



TRANSIT NEWS

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Public Transportation Use Substantially Reduces Greenhouse Gases, According to New Study

WASHINGTON, DC –The most powerful weapon you can use to combat global climate change may be a daily transit pass, according to a new study that was released today by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). The study, *Public Transportation's Contribution to U.S. Greenhouse Gas Reduction*, was prepared for APTA by Science Applications International Corporation.

The research shows that when compared to other household actions that limit carbon dioxide (CO₂), taking public transportation can be more than ten times greater in reducing this harmful greenhouse gas. It takes one solo commuter of a household to switch their daily driving to using public transportation and he or she can reduce their household carbon footprint by 10 percent. If one household's driver gives up that second car and switches to public transit, a household can reduce its carbon emissions up to 30 percent.

“Encouraging use and expanding public transportation should be a part of our national strategy to address global climate change,” said James L. Oberstar, U.S. Congress (D-MN), chairman, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. “The report provides further evidence that public transportation is one of the most important tools to minimize carbon output, help the environment and assist the nation in achieving a sustainable transportation system.”

"Congress has yet to have a serious, comprehensive debate about how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change," said Peter DeFazio, U.S. Congress (D-OR), subcommittee chairman, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. “As the APTA report shows, however, increasing use of public transportation will be central to the discussion about how to reduce emissions from the transportation sector, which is something that I will pursue as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit.”

While it is very important to employ environmentally-friendly household activities, commuting by public transportation makes a more substantial impact. An individual switching to public transit can reduce their daily carbon emissions by 20 pounds; that's more than 4,800 pounds in a year. This is far greater than the many actions people are being encouraged to take, for instance;

- Home weatherizing and adjusting the thermostat for heating and cooling saves 2,847 pounds of carbon per year. Transit use saves almost twice the carbon.
- Replacing five incandescent bulbs to lower wattage compact fluorescent lamps saves 445 pounds of CO₂ per year. Transit use saves more than ten times the CO₂.
- Replacing an older refrigerator freezer with a high efficient one saves 335 pounds of CO₂ per year. Taking public transportation saves more than fourteen times the carbon.

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“Public transportation use should be at the top of the list of ways for households to become greener,” said William W. Millar, president of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). “Switching to public transit gives a person the opportunity to immediately become part of the solution to help reduce carbon dioxide, a harmful greenhouse gas.

“Commuting by public transportation is one of the most significant actions a household member can take to reduce their carbon footprint,” Millar added.

The research points out that due to increases in vehicle miles traveled, the problem of pollution from vehicle emissions is accelerating. Greenhouse gas emissions from mobile sources have grown 27 percent from 1990 to 2004. Autos and light duty trucks represent about 61 percent of the total mobile source of greenhouse gas emissions. The report says single occupancy drivers switching their work commute to public transportation is one of the more effective ways to reduce the nation’s vehicle miles traveled while reducing harmful carbon dioxide.

“While it is good public policy to require more fuel efficient automobiles, increasing the use of transit can have a more immediate impact on our nation’s transportation fuel consumption,” said Millar. “It could take twenty to thirty years to see a complete turnover of the vehicle fleet. A household does not need to go to the expense of buying a new vehicle to make a difference; they can simply take advantage of the nation’s existing bus or rail services to dramatically reduce their carbon footprint.”

APTA is calling on Congress to incorporate public transportation into a national climate strategy that includes providing additional funding levels for more public transportation investment; providing tax credits to major employers who spend resources to support mass transit ridership programs; and tax credits to developers for mixed development residential, commercial and transportation sites that encourage greater use of public transportation.

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APTA is a nonprofit international association of 1,500 member organizations including public transportation systems; planning, design, construction and finance firms; product and service providers; academic institutions; and state associations and departments of transportation. APTA members serve the public interest by providing safe, efficient and economical public transportation services and products. APTA members serve more than 90 percent of persons using public transportation in the United States and Canada.

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