

Rural and Small Town Public Transit Ridership Increased Nearly 8% Since 2007

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WASHINGTON (October 5, 2017) – While America’s rural population declined by more than half a million people, small town and rural public transit ridership has increased nearly eight percent (7.8 percent) from 2007 to 2015, according to a new study by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA).

The study authors of *Public Transit’s Impact on Rural and Small Towns* show that public transit’s affordability and the demographic makeup of these areas combine to make public transit desirable for rural and small town populations. Seniors, veterans and people with disabilities have the highest public transit use in these areas.

“We know the impact of public transportation in urban areas, however, people may not realize it is a lifeline service for many in rural and small communities,” said APTA Acting President and CEO Richard A. White. “As the Administration and Congress begin to discuss the prospects for creating a new infrastructure initiative, it is crucial to include investments in public transportation because of its importance among seniors, veterans and those with disabilities in these communities. In addition, a commitment from Congress to fully fund public transportation through the FAST ACT will also be essential in serving their needs.”

Authors of the report note that rural and small town residents with disabilities particularly rely upon public transportation. These residents take nearly 50 percent more public transit trips than unimpaired people. There are 2.9 million veterans residing in rural and small towns, which make up 33 percent of the veteran population enrolled in the VA health care system. Public transit can help this population access needed services, particularly wounded veterans with limited mobility, according to the report.

“Public transit is an important factor supporting these rural and small town economies by connecting people with local businesses, healthcare and job opportunities,” said Scott Bogren, Executive Director, Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). “Because of the consistent resiliency of ridership in these areas, increased funding will be crucial to address growing demand and capital needs.”

The authors of the report noted that seniors make up a larger portion of rural and small town populations (17%) compared to urban populations (13%). This is because most seniors want to age in place while many younger adults head for higher employment urban areas after they finish school.

Taking public transit can help reduce vehicle expenditures related to fuel and maintenance. In fact, rural and small town households spend nearly seven percent more of their budgets on transportation than those in urban households. Overall, costs of operating even an older car can cost \$3,000 annually or \$20 per trip. A five-mile rural public transit trip costs nearly \$7 compared to a \$10-15 cab fare.

“Expanding public transit in rural and small towns provides a safe alternative that helps reduce the risk of road accidents for vulnerable populations; while at the same time, its use promotes active lifestyles,” said White. “Growing investments in rural public transit can have a big impact and increased federal investment can help address this.”

To read the report in its entirety go to www.apta.com/rural.

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The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) is a nonprofit international association of 1,500 public and private sector organizations, engaged in the areas of bus, paratransit, light rail, commuter rail, subways, waterborne services, and intercity and high-speed passenger rail. This includes: transit systems; planning, design, construction, and finance firms; product and service providers; academic institutions; transit associations and state departments of transportation. APTA is the only association in North America that represents all modes of public transportation. APTA members serve the public interest by providing safe, efficient and economical transit services and products.