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A sound investment for the 21st century
Report hails economic, environmental benefit of commitment to transit

SACRAMENTO — Public transit allows Californians to save more than a billion dollars a year at the gas pump, and produces extensive benefit to the tune of two dollars for every one dollar invested, according to a report released today by the California Public Interest Research Group (CALPIRG).

CALPIRG Education Fund unveiled its report, *A Better Way to Go: Meeting America's 21st Century Transportation Challenges with Modern Public Transit*, at a series of statewide events. The study highlights the fact that, in an era of oil and gasoline prices reaching unprecedented levels and mounting concern over the effects of global warming, commitment to enhanced public transit is central to meeting the state's 21st century transportation needs.

But beyond the environmental benefits that only the most intractable continue to deny, perhaps the most compelling of the report's conclusions is that investment in public transit yields wide-ranging economic stimulus at a rate of twice the initial outlay.

“It's hard to imagine anybody still debating the environmental plusses of public transit, and this report goes a long way toward shooting down any lingering arguments of that sort,” said Joshua Shaw, Executive Director of the California Transit Association. “But what really ought to open people's eyes is the evidence in this report that investment in public transit results in widespread gains across the economic and demographic spectrums.”

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The report states that, in 2005, federal, state and local governments spent \$30.9 billion to provide transit services (not including fares). These investments yielded at least \$60 billion per year in benefits from reduced vehicle expenses, avoided congestion, global warming emission reductions, reduced road expenditures, reduced spending on parking, and avoided traffic accidents. In other words, investment in transit more than pays for itself.

In addition, the report reveals that commitment to transit is especially valuable during periods of rising unemployment that accompany a sluggish economy, stating that investments in transit produce 19 percent more jobs than equivalent investment in new road and bridge projects.

“This is especially sobering data in light of the California Legislature’s continuing raid on public transit funding,” said Shaw. “It’s yet further evidence that to turn our backs on transit is to lead us down a treacherous path.”

With oil prices at a record \$105 per barrel and gasoline in California nearing \$4 per gallon, the report paid special notice to the need to curtail our long-standing oil addiction. According to the study, public transit allows Californians to save more than \$1.2 billion in gasoline cost savings annually. Those savings stem in part from an annual savings of more than 486 million gallons of oil, roughly the equivalent of taking more than 800,000 cars off the road.

“The recent spike in gas prices is just one of many compelling reasons why convenient, fast, and reliable bus and rail service need to be expanded throughout our cities,” said Emily Rusch, Transportation Advocate with CALPIRG Education Fund. “Let’s face it: the era of cheap oil is over.”

Among other highlights in the report:

- Transit in California prevents more than 3.6 million metric tons of carbon dioxide pollution annually

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- Transit ridership increased by 30 percent between 1995 and 2006, reaching the highest ridership level since the late 1950s
- Approximately three out of four Americans now believe that improving transit and building communities that require less driving are the best solutions for reducing traffic congestion
- Since 1956, federal, state and local governments have invested nine times more capital funding in highway subsidies than in transit
- In 2004, state governments spent nearly 13 times more public funds on highways than on transit

The complete report can be viewed at

[http://www.caltransit.org/pdf/Articles/A%20Better%20Way%20to%20Go%20vCAP%20\(3\).pdf](http://www.caltransit.org/pdf/Articles/A%20Better%20Way%20to%20Go%20vCAP%20(3).pdf)

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