

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Senator Cardin writes periodic columns for Maryland publications. The following column about public transportation may be of interest to your readers. Please contact Susan Sullam at [susan\\_sullam@cardin.senate.gov](mailto:susan_sullam@cardin.senate.gov) if you have any questions.

---

*PRECEDE: Senator Cardin is a member of five Senate committees: Foreign Relations, Judiciary, Environment and Public Works, Budget, and Small Business and Entrepreneurship. His web site is: [cardin.senate.gov](http://cardin.senate.gov). He also can be found at [YouTube.com/SenatorCardin](http://YouTube.com/SenatorCardin)*

## **Clean, Green Transportation Is Our Future**

**By Senator Benjamin L. Cardin**

As Congress works to address our nation's transportation problems, it has a duty to rebuild our aging infrastructure for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At the same time, Congress also has an opportunity to make our transportation networks more environmentally sustainable. Surface transportation is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, but most Americans have only one option for their daily commutes -- their car and gridlocked highways.

Lack of transportation choice is bad for the environment and it's bad for our economy. Our nation's heavily congested roads cost the United States more than \$78 billion a year in lost time and wasted fuel. In Maryland, more than 10 percent of workers must travel more than an hour each way to reach their jobs, and commuting times across the nation continue to grow every year. At \$2-per gallon – or \$4-per gallon – the waste adds up quickly.

As we debate how to improve transportation and prevent global warming, there is one strategy that meets all of our goals: offer better public transportation. And public transportation includes not just major transit systems like MTA buses, MARC commuter trains and Washington's Metro system. In smaller cities and rural areas, community transit services like regional and municipal bus programs, van pools and senior rides offer access to vital services, and employers in suburban locations need special bus routes to get workers to jobs.

Those who ride public transportation help reduce their carbon footprint, use less fuel, and save money. Consider these facts:

- Public transit already saves 37 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually — that's equal to the emissions from 4.9 million households or every household in Washington D.C., New York City, Atlanta, Denver; and Los Angeles combined.

- Households with access to good public transportation drive an average of 4,400 fewer miles annually than those with no access to public transportation.

Expanding and improving public transportation is the key to making our overall transportation system more efficient. By integrating land-use with transportation policies, and by offering better mass transit service, transportation infrastructure can be the bedrock of a new, more energy efficient economy.

To make this vision a reality, the federal government needs to dramatically increase investment in public transportation, and more effectively allocate existing transportation funds. As a nation, we should triple transit ridership by 2020. This would save us 141.9 million tons of carbon emissions every year and 15.2 billion gallons of fuel. That's almost 8 percent of our carbon emissions from transportation today, and the fuel savings would be equivalent to the amount of fuel we import from the Persian Gulf.

Transportation investment also will produce new jobs. Every \$1 billion of investment in public transportation infrastructure supports 30,000 jobs as workers build new infrastructure like light rail and streetcar systems and upgrade existing facilities.

Public transportation benefits every member of a community, not just those that ride a train or bus. We have an opportunity for the federal government to commit to a new vision that will help transform our transportation system into the cornerstone of a clean, "green" economy.

--##--