

Washington, D.C. -- Congressman Earl Blumenauer applauded the passage in the House this week of the FY 2002 Legislative Branch Appropriations and assurances by the House Administration Chairman Robert Ney that the transit benefit program for House employees will increase to \$65 once the bill is signed into law by President Bush later this month. Blumenauer has been working steadfastly for the past two years to have the amount increased to at least \$65, the amount currently provided to all other Federal employees working in the Washington metro area.

“During a national crisis when we are called upon to take extra steps, we must promote solutions that save people time, money, and that are good for the environment. This is one easy thing Congress can do to achieve just that, as well as having long term benefits for the region.” Said Blumenauer, who spearheaded bi-partisan requests to both the Appropriations and House Administration Committees to increase the current benefit from \$21 per month.

Earlier this week, Blumenauer sent a letter to Chairman Ney and Ranking Member Hoyer requesting that the House Administration Committee authorize the transit benefit increase quickly in response to recent terrorist activity on the Hill.

“This simple step would provide immediate relief to those employees who choose to ride transit to their Hill jobs,” wrote Blumenauer. “Authorizing this increase is a small but important action that Congress can take to reward employees for their efforts to help respond to the changing demands of working on Capitol Hill.”

The Legislative Branch appropriations report includes language allowing the increase for congressional staff, as well as employees at the Library of Congress, Congressional Budget Office, and the Government Printing Office. The House Administration will authorize not only the \$65 per month benefit, but also an additional \$35 pre-tax deduction beginning in January 2002 -- at which point current law allows an increase to \$100 per month.

Blumenauer commends his colleagues Congressmen Ney, Hoyer, Taylor and Moran for their leadership and swift action on the issue.