



Events and announcements:

Congressman Blumenauer speaks out against cuts to the EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities

Livable Communities Task Force releases report on policies to provide gas price relief

- On June 2, 2011, the Livable Communities Task Force (LCTF) released a report entitled “[Freedom from Oil: How Transportation Choices Can Provide Gas Price Relief.](#)” The report recommends a suite of legislative proposals and other steps that policymakers, businesses and individuals can take to help consumers deal with high gas prices. LCTF

Chairman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), joined by members Lois Capps (D-CA), Jim Moran (D-VA), and Peter Welch (D-VT) spoke at the press conference, emphasizing the importance of giving people choices in how they get around, whether by car, bike, transit, or foot. They also emphasized the health, environmental, and economic benefits of non-automobile based travel. Dan Weiss from the Center for American Progress, Rob Healy of APTA, and Jason Pavluchuk of the Association for Commuter Transportation also gave remarks on the need for short and long-term policies that will offer solutions to transportation oil-dependence.

The report recommends policy solutions that protect communities and families from oil price sticker-shocks, including investments in electric and other non-petroleum fueled vehicles, higher CAFE standards, Pay-As-You-Drive Insurance, federal funding for transit and Safe Routes to Schools programs, and location-efficient mortgages. See the [full report](#) for more details.

Task Force supports appropriations for the Partnership for Sustainable Communities

- Earlier this month, Task Force members weighed in with the Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Environment and Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development to support the livable communities activities at HUD, DOT, and EPA in FY12. The livability initiatives are helping communities improve their transportation network, mitigate environmental impact, and encourage sustainable development patterns. The members sent letters to the Subcommittees urging support for President Obama's funding requests for the livability efforts at the three agencies, including HUD's Sustainable Communities Initiative and Choice Neighborhoods, EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities, as well as FHWA's Livable Communities program, and FTA's Livability Demonstration Grant program.

Task Force Members' legislation to enhance livability and sustainability

- On May 11, Representatives Blumenauer, Moran, and Mazie Hirono (D-HI) released the "[Commuter Relief Act of 2011](#)," which promotes equity among transportation commuting benefits in the tax code.. In current law, tax benefits give preference for commuting by car. This revenue-neutral legislation sets a uniform cap on transportation benefits, and allows employers to offer a parking cashout to employees who would prefer not to drive on their commute. The legislation would make it easier for people to commute by bicycle, walking, carpooling, or using public transit, and also enables transportation benefits to be combined for those with multimodal commutes.

- On May 5, 2011 LCTF member Rep. Doris Matsui (D-CA) introduced the "[Safe and Complete Streets Act of 2011](#)"

” with Rep. Steven LaTourette (R-OH). This bipartisan legislation requires states DOTs and MPOs instate a Complete Streets policy to ensure transportation facilities are safe and accessible for all users. Complete streets provide safe and vital access for commuters of all ages and abilities, on a variety of modes including transit, bicycle, car, and on foot. They accommodate this great diversity of needs and remove barriers to use by children, the elderly, and the disabled. Complete Streets policies save lives and ensure that investments provide a lasting value to the community.

Livable Communities Task Force Members introduce legislation to support livability goals

- On January 11, 2011, LCTF member Rep. Albio Sires (D-NJ) introduced H.R. 260, the “Commute LESS” (Leveraging Employer Support and Successes) to provide commuters with real options to conserve fuel, reduce congestion, and increase overall investment in transportation. LCTF member Russ Carnahan (D-MO) is an original co-sponsor. “Commute LESS” would give employers the tools and resources they need to provide their employees with alternative forms of transportation such as transit, carpooling or teleworking. Metropolitan planning organizations would be required to include strategies for outreach and input from employers into the development of long-range transportation plans.

- On February 15, Sires introduced H.R. 709, the “Urban Revitalization and Livable Communities Act,” which will invest in the health and well-being of communities across the nation by creating four grant programs that all require a local match. Rehabilitation grants would be used for purposes of remodeling or rebuilding recreational areas and facilities. Innovation grants would be used to cover costs of personnel, facilities and equipment designed to demonstrate innovative and cost-effective recreation opportunities. At-risk youth recreation grants would support new or existing programs support for existing programs that provide alternatives to at-risk youth. Lastly, recovery action program grants would be used for the development of local park and recreation programs, including citizen involvement and planning.

- On February 17, LCTF member Tim Ryan (D-OH) introduced H.R. 790, the “Community Regeneration, Sustainability and Innovation Act,” which will help communities address the growing problem of abandoned properties and urban blight. LCTF member Earl Blumenauer is a co-sponsor. Vacant land and buildings harm residents and municipalities through reduced property values, safety and health risks, and reduced tax revenue. The Community Regeneration Act would create a new pilot program within HUD to fund innovative solutions by communities experiencing large-scale property vacancy and long-term population losses. This bill would build the capacity of local governments to prevent, demolish, manage, and reclaim

vacant and abandoned properties through an array of effective strategies and tools.

- On April 1, Sires introduced the “Focusing Resources, Economic Investment, and Guidance to Help Transportation (FREIGHT) Act of 2011” to create a national multimodal freight program to improve efficiency, operation, and security. LCTF members Steve Cohen (D-TN) and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) are original co-sponsors. The FREIGHT Act will ensure our nation’s transportation system is able to remain globally competitive by establishing a national freight transportation policy and creating a dedicated Office of Freight Planning and Development within the Department of Transportation. Additionally, national freight infrastructure grants would be awarded on a competitive basis to improve the efficiency of the national transportation system.

2011 National Bike Summit National Bike Summit advocates for Transportation funding

From March 8-10, more than 800 advocates came to Capitol Hill to defend programs that support bicycling and other livability goals, including the Transportation Enhancements and the Safe Routes to Schools program. Rep. Blumenauer addressed participants and encouraged their advocacy on behalf of the role that alternative transportation can play in solving energy, health and environmental problems faced across the nation.

LCTF defends Partnership for Sustainable Communities funding

On March 15th, twenty eight members of Congress, led by the LCTF, forcefully defended funding for the Partnership for Sustainable Communities and the HUD Challenge Grants.

[The letter](#)

urged the House and Senate Leadership to reject the elimination of the Partnership’s discretionary grant programs, as was proposed in H.R. 1, the Continuing Resolution passed by the House. These grants are enabling communities across the country to envision and implement coordinated, sustainable growth and development plans. This integrated planning process can stimulate job creation and help to lower housing and transportation costs, which are all the more important in times of economic distress.

Secretary Ray LaHood in Portland with Rep. Blumenauer

On March 22nd, Secretary Ray LaHood joined LCTF Chairman Earl Blumenauer in Portland to break ground on the SW Moody Avenue project, which received a \$23 million TIGER grant from the US DOT. This project will stimulate economic development and improve the environment of a Brownfield while creating an array of new transportation options.

While he was in Portland, Secretary LaHood and Rep. Blumenauer also took the opportunity to tour the United Streetcar factory—the sole American manufacturer of modern streetcars. Portland’s streetcars are connecting residents to jobs, education and shopping without leaving them dependent on driving.

Rep. Blumenauer Emphasizes Livability’s Role in Energy Plan

High gasoline prices have consumers looking for new solutions, and on March 30th, President Obama responded to concerns with a speech outlining new goals for oil imports and alternative fuel vehicles. Rep. Blumenauer [responded](#) by reminding his colleagues of the central role that livability and land use can play in helping our nation become less reliant on oil. The path to independence from oil has to involve transportation alternatives such as those available in livable communities.