

Bi-partisan, bi-cameral bill would address transportation's share of emissions

Washington, DC – Yesterday, Sens. Thomas Carper (D-Del.) and Arlen Specter (R-Penn.) and Reps. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), Ellen Tauscher (D-Calif.), Steven La Tourette (R-Ohio), Melissa Bean (D-Ill.), and Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) introduced The Clean Low-Emissions Affordable New Transportation Equity Act or CLEAN TEA. The bill is predicated upon passage of a comprehensive climate change bill, such as the one considered by the Senate earlier this year, which would generate revenue for the Federal government. Under CLEAN TEA, ten percent of the revenue would be used to create a more efficient transportation system and lower greenhouse gas emissions through strategies including funding new or expanded transit or passenger rail; supporting development around transit stops; and making neighborhoods safer for bikes and pedestrians.

Transportation is responsible for about one-third of greenhouse gas emissions; passenger automobiles and light trucks alone contribute 21 percent. This legislation recognizes that the United States cannot meet its climate change goals without addressing emissions from the transportation sector. Statements from the bill's co-sponsors are below.

Sen. Tom Carper said: "Today, we fund our transportation system through a gas tax, meaning we pay for roads and transit by burning gasoline. When people drive less, our transportation budgets dry up. This means states and localities that reduce oil use, lower greenhouse emissions and save their constituents money end up getting their budgets cut. But CLEAN TEA reverses this negative funding policy by sending money to states and localities based on how much they reduce emissions. Now, we in the Congress have the great opportunity to address many national problems at once – finding additional funding for transportation infrastructure, building money-saving transportation alternatives and lowering greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector."

"Reducing emissions from the transportation sector will not only help us achieve our global warming goals, but will provide additional benefits to the environment, public health, the economy, and quality of life," said Rep. Earl Blumenauer. This legislation will help finance our shift to a low-carbon transportation system that provides transportation choices, creates safe and healthy communities, and saves consumers money. I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure that any climate legislation we advance in the House recognizes the opportunities provided by the transportation sector."

"This bill represents an important step in lowering our nation's greenhouse gas emissions, reducing our dependence on foreign oil and promoting transportation mobility," Sen. Arlen Specter said. "Since transportation accounts for one-third of greenhouse gas emissions, it stands to reason that revenue generated from a cap-and-trade system should be devoted to

creating a more sustainable transportation future.”

“Transportation accounts for 30 percent of our greenhouse gas emissions. CLEAN TEA addresses the difficulty of reducing these emissions by investing in strategies that make our transportation system more efficient and in transportation alternatives, such as mass transit,” said Rep. Melissa Bean. “This bill is a great example of how pro-growth and environmentally conscious policy can come together.”

“CLEAN TEA can’t come soon enough for our mass transit infrastructure,” Rep Mark Kirk said. “By investing in energy-saving projects like commuter rail, we’ll save money at the gas pump, decrease congestion and reduce greenhouse gases. Most importantly, we’ll create thousands of jobs throughout the country.”

“CLEAN TEA is a good benchmark to start the debate on climate change legislation. We cannot effectively address climate change without reducing the transportation sector’s contribution to greenhouse gas emissions,” Rep. Ellen Tauscher said. “This bill follows in the wake of historic legislation in California to address climate change by linking it to land use and transportation policy.”

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