

Mr. Speaker, for people who care about livable communities, the D.C. metropolitan area is either a test case or a basket case; sometimes it is both.

In terms of quality of life for the commuter, the experience in recent decades commands a horrid fascination. Between 1982 and 1994, there was a 69 percent increase in the time D.C. area commuters spent stuck in traffic. The average speed on the Beltway has decreased from 47 miles an hour to 23 miles per hour.

In D.C., we are told that the average commuter spends 76 hours a year stuck in traffic; that is almost 10 working days sitting in the car absolutely immobile. In Northern Virginia this summer, nearly 1 out of every 3 days was in violation of ozone clean air standards.

Mr. Speaker, of course, it is no secret that in this metropolitan area we are sprawling far more rapidly than we increase in population. From 1970 to 1990, Metropolitan Washington population grew 25 percent, yet the area that we consume increased over 60 percent.

The suburbs here grew by a population of 18.3 percent while the District itself lost 17 percent of its residents. In the first 7 years of the 1990s, the District was hemorrhaging one person every hour.

There are solutions which we know will not work; one is trying to simply pave our way out of congestion. The congestion in the United States will triple over the next 15 years, even if we increase capacity 20 percent.

The same people who tell us that we have the second worst congestion in the country found that, despite roughly \$30.8 billion spent by urban areas to add more vehicle lanes, congestion levels remained almost identical to urban areas that did not.

Mr. Speaker, of course, here we do not have any thoughtful regional land use. But at an era of smart growth, we seem to be continuing to engage in dumb growth, like putting a massive stadium with huge public subsidy out in the middle of nowhere where it is virtually inaccessible any way other than by car and then being surprised when on opening day it is jammed and some people actually are abandoning their cars to get to the game.

We continue to scatter development throughout the region away from Metro stations and designated growth sites. There are things that can, in fact, work and make a difference.

Last week in Atlanta, Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater launched the Commuter Choice Initiative, a program that was created in TEA-21 to provide \$65 a month in tax-free transit or vanpool benefits for employees in both the private and the public sector.

While this effort is a step in the right direction, we in Congress need to make sure that the Federal Government leads by example. Unfortunately, here in our congested metropolitan area, there is no uniform program or policy for our Federal employees, yet 350,000 Federal employees make up the majority of people who work here in and near transit.

There is no uniform parking or commuter policy across the Federal Government. The costs and subsidy for parking varies, different levels of transit subsidy.

Mr. Speaker, the administration is looking at an Executive order for Federal transportation in the National Capital region. This Executive order that they are looking at would require each Federal agency in the region to support transit and commercial vanpool benefits, to increase carpool and vanpool benefits, encourage bicycle and walking and provide shuttle service between transits points and agency workplaces where appropriate.

Last week, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Wolf) introduced legislation that would make this happen much faster via the legislative route. His bill would expand Federal employee commuter options and accept the Federal Government's responsibility as the single largest employer in the Capital region to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution.

Mr. Speaker, I am excited about the gentleman from Virginia's leadership and the way that the administration is moving. I hope, however it is done, that we do not let an extra minute go by. People who are caught in traffic as we speak this moment deserve the best from the Federal Government to make our communities more livable, to make our families safe, healthy, and economically secure.

Having a uniform comprehensive approach to the Federal Government's transportation issues in the metropolitan region is an important step in that direction.