



Testimony of

**Hon. Kwame M. Kilpatrick
Mayor of Detroit**

Before the

Subcommittee on Housing and Transportation

of the

Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs

**United States Senate
June 13, 2002**

Good Morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the importance of Federal assistance for public transportation for the City of Detroit. It is a particular pleasure to appear before a committee on which Sen. Debbie Stabenow serves. We are lucky to have her working for us here in Washington on issues that are important to the City of Detroit such as affordable housing, homeownership, and -- of course -- public transportation.

During my campaign for Mayor last year, I spent a lot of time talking with the people of Detroit about a new vision. Part of this vision is improving the quality of life, which includes a variety of transportation methods that are needed to connect the downtown area with our neighborhoods and opportunities for jobs that are further away from home. Detroit will always be the "Motor City," but our citizens also want alternative forms of transportation such as buses, trains, light rail vehicles and people movers.

I have had a longstanding interest in transportation issues. Prior to my position as the Mayor of Detroit, I was a member of the state legislature for five years and served as Vice Chairman of the Transportation Committee. In that role, I had the opportunity to observe how Federal assistance affects transportation throughout the state of Michigan. My goal then was the same as it is now - - to bring federal, state and local governments to the table to enhance transportation options for our citizens.

Since becoming the Mayor of Detroit, I have focused on developing a clearer picture of transportation options available to our city. The City of Detroit is currently examining several transportation alternatives and will continue to work in partnership with the Federal government to make these plans a reality. I have also been working with the automotive community to encourage new technology to support alternative forms of transportation.

I would like to first discuss how the Federal transit program is performing in the City of Detroit and the surrounding region. Southeastern Michigan is an unusual region where transit service is concerned—the City of Detroit is the major transit operator. As Mayor, I oversee the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT). We operate 520 buses, employ more than 1,700 people, and carry 41 million riders per year. According to the American Public Transportation Association, DDOT ranks among the top 35 transit agencies nationwide in terms of passengers carried. The City of Detroit also oversees the Downtown People Mover, an automated rail guideway system that serves as a major circulator connecting office, hotel, entertainment and residential centers in our downtown area. The City's suburban bus agency (SMART bus service) operates approximately 250 buses.

Like all transit providers, the City of Detroit has benefited greatly from funding increases made available during the TEA-21 authorization period. The most important evidence of the impact of this Federal program is the reduction in the age of our bus fleet. In 1993 the average age of our buses was 10.1 years. Today, thanks to the additional funding approved by this committee, our average bus age is 5.6 years. Our City has also benefited from the Jobs Access and Reverse Commute program. Through expanded community-based and private van services, we have been able to service residents that are primarily located in empowerment zones. The

collaboration of DDOT, the City's Employment and Training Division, and other stakeholders serve as a key component in helping people make the transition from welfare to work.

As the City of Detroit looks to the future, we hope to make major improvements to the City's transportation infrastructure. We are seeking support from this committee to create partnership opportunities between Federal, state, and local governments. Here are some of the transit needs the City of Detroit has identified which we seek to address:

- Our Downtown People Mover -- now 15 years old -- is in dire need of repair and will require significant upgrades if it is to remain a key public transit circulator in downtown Detroit. We have identified an estimated \$37.9 million of repairs and improvements needed to upgrade the People Mover.
- A Downtown Central Transit Terminal is needed to link together our existing bus and people mover systems with improved pedestrian walkways and possible rail or bus stations. This proposed terminal will cost about \$45 million.
- Our bus system needs maintenance and heavy repair garages which could cost the City up to \$120 million.
- Development of a Center City Loop rail service, comprised of modern-day structures, will improve mobility in the core of Detroit, will connect the new downtown area, which is rich in business, entertainment, and cultural activities, and will stimulate neighborhood growth through transit development opportunities. Providing a feasibility study through preliminary engineering is projected at a cost of \$20 million.
- The Woodward Ave. corridor -- Southeastern Michigan's main street -- has been the subject of transportation studies for a generation. The most recent Alternative

Analysis -- completed in May 2000 -- reviewed light rail, commuter rail, people mover and bus rapid transit options for this corridor. We are now working to move ahead to implement an alternative transit method in this corridor.

- The Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments is examining rail service from Downtown to the Detroit Metropolitan Airport. The City is also supportive of this idea as part of a regional package of improvements that include upgrades to the transit system within the City of Detroit as well.

Meeting these major needs will require a lot of work in our state and region. Our state legislature is reviewing a proposal, which will provide a new organizational structure for our transit agencies. I support changes that will allow for a truly regional approach to improving our transit service, provided that the City of Detroit has an appropriate voice in the decisions that will be made.

As we seek regional transportation solutions in Southeastern Michigan, the City of Detroit looks to Congress for help in providing the funds to meet our transportation needs. Transit programs need to be funded at an adequate, ongoing level by incorporating the following ideals:

- The transit program should grow to \$14 billion, the annual level suggested by APTA.
- The guaranteed funding program -- which protects the transit program from the ups and downs of the annual appropriations process -- should be continued.
- Flexible funding programs -- such as the Surface Transportation Program (STP) and the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality program (CMAQ) should be reauthorized.
- Funding to improve the security of our transit systems should be provided from new Federal resources. Responding to terrorist threats against our nation is a matter of

national policy, and the financial burden for making necessary improvements cannot fall solely on existing Federal, state, and local funding sources. Our initial review of security needs on the DDOT system indicates it would cost us more than \$ 30 million to make the necessary improvements.

Detroit is the largest border crossing in North America; the Detroit River runs between the United States and Canada. Like so many other cities, we are seeking funding to revitalize transportation along our waterfront. One item on our agenda is establishing bike paths, which will directly improve the quality of life for Detroit citizens. Our waterfront is a recreational gem that must be redeveloped.

I look forward to working with the Members of this Committee to refine these principles and want to work with you in every way I can to build support for your efforts to enact legislation that embodies them. I am impressing upon my Administration and my constituents the importance of moving RIGHT HERE and RIGHT NOW to solve our transportation problems. I know this committee is prepared to move ahead as well, and I, as Mayor of Detroit, will be there to work with you as we move forward in this process together.

Thank you once again Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to appear before you today.