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# Community Transportation Association of America

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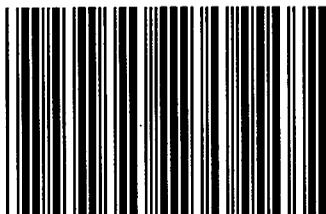
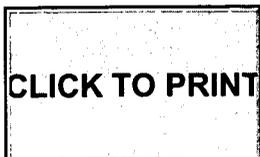
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BAUCUS

## Community Transportation Association of America Speech

Hello everybody. Max here. I'm sorry I can't be with you in person today. However, I'm glad so many of you have turned out to work on community transportation issues. Your attendance is a testament to how important this subject is.

Before I begin, I'd like to thank Dale Marsico [MAHR-SICO] and everyone at CTAA, not only for putting this Conference together, but for your tireless work in promoting better public transportation. I'd also like to say hello to the Montana folks in the crowd. Your work is critical to our nation.

I'm honored to receive the George Rucker Memorial Award. *[Note: Hold up award now]*. While it's nice to be noticed, it's not why I work so hard for community transportation. Rather, it's about providing for those in need. Frankly, it's about doing what's right.

I never knew George, but I'm told that he was a maverick. A man who stood on principle. George Rucker served on the staff of the Community Transportation Association and its predecessors for more than 25 years. His landmark research on the urgent need for transportation alternatives in Rural America is as vital and true today as it was when first published a decade ago.

George knew that for too many Americans the difference between a job and unemployment, between medical care and ill health, between a high quality of life and isolation, was simply a ride.

I also understand that this is the first time CTAA has given this award to a member of Congress. It's an honor to be the first to receive this award, but it's even more meaningful when it represents the accomplishments of such a great man. Thank you.

Let me turn to the issues now. As you all know, public transportation plays a significant role in the development of our communities.

Think about how vital public transportation is to citizens across the country. With a "ride," an unemployed worker can seek and obtain a job; a single mother can get off of welfare because she can now reach her job by riding the bus; and our senior citizens can achieve easier access to the medical care they need. And to top it off, our air is cleaner and easier to breathe -- All because of public transportation.

I have sponsored a number of bills to boost federal funds for public transportation. Specifically, I introduced the MEGARED and MEGARURAL bills. These two pieces of legislation seek to improve transportation services for the very folks I mentioned earlier.

Both bills address what is clearly the current inequitable distribution of federal transit money. Under my proposal, each state would be guaranteed a minimum in rural and small-urban transit investments. Additionally, current spending for elderly and disabled transit programs would be at least doubled.

This is a huge step forward. But we have more to do. We should not limit ourselves to a public transportation system that meets just our basic needs. Rather, we must strive to help our citizens connect with their community. Everyone should have access to their communities through public transportation.

Just because a person is old or disabled does not mean they should receive inferior service. Rather, as Americans, it's our duty to work toward making public transportation accessible to all.

Let me now turn to reauthorization. This is going to be an historic year as we re-authorize TEA-21. It's not going to be easy. Challenges lie ahead. The outcome is uncertain. But one thing is clear: As the top Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, and a senior member of the Environment and Public Works Committee I'll be at the table. I'll be at the table fighting for your concerns.

Although the Transportation Reauthorization deadline is nearly five months away, I'm leading the charge.

I've proposed a new financing plan that provides at least \$100 billion more in transportation funding, of which \$60 billion would be dedicated to transit. \$1 billion would be dedicated to rural, small urban, and elderly and disabled transit for each of the next six years.

Working with my good friend and colleague Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, we've developed a model that protects and increases highway and transit funding.

We're proposing a new way to finance our transportation infrastructure. One that substantially increases the entire fund while not increasing taxes. We're proposing issuing dedicated bonds to help fund transit in TEA-21.

The Grassley-Baucus proposal provides additional funds for rural transit districts. Think about it. Transit projects are public goods for everyone to use. Bonds are a much better way for the public to invest. Bonding will mean more money for transit, which means more money for rural transit. And, I can think of no better way to pay for their use than through bonds.

Plus, bonds are our ONLY way to get there. But we'll need your help meeting this goal.

Although our investment in public transportation is greater than it was six years ago, there is still a lot to do for rural transit. Demand for public and community transportation services continues to outstrip supply. But by working together -- making the right decisions and moving America forward -- we have an opportunity to make our nation the most accessible, mobile society in the history of the world.

Good luck with today's meeting. And thank you very much for this award.

All the best.