

## **Mica Proposal Would be Death Blow for Transit; Millions to Lose Safe Ride to Work**

Massive service cuts and dangerous traveling conditions for U.S. transit riders would result from the multi-year transportation reauthorization proposal unveiled today by House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman John Mica (R-Fla), according to the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU). The misguided bill calls for cutting public transportation funding by more than 30% at a time when American commuters in most cities are already scrambling to find a safe ride to work and avoid sky-high gas prices.

Since the beginning of the current recession, more than 85% of transit systems across the U.S. have cut service or raised fares. Thousands of transit workers have lost their jobs. "Transit is already on the ropes," said ATU International President Larry Hanley. "The Mica proposal would be the knockout punch that puts millions of more people on the unemployment line."

Slashing federal transportation spending by a third will cause transit systems to shift what little local operations funding they have to rehabilitate aging vehicles and equipment, triggering the elimination of essential bus routes across the country. "The more than nine percent of Americans that are currently unemployed includes a significant number of transit-dependent people who simply cannot get to their jobs because their ride to work has been scrapped. If this bill becomes law, that number will grow substantially," said Hanley.

In addition, the Mica cuts will cause cash-strapped transit systems to further put off new equipment purchases and deferred maintenance, causing significant safety issues. Heavy duty large buses, which can be replaced every 12 years, are already running 14-16 years. Thirty five percent of all rail assets of the nation's seven largest rail transit agencies are already in subpar condition. The Mica bill will push those numbers much higher, to dangerous levels.

"People will be boarding twenty-year old buses held together with spit and glue, and transfer to subway, light rail, and commuter rail systems running on ancient tracks, rusty nuts and bolts, and 20th Century signal equipment. It's another Washington Metro disaster waiting to happen," warned Hanley. "Americans want and deserve reliable and affordable public transportation that can get them safely to and from work, school and other daily tasks."

ATU supports President Obama's Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Department of Transportation (DOT) Budget as well as the Administration's outline for the reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU, which calls for nearly doubling the size of the federal transit program in FY 2012. The President's proposal is a recognition of the public transportation crisis and the role that transit can play in getting people back to work.

The Mica blueprint is the result of a right-wing conservative-led effort to shed the federal government of its responsibility to build and maintain an efficient transportation network, regardless of the millions of jobs that will be lost or the pain that will be felt by average Americans.

Rep. Mica has repeatedly said that he wants America's transportation system to "live within its means," said Hanley. But voters have approved more than 70% of local transportation ballot measures since 2000, even if it may mean additional taxes. "Rep. Mica and the House Republicans just don't understand the needs of working Americans and their families," Hanley added. "Unfortunately, they never have."

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