



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: OCTOBER 15, 2008**

## **JUMPSTARTING THE TRANSIT SPACE RACE**

***A New Report Documents The Surge of Interest in Transit And Recommends A Transit-Building Program to Help Make the U.S. Energy-Independent and Create Jobs***

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**OAKLAND** – The demand for transit in the U.S. has never been greater, with ridership at its highest levels in 50 years and almost 400 new rail, streetcar and bus rapid transit projects proposed in large and small regions from Massachusetts to Hawaii, according to a new report by the national nonprofit Reconnecting America. Americans took 10.1 billion trips on transit in 2007, saving 1.4 billions of gallons of gasoline – the equivalent of a supertanker leaving the Middle East every 11 days.

“Jumpstarting the Transit Space Race: How the New Administration Could Make America Energy-Independent, Create Jobs and Keep the Economy Strong” documents the interest in transit projects around the U.S., and calculates the investment required to build all the proposed new lines. The report concludes that a transit building program not unlike the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act after World War II would help address many of the challenges facing this country – from rising gas prices to climate change – and it would create jobs.

“There is so much interest in transit that 78 regions in 37 states have proposed 400 projects worth \$248 billion,” says Shelley Poticha, CEO of Reconnecting America. “The increased interest in transit has opened a window of opportunity to make an investment that would reduce dependence on foreign oil, enhance national and economic security, and create jobs. But at the current rate of federal transit investment, building these projects would take 77 years.”

The number of transit projects that have been authorized to begin the federal funding process increased from 220 in 1998 to 331 in 2004. At least 64 new projects have been proposed in the four years since, with regions from Cleveland to Tampa to Baltimore proposing construction of entire rail and bus rapid transit systems consisting of several lines. So many projects have been proposed that the total investment required would be at least \$248 billion – roughly the same amount allocated for both highways and transit in the last federal transportation reauthorization, a six-year funding bill named SAFETEA-LU. Billions more are needed to modernize existing transit lines in cities with older systems – including New York; Chicago; Boston; Washington, D.C., and Atlanta.

SAFETEA-LU allocated \$248 billion for highways and transit for the six-year period from 2004 to 2010. But the federal government spends about 80 percent of federal transportation funding on highways and just 20 percent on transit. A relatively small portion of transit's 20 percent is spent on the construction of new fixed-guideway systems – about \$1.6 billion a year over the last half dozen years – while the rest is spent on maintenance and on buses. The federal government typically pays for half of total project costs.

Poticha notes that the transit investment in the U.S. lags far behind that of countries such as China, India, England and Canada. She says that federal transportation policy remains essentially unchanged since the 1950s, when gas was a nickel a gallon and President Eisenhower launched the interstate highway system. She adds that the era of cheap gas is over, and today's new reality demands a reassessment of federal transportation priorities that results in a 21st century transportation system for a 21st century America.

*For more information or to download the report, visit [www.reconnectingamerica.org](http://www.reconnectingamerica.org).*