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First Quarter 2010 Public Transit Ridership Declines at Slower Rate *Recession Continues to Impact Transit Revenues, Leading to Higher Fares and Service Cuts*

Nationally, nearly 2.5 billion trips were taken on public transportation in the first quarter of 2010, according to a report released today by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). Even with continued high unemployment, a severe economic downturn, lower state and local revenue for public transportation, and historic snowfalls in the mid-Atlantic region and Texas, public transportation use in the first quarter declined by only 2.7 percent.

“Despite negative economic national trends, public transportation ridership has declined by only 2.7 percent,” said APTA President William Millar. “High unemployment impacts public transit use since nearly 60% of trips are work-related commuter trips. Additionally, public transportation service is funded by state and local revenue, both of which have declined due to the economic recession. But we are encouraged that light rail service as well as bus systems serving smaller communities increased overall.”

A March 2010 APTA report titled, *Impacts of the Recession on Public Transportation Agencies*, shows that revenue decline is widespread, with 90 percent of public transit systems reporting flat or decreased local funding and 89 percent reporting flat or decreased state funding. Operation costs are paid for through state and local revenue and with significantly less funding available, many transit systems have had to cut service or reduce fares. In the time period of January 1, 2009 through mid-March, 2010, more than 8 out of 10 public transit agencies (84%) reported that they had cut service or raised fares or were considering either of these actions in the future.

“When public transit agencies are forced to raise fares or cut service, this means that fewer people will be able to use public transportation,” said Millar. “In light of reduced operating funding due to the economic recession, it is not surprising that ridership has declined. The good news is that ridership is declining at a slower rate than occurred in the 4th quarter of 2009 (3.8%) – perhaps indicating that as the recession ends and more Americans find jobs ridership will rebound.”

APTA has called on Congress to include provide additional revenue for public transit through the climate change legislation and through the Public Transportation Preservation Act of 2010 (S.3412), which would authorize \$2 billion in funds for emergency transit operating funds if enacted.

2010 First Quarter Ridership Breakdown

Ten out of twenty-nine light rail systems reported an increase in ridership for the first quarter of 2010. Overall, light rail increased by 1.5 percent in the first quarter of 2010. Light rail systems in three cities saw double digit increases in the first quarter: Portland, OR (16.7%); Phoenix, AZ (14.7%); and Seattle, WA (14.3%). Other light rail systems showing increases were located in the following cities: New Orleans, LA (9.8%); Memphis, TN (8.8%); and Los Angeles, CA (5.1%).

Three out of 15 heavy rail systems (subways and elevated trains) experienced ridership increases in the first three months of 2010 over the same period in 2009. The heavy rail systems with the highest increases in ridership for 2010 were in the following cities: Chicago, IL (3.0%); Los Angeles, CA (2.5%); and New York, NY (1.6%). Nationally, heavy rail ridership decreased by 1.5 percent.

Seven out of 27 commuter rail systems reported ridership increased. Cities with commuter rail increases were: Portland, OR (55.9%), Nashville, TN (32.4%); Salt Lake City, UT (15.6%); Alexandria, VA (5/9%); Harrisburg, PA (5.6%); Portland, ME (3.3%), and Philadelphia, PA (0.1%). Nationally, commuter rail ridership declined by 3.1 percent in the first quarter of 2010.

Bus ridership decreased nationally by 4.0%. Increases among large bus systems for the first quarter of 2010 were reported in the following locations: Boston, MA (3.3%) and Minneapolis, MN (0.2%). Small bus systems with populations below 100,000 saw a dramatic increase (5.7%).

Demand response (paratransit) decreased in the first quarter of 2010 by 0.8 percent.

To see the complete APTA ridership report go to:

http://www.apta.com/resources/statistics/Documents/Ridership/2010_q1_ridership_APTA.pdf

To see the report, *Impacts of the Recession on Public Transportation Agencies*, click on the following link: <http://www.apta.com/gap/policyresearch/policysurveys/Pages/default.aspx>

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The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) is a nonprofit international association of more than 1,500 public and private member organizations, engaged in the areas of bus, paratransit, light rail, commuter rail, subways, waterborne passenger services, and high-speed rail. This includes: transit systems; planning, design, construction, and finance firms; product and service providers; academic institutions; transit associations and state departments of transportation. More than 90 percent of the people using public transportation in the United States and Canada are served by APTA member systems.