

Draft Letter to the Editor, Version 1:

Is There a Better Way to Get There?

Prevention Institute commends the New York Times editorial board for supporting public transit investment in the next authorization of the federal transportation bill. If President-elect Obama wants to create a “transit bill” and move Americans in a bold new direction, he must not only invest in a clean-green transit system, but also in land use that promotes accessibility and ease of transit use, complete the streets to promote walking and biking, and renew the government’s commitment to safely transport *all* people to and from their key destinations. This new system will accrue benefits such as: jobs and improved community vitality, a cleaner environment with fewer air toxins and greenhouse gases, more active Americans choosing to walk, bike and use public transit rather than driving, and fewer injuries and deaths due to crashes. Unfortunately, today only about 50% of Americans have access to public transit and we can’t use what we don’t have. For once, federal transportation dollars will work for all residents in communities as opposed to the select few that can afford to fill up their gas tanks.

Comment [JS1]: This letter is too long. It’s word count is 415! When writing letters to the editor, aim for 150 words or less. Some publications allow up to 200-250 words.

Comment [JS2]: Good introduction; it gets right to the point. It should, however, be more concise.

Comment [KR3]: Limit your focus to one point – two at the most. This paragraph has already made at least three points.

Public transit has been shown to not only increase levels of physical activity among users but can reduce a single person’s carbon footprint by up to 30%. Transit use already saves the U.S. 4.2 billion gallons of gasoline each year, which is equivalent to more than three times the amount of oil we import from Kuwait each year. And for every \$1 billion in federal investment in transportation infrastructure, the U.S. Department of Transportation estimates that approximately 35,000 jobs are created - a much needed boost for our crumbling economy. On average, a transit user saves approximately \$9,500 per year by taking public transportation instead of driving, making public transit the cornerstone of equitable communities. Public transit is indeed the multiplier effect we’ve been waiting for: a good solution that solves multiple problems.

Comment [KR4]: Too much information for one letter. At most, you’ll want to include one statistic that supports your letter’s main point.

In 2009, Congress and the next Administration can take a visionary step towards what the average American already knows is necessary by investing in public transit and walkable communities. Mr. President-elect, please don’t leave Americans in the same situation we found ourselves in 2008 – when we could not afford the gas it took to run our cars and turned to the streets and to public transit and found that our communities were missing sidewalks and bikelanes and there were no buses or trains. The choice is clear: invest in our communities, not in the same old system that is both broke and broken.

Comment [KR5]: Good, the last line should always be a call to action or policy solution!

Draft Letter to the Editor, Version 2:

Is There a Better Way to Get There?

Your editorial “A Pitch for Mass Transit” (Jan. 5) rightly points President-elect Obama toward an investment in clean air, green jobs, and less dependency on oil. But there’s even more: mass transit will protect the public’s health.

Comment [KR6]: Good to include the reference to the original article.

Comment [JS7]: Main point. Simple and concise.

Besides the obvious benefits to health of a cleaner environment with fewer air toxins and greenhouse gases, mass transit means people walk and bike more, according to research. We can also expect fewer injuries and deaths due to car crashes if we get more people out of their cars and onto public transit. And the jobs that would be created — approximately 35,000 for every \$1 billion invested — also benefit the public’s health as steady employment means steady income, and for many, health care coverage.

Comment [KR8]: Use of concrete facts/statistics. This lends support to our main point — that mass transit will protect the public’s health.

Smart mass transit can “complete the streets” so pedestrians and bike riders use them as much as cars. Federal transportation dollars would then work for all residents, not just those that can afford to fill up their gas tanks. Healthy communities need sidewalks, bike lanes and mass transit.

Comment [JS9]: This sentence makes a similar point to the previous paragraph, so it is unnecessary. It also uses public health jargon, which should be avoided in letters to the editor.

Public transit is indeed the multiplier effect we’ve been waiting for: a good solution that solves multiple problems.

Comment [KR10]: The change needed is clearly articulated, which is good.

Comment [JS11]: This letter is 187 words, much better than the last version, but we may still want to shorten it.

Draft Letter to the Editor, Version 3:

Is There a Better Way to Get There?

Your editorial “A Pitch for Mass Transit” (Jan. 5) rightly points President-elect Obama toward an investment in clean air, green jobs, and less dependency on oil. But there’s more: mass transit will protect the public’s health.

Comment [JS12]: Compelling intro that references the original article and gets straight to the point. Good!

Besides the obvious benefits of a cleaner environment with fewer toxins and greenhouse gases, mass transit means people walk and bike more. We can also expect fewer injuries and deaths due to car crashes. And the jobs that would be created — approximately 35,000 for every \$1 billion invested — also benefit the public’s health as steady employment means steady income, and for many, health care coverage.

Comment [JS13]: This section elaborates on how mass transit will protect the public’s health – our main point. Great!

Federal transportation dollars should work for all residents, not just those that can afford to fill up their gas tanks. Healthy communities need sidewalks, bike lanes and mass transit.

Comment [JS14]: This section articulated the policy change needed. Perfect.

Public transit is indeed the multiplier effect we’ve been waiting for: a good solution that solves multiple problems.

Comment [JS15]: The final version is 148 words – perfect!

Sincerely,

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Comment [JS16]: Important to include contact info in submission.