

Mr. Speaker, in honor of tomorrow being Earth Day, I think it appropriate for us to pause for a moment and consider one of these pictures that is worth 1,000 words.

This photo of the block above the Metro South Station immediately behind the Cannon Building makes crystal clear how we in the House of Representatives can use our resources to improve the environment around us.

Tens of millions of dollars are being proposed right now to help the District of Columbia, an area that is in decline, that is fighting road congestion, air pollution, with some rather elaborate proposals. Yet each day 5,000 people exit this transit station on their way to work in and around Capitol Hill, and it suggests a simple solution to encourage less traffic, less sprawl, and revitalize Washington, D.C.

Consider for a moment the over 6,000 parking spaces the House reserves for those employees who drive. These spots are on hold, guarded, secure 24 hours a day. They cost the taxpayer approximately \$1,500 a year per employee per parking space. On the other hand, employees who use public transportation are totally on their own. They have to meet the costs of their transportation, even though they work side-by-side with employees for whom the \$1,500 per year worth of transportation costs are covered by the House.

Now, I have no problem with people who want to or must drive to work. I do find it odd, however, that we encourage it over taking public transit, particularly after we have invested over \$10 billion for the transit program here in Washington, D.C. As an employer, we are sending hardly an Earth friendly message to our employees that we will only help them if they drive their car to work. We are ignoring those who take transit, the MARC train, Virginia Rail Express; you are out of luck.

Imagine for a moment what this would look like if 312 drivers did not park their cars, and instead it could be used for a park, an expansion of the Library of Congress, for that visitors center that we talk about.

For years, we have encouraged in the Federal Government, the private sector to join in the fight for cleaner air by reducing single-occupant vehicle trips. In and around the District of Columbia alone, over 1,000 businesses are members of the Washington Metro Transit Authority's Metro Pool Program that provides a Metro check. Over 50,000 public and private sector employees in D.C. regularly use this service. Yet while we have encouraged private

businesses to offer transit benefits, the House of Representatives is one of the few, and certainly the most visible Federal office not to offer transit benefits to its employees. It sounds a little bit hypocritical to me.

The following Federal Agencies do offer these benefits: The Senate, the Senate of the United States Congress, the Office of the Architect of the Capitol, the Congressional Budget Office, the Bureau of Public Debt, the Supreme Court. Did I mention the Senate? One hundred thirty-four other Federal employers provide over 30,000 employees benefits for the metropolitan area.

I think it is time that we give House Members the same option that the United States Senate has had for its employees for over 5 years. I think we in the House are smart enough to do it, our employees deserve this modest tax benefit, and it is a low-cost option that will improve the livability for our Nation's Capital.

I would suggest that it is time for us to look back here for a moment and imagine what would happen if we have only 5 percent of our employees who take advantage of this opportunity. We could have an opportunity to improve the environment, use our resources more effectively, and, in the long term, it would make a big difference in the budget of the House of Representatives.

I would urge strongly my colleagues to join with me and over 150 other cosponsors to add their name to House Resolution 37 that would provide an optional transportation benefit for House offices; that would provide the same \$21 per month tax benefit to our employees that has been given to the Senate. It was based on entirely using existing office funds; no additional requirement is necessary.

I hope that this is something that we can take a small step to recognize our obligation to the environment.