

Heard the news about public transit?

San Francisco Chronicle, December 8, 2008

Public Transit Use Soars While Gas Price Falls

Riders made 2.85 billion trips on public transportation during the third quarter, up from 2.67 billion trips a year ago. There have been gains in every quarter this year from 2007. Last year's 10.3 billion trips were the most on public transportation in 50 years.

Los Angeles Daily News, December 8, 2008

Rail, Bus Staying in Demand

(He) is among a growing number of Americans who changed their driving habits for good when gasoline prices soared. And now with a recession, falling home prices and rising unemployment, some of them aren't getting back behind the wheel any time soon, even though it's much cheaper than it was just a few months ago to fill up.

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin, November 29, 2008

Despite Lower Gas Prices, Many Still Use Public Transportation

Even with gasoline falling below \$2 a gallon, it seems people are still looking for relief through public transportation. In the past year, Metrolink, Foothill Transit and Omnitrans have seen a ridership boom as gas prices raced toward \$5 a gallon. But even now that the price has dropped, many people have discovered they would rather take the bus or train than hit the road on their own.

Sacramento Business Journal, December 9, 2008

Local light rail ridership increases 16.5 percent

A double-digit increase in light-rail ridership in Sacramento helped lead the nation's largest quarterly increase in public transportation ridership in 25 years, according to the American Public Transportation Association. Sacramento's light-rail ridership increased 16.5 percent in the third quarter, compared to a year ago. The local light-rail service had the third-highest percentage increase in the nation.

KFSN-TV, Fresno, November 26, 2008

Merced County Transit Cutting Service

As holiday travelers take advantage of different transportation options, Merced County Transit is cutting back its service to deal with a lack of state funding. Stacey Wright relies on Merced County Transit to take her all over town and to help her through tough economic times. "I take the bus because I don't have a car right now, and gas being high, my husband's out of work and it's easy for us," said Wright. She and her son are also two of nearly two thousand people who ride "the bus" each Saturday. "I have a 5 year old and that's how we go out on the weekends to the mall or to the library," she added. But that's about to change.

San Diego Union-Tribune, November 21, 2008

Mass Transit Funding Expected to Drop; MTS May Have to Slash Millions

Funding for mass transit in San Diego County continues to lose traction, even as more commuters turn to buses, trolleys and trains for their daily ride ... Other major sources of funding are also in jeopardy, local officials said, including a pot of state transit money that is increasingly being siphoned to pay for other programs.

North County Times, November 20, 2008

Transit district faces more painful cuts

If the state legislature approves California's proposed budget, it will mean an additional \$3 million hit to local bus and train service. Richard Hannasch, (North County Transit District) finance director, told the board that attempts to fill a \$11.2 billion hole in the state budget will likely mean \$3 million less in gas tax revenue to pay for local buses and trains. "If there is less money to pay for transit then there will be less transit," Hannasch said.

... and that's only part of the story!

Transit has already borne more than its fair share of the burden

- The state budget approved in September reflected an **85 percent cut** in available transit-dedicated funding.
- The latest legislative proposal seeks a **92 percent cut**, and perpetuates that level in future budgets.
- The Governor's latest plan includes a **96 percent cut**, and, beginning in 2009-10, **eliminates** the only source of ongoing state funding for transit operations.

Funding Diverted from Transit This Decade

2000-01 ... \$345 million	2002-03 ... \$100 million
2003-04 ... \$181 million	2004-05 ... \$354 million
2005-06 ... \$380 million	2006-07 ... \$325 million
2007-08 ... \$1.3 billion	2008-09 ... \$1.7 billion*

*-per the state budget adopted in September

TOTAL DIVERTED = \$4.7 BILLION

Transit cuts hit hardest on those who can least afford it

With many transit providers resorting to fare increases and service cuts, those most adversely affected are seniors, students, people with disabilities and low-income riders – transit dependent individuals who are likely to feel the pinch of the recession much more profoundly than the larger population.

- Of the 67 million rides provided annually by AC Transit, 49 percent are by people defined as “extremely” low income.
- One in five transit riders in California is a senior citizen or person with a disability.
- Transit providers in California report that students account for as much as one-third of their total ridership.

Transit funding raided equals jobs lost

- Service cuts of up to 35 percent are anticipated due to raids on state funding, meaning thousands of California jobs are at stake.
- The proposed funding cuts would pose an immediate threat to nearly 2,000 jobs in the Bay Area alone.
- If invested in capital projects, the \$1.7 billion *already* cut this year could have generated 80,750 jobs.

Service cuts alone aren't the only threat to California jobs. With billions of dollars worth of capital improvement projects put on hold or cancelled altogether due to loss of funding, the opportunity for significant, vital economic stimulus would be squandered.

Record-breaking increases in transit ridership can no longer simply be attributed to high gas prices. Californians have spoken – with their wallets and their ballots – in favor of MORE funding for public transit. Transit's ability to meet its surging demand for services is already threatened. Now is no time to cut even deeper!

21ST CENTURY PLANNING REQUIRES 21ST CENTURY PRIORITIES

We implore you to reject these newest proposals for additional cuts to state transit funding. We also urge you to deny the Governor's call to eliminate the State Transit Assistance Program beginning in 2009-10.



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