

Washington, DC -- Today, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation, strongly supported by Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica), authorizing millions to reduce public transit fares in cities like Utica and Auburn, as well as rural areas across Upstate New York.

“Increasing transit funding kills two birds with one stone – it provides American families with relief from high gas prices in the short-term and increased transit ridership, in the long-term, will help make our overall surface transportation system more energy efficient and less dependent on fossil fuels,” **said Arcuri, a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee**. “This is one more step to lower transportation costs for consumers struggling with out-of-control gas prices.”

The Saving Energy Through Public Transportation Act (H.R. 6052) would provide \$1.7 billion in grants to mass transit authorities over the next two years to reduce public transit fares and give consumers a cost-effective alternative to gas above \$4 a gallon.

Transit agencies are currently paying 44 percent more than last year for diesel fuel. Almost half of bus operators and more than two-thirds of rail operators have increased fares and about one-fifth are cutting services. The legislation passed today would provide the funding necessary to reverse that trend.

Public transportation provides an affordable alternative to driving, saving the average household \$6,251 every year, and reduces carbon dioxide emissions by more than 4,800 pounds per year per person.

“This legislation will strengthen public transportation nationwide by reducing fares, increasing ridership and reducing emissions,” **Arcuri said**. “Most importantly it will help families across the county save money on transportation.”

H.R. 6052 authorizes funding for transit grants in “urbanized areas” with populations of 200,000 or more. Agencies in all other areas are eligible for funding under the “non-urbanized areas” grant program.

Funding for the 24th district authorized by H.R. 6052:

\$235,714 for Ithaca and all of Tompkins County

\$736,078 for Binghamton and all of Broome and Tioga Counties

\$533,724 for Utica and Rome and all of Oneida and Herkimer Counties

\$3,231,898 for the Rochester area, which includes Ontario County

Under the legislation, New York State would also receive \$6,770,700 in statewide funding for grants to public transit agencies that serve non-urbanized areas such as Cortland and Cayuga Counties.

In addition to grants for local public transit, H.R. 6052 increases the federal share for clean fuel and alternative fuel transit equipment and facilities from 90 percent to 100 percent. Under current law, states or local transit agencies must cover 10 percent of the costs of clean fuel or alternative fuel-related equipment or facilities for transit buses, ferries, or locomotives, as required by Clean Air Act.

The bill would also establish a pilot program for vanpool demonstration projects in urban and rural areas. This fall, Tompkins County Area Transit (TCAT) will begin operation of its own, independently funded, vanpool pilot program, which will be New York State's first vanpool. TCAT's pilot program will bring commuters from outlying rural areas into the more urbanized Ithaca area.

Last week Arcuri strongly supported, and the House passes, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (H.R. 6003), authorizing funding for Amtrak and improving and expanding passenger rail service nationwide, including amendments sponsored by Arcuri to directly address New York State's rail infrastructure needs.

The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 would authorize \$2.5 billion in grants over five years for intercity passenger rail, funding an increasingly necessary transportation alternative that will decrease commuter costs and travel times, as well as decrease dependence on foreign oil and improve the environment.

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