start designing and operating streets to be accessible for all people—drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists, as well as for older people, children, and people with disabilities
- Complete streets policies are flexible and incremental and **do not** require that transportation agencies immediately add a bike lane or sidewalk to every road. What they do say is that whenever something will be done to a road in the future—construction, reconstruction, restriping, expansion—the streets should be made complete based on the needs of the users of that particular street. This process makes projects more cost-effective, as it avoids costly retrofits.
- The Complete Streets Act of 2008, H.R. 5951 introduced by Representative Matsui (CA) would require states and MPOs to establish complete streets policies and apply them to federally-funded projects.
- **ASK:** Will your sign on as a co-sponsor to the complete streets bill? The person to contact is Sam Stefanki in Congresswoman Matsui's office.

2) Transportation and Housing Choices for Gas Price Relief Act of 2008

- Transportation costs are now the second highest expense for most Americans and in most regions the combined transportation and housing costs for living farther out is greater than living closer to town. The foreclosure crisis has hit especially hard in the exurbs.
- Many Americans are already changing their habits—taking more transit trips when available, reducing car trips, and some are resorting to buying more efficient cars or moving to more efficient locations. More needs to be done to provide Americans with other options to get around and a greater ability to afford homes closer to jobs and schools so they can spend less time driving and less money on gas.
- The Transportation and Housing Choices for Gas Relief Act of 2008 makes the federal government a partner in supporting community efforts to help citizens cope with high gas prices.
- The legislation takes a holistic approach, through educating Americans about their transportation and housing options; providing economic incentives to telecommute, use transit and walk or bike or live in 'location efficient' places; providing better infrastructure to support transit, walking and biking and improving the federal funding programs for transit; and have the federal government lead by example.

- **ASK:** Will your sign on as a co-sponsor to bill? The person to contact is Janine Benner in Congressman Blumenauer's office.

SENATE

1) The Complete Streets Act of 2008 (Senate S. 2686): Same talking points as the House Complete Streets bill above.

- The Complete Streets Act of 2008, S. 2686 introduced by Senators Harkin (IA) and Carper (DE) would require states and MPOs to establish complete streets policies and apply them to federally-funded projects.
- **ASK:** Will your sign on as a co-sponsor to the complete streets bill? The person to contact is Richard Bender in Senator Harkin's office.

2) The High Speed Rail Act of 2008 (will be introduced by Senator Kerry week of 9/30)

- More and more airlines are cutting back on service or raising fees to deal with the higher cost of fuel. In smaller cities and towns across the country, airlines are cutting off service, which could isolate these communities and stifle their economic opportunities.
- Increased investment in passenger rail is the answer, and one that is used by many other countries in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere.
- Americans are already turning to rail. The U.S. Transportation Department reported that in March, Americans drove 11 billion fewer miles than in March 2007 – a decline of 4.3 percent and the first time since 1979 that traffic has dropped from one March to the next. Across the country, heavy-rail ridership increased 4.4 percent in the first quarter with Boston experiencing an 8.8 percent increase. Amtrak ridership from October to May along the northeast corridor was up 11 percent.
- Rail is also a greener alternative to planes and driving. The average intercity passenger train produces 60 percent fewer CO2 emissions per passenger-mile than the average car, and half the greenhouse gas emissions of an airplane.
- Rail stimulates energy-efficient, pedestrian friendly real estate development in proximity to the station and provides people with more options for what would otherwise be short plane trips or long car trips.
- The High Speed Rail Act of 2008 creates a central office to oversee the development of high-speed rail, defined as a train maintaining a cruising speed of at least 150 mph. It provides a consistent source of funding for high-

speed rail. Over a six year period, this legislation will provide \$200 per million a year in grants, a total of \$8 billion in tax exempt bonds, and creates a tax credit bond program for rail, including \$10 billion for high-speed intercity rail facilities and \$5.4 billion for rail infrastructure.

- **ASK:** If you are interested in co-sponsoring this legislation that will be introduced by Senator Kerry's office, please contact Jeremy Marcus.

V. Make sure to provide local examples of transportation issues and their effects:

- Give local examples of things like high transit ridership, more biking, transit service cuts due to energy costs
- What problems do you and your members face?
- What's been in the news lately?
- Use the new housing and transportation affordability index to create a map of your community's transportation expenses and bring that to the meeting:
<http://htaindex.cnt.org/>

VI. Current Cosponsors: Make sure to check to see if the office you are meeting with has already signed on to these bills (see list below). If they have thank them for their leadership by co-sponsoring this bill.

COMPLETE STREETS SENATE BILL CO-SPONSORS

- **Senator Harkin (D-IA)—sponsor**
- Senator Carper (D-DE)
- Senator Coleman (R-MN)
- Senator Durbin (D-IL)
- Senator Levin (D-MI)
- Senator Sanders (I-VT)

Check here for updates: <http://www.thomas.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:s.02686:>

COMPLETE STREETS HOUSE BILL CO-SPONSORS

- **Rep Matsui, Doris (D-CA, 5)—sponsor**
- Rep Blumenauer , Earl (D-OR, 3)
- Rep Bordallo, Madeleine (GU)
- Rep Braley, Bruce (IA-1)
- Rep Carnahan, Russ (D-MO-3)
- Rep Cleaver, Emanuel (MO-5)
- Rep Cohen, Steve (TN-9)
- Rep Grijalva, Raul (AZ-7)
- Rep Jackson-Lee, Sheila (TX-18)
- Rep Lee, Barbara (CA-9)
- Rep Lewis, John (GA-5)
- Rep Lipinski, Daniel (IL-3)
- Rep Loeb sack, David (IA-2)
- Rep Moran, James P. (VA-8)
- Rep Price, David E. (NC-4)

- Rep Shays, Christopher (CT-4)
- Rep Stark, Fortney (CA-13)
- Rep Tauscher, Ellen O. (CA-10)
- Rep Waxman, Henry A. (CA-30)
- Rep Woolsey, Lynn C. (CA-6)

Check here for updates: <http://www.thomas.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:h.r.05951:>

TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING OPTIONS FOR GAS RELIEF BILL

- **Rep Blumenauer (OR-3)-sponsor**
- Rep Carnahan, Russ [MO-3]
- Rep Hirono, Mazie K. [HI-2]
- Rep Inslee, Jay [WA-1]
- Rep Markey, Edward J. [MA-7]
- Rep McNerney, Jerry [CA-11]
- Rep Moran, James P. [VA-8]
- Rep Sarbanes, John P. [MD-3]
- Rep Schakowsky, Janice D. [IL-9]
- Rep Schwartz, Allyson Y. [PA-13]
- Rep Shays, Christopher [CT-4]
- Rep Solis, Hilda L. [CA-32]
- Rep Tauscher, Ellen O. [CA-10]
- Rep Wu, David [OR-1]

Check here for updates: <http://www.thomas.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:h.r.06495:>