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THE **IMPACT** OF THE **RECESSION** ON **PUBLIC** **TRANSIT**

A recent survey from the American Public Transportation Association shows that the impact of the recession on public transportation agencies across the country has been dramatic. Cuts and service reductions have gone from bad to worse to disastrous.

Since January 1, 2009:

- *84% of public transit systems* have raised fares, cut service or are considering either of those actions.
- *59% of public transit systems* have already cut service or raised fares.
- *3,129 transit workers* were laid off in 2009, according to the Amalgamated Transit Union, and an additional 3,600 workers are likely to be laid off this year.
- *Revenue decline is widespread*, with 90 percent of public transit agencies reporting flat or decreased local funding and 89 percent reporting flat or decreased state funding.
- *Despite actions taken* to address budgetary issues, 11 transit agencies project shortfalls in excess of 20 percent, and the cumulative projected shortfall among participating transit agencies is almost \$2 billion.
- *Larger transit agencies were more likely to have a decrease* in local, regional, or state funding, or fare revenue than other transit agencies. Among larger agencies, more than half (54%) have already increased fares, and two in three (66%) have cut service. Nearly all (97%) of larger agencies have cut service or raised fares or are considering doing so in the future.
- *More than half of all transit agencies* (53%) have eliminated positions and one in three (32%) have laid off employees. Among larger transit agencies, the cuts in staff have been more common, with four out of five (80%) reducing positions and more than half (57%) laying off employees.

Without additional transit funding from Congress in the form of emergency aid or an infrastructure-focused jobs bill, transit service will continue to deteriorate, leaving millions of Americans stuck and stranded, paying higher fares for less service. Even USDOT Secretary Ray LaHood has acknowledged the severity of this crisis, saying Congressional action is needed "to keep our trains and buses operating, to keep people working, and to keep people getting to the jobs they need so badly."

The survey asked APTA member transit agencies to report on actions they have taken since January 1, 2009 in response to the economic downturn and those actions anticipated in the near future. 151 transit agencies responded; these agencies carry more than 80 percent of all public transportation riders in the United States. The results show that service cuts, fare increases, and reductions in staff, benefits, and pay are faced by a large number of transit agencies due to declining revenues. The impacts were most severe among the larger public transportation agencies.

Meanwhile, public transportation agencies across the country continue to seek solutions and do all they can to provide critical service to connect people to jobs and help support an economic resurgence. Given current economic trends, most see heightening pressures in the months ahead as agencies face unprecedented budgetary challenges. In order to protect vital public transit service, state, local and federal partners must provide critical funding to help transit agencies move beyond the immediate economic crisis.

The call to save transit, coming from riders, advocates and workers alike has reverberated throughout the country and will only get louder as more transit cuts take effect. Will the country's transit systems be left to deteriorate when transit ridership is at an all-time high and when Americans want more transportation choices? The millions of Americans who took 10.5 billion trips on public transportation last year certainly hope not.