

Putting Transit to Work in Main Street America

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At Reconnecting America, we help transform promising ideas into thriving communities – where transportation choices make it easy to get from place to place, where businesses flourish, and where people from all walks of life can afford to live, work and visit.

www.reconnectingamerica.org

Putting Transit to Work in Main Street America

1. Context and goals
2. Overview of Findings
3. Case Studies
 1. Improved Local/Regional Bus Networks
 2. Circulator Systems
 3. Intermodal Transit Centers
 4. Intercity Transit/Rail Improvements

River Rail Streetcar in Little Rock and North Little Rock, Arkansas

Photo: Joe Stocks

Transportation Needs in Small Towns and Rural Areas

The Myths

- Large cities and small towns have nothing in common.
- A city is only defined by its population.
- A rural population is totally self-sufficient. They lead a sole existence on their farms and ranches and are not reliant on city/county services.
- Due to their self-sufficiency, they have no need for transportation options.

River Rail Streets in Little Rock and North Little Rock, Arkansas

Photo: Joe Stocks

Transportation Needs in Small Towns and Rural Areas

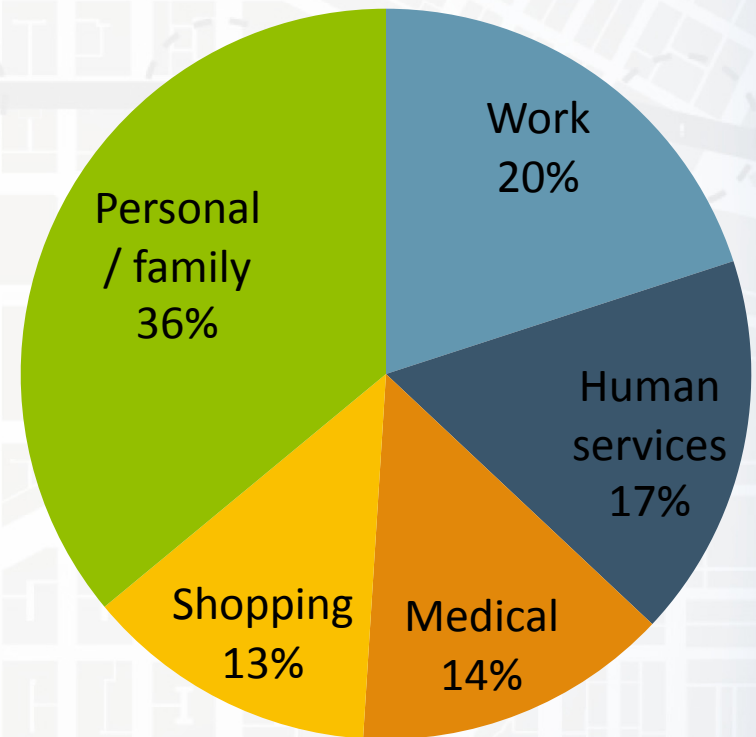
The Facts

- People who live in large cities, small towns and rural areas all have the same concerns.
- A city is defined less by its population and more by the services it renders.
- No matter where people live, they depend on nearby cities for jobs, healthcare, education and services.
- Transportation options are needed for everyone – including veterans, students, the elderly, the economically-challenged.

Small Towns and Rural Areas Have Unique Needs

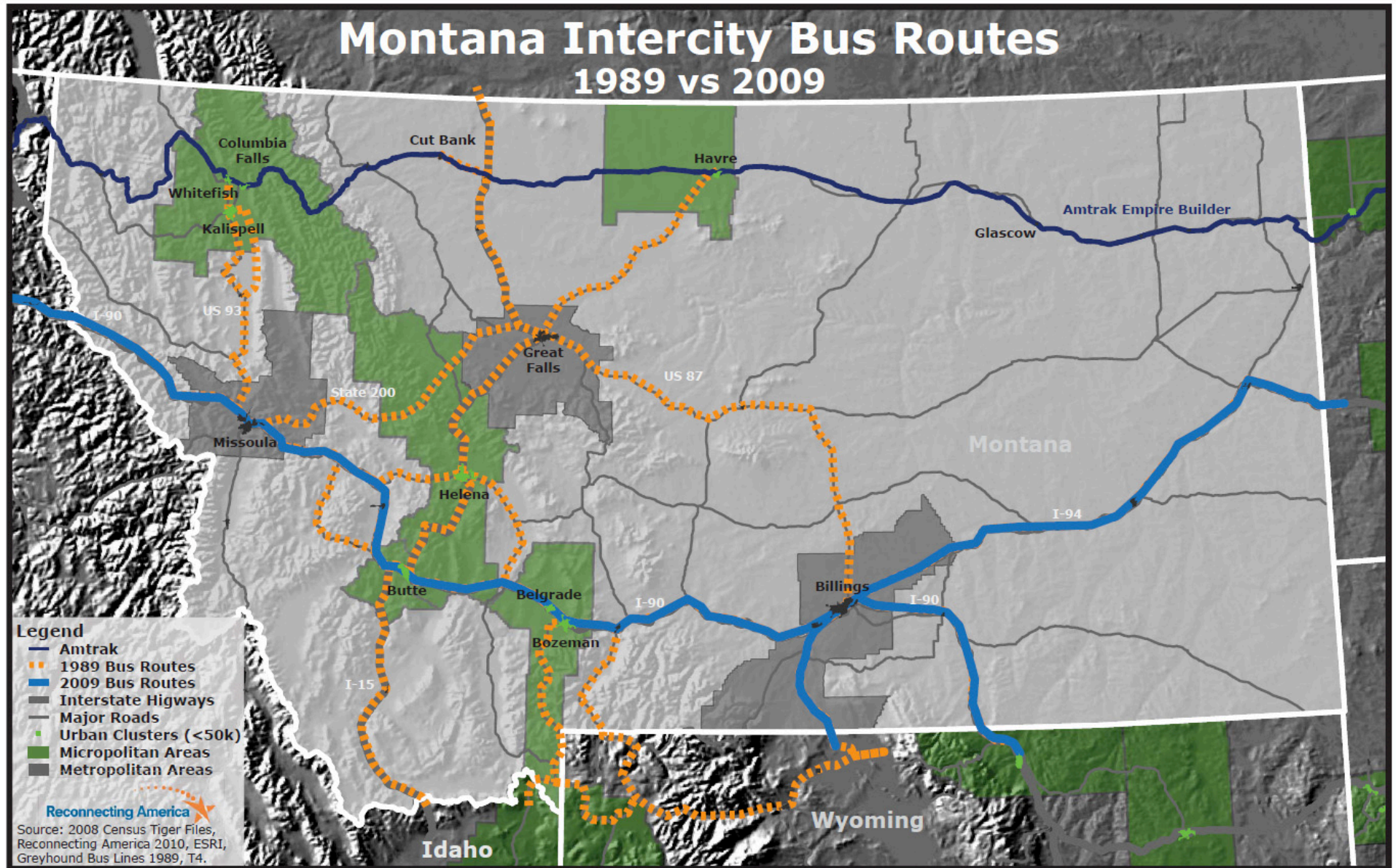
1. Long distances between destinations
2. High transportation costs
3. Older than average population has specific transportation needs
4. Geographically isolated, as intercity bus and rail networks have declined over the last few decades

How Rural Population Uses Transit



Source: RTC:Rural.

Intercity Bus Route Changes





True Affordability and Location Efficiency

H+T[®] Affordability Index

H+T Index Gas Cost Impacts Greenhouse Gas Impacts Custom Comparison

Share

Region: Biloxi--Gulfport--Pascagoula, MS Region

Typical Household: Regional Median Income: \$36,662 Size: 2.5 People Commuters: 1.1 Workers

Display: Legend and Description Change

Housing Costs - % Income Change

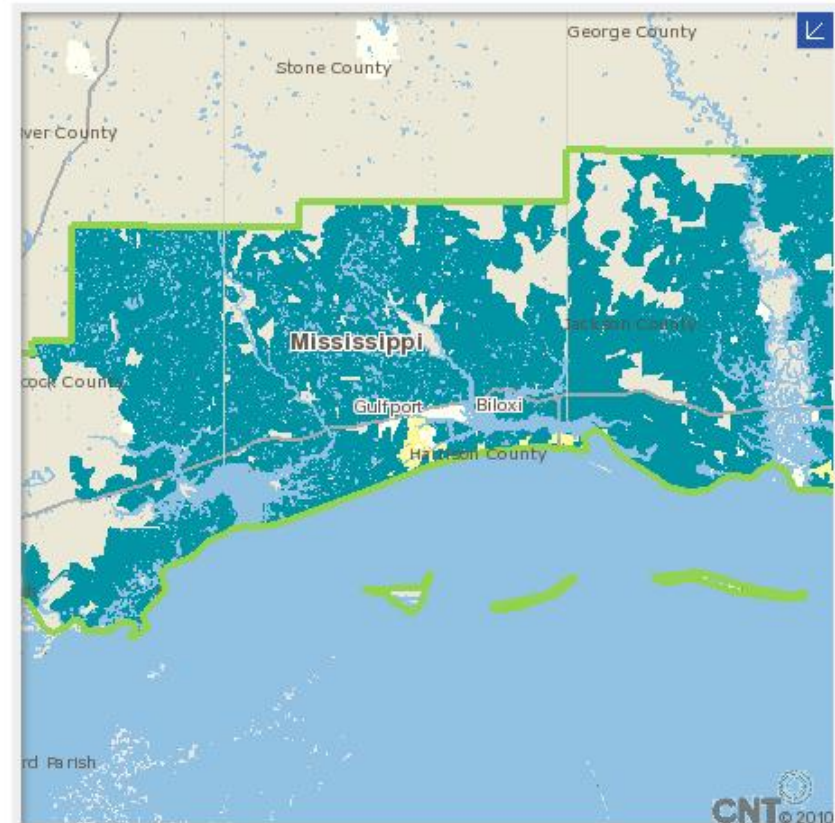
- Data Not Available
- Less than 30%
- 30% and Greater

Housing Costs factored as a percent of income has widely been utilized as a measure of affordability. Traditionally, a home is considered affordable when the costs consume no more than 30% of household income.

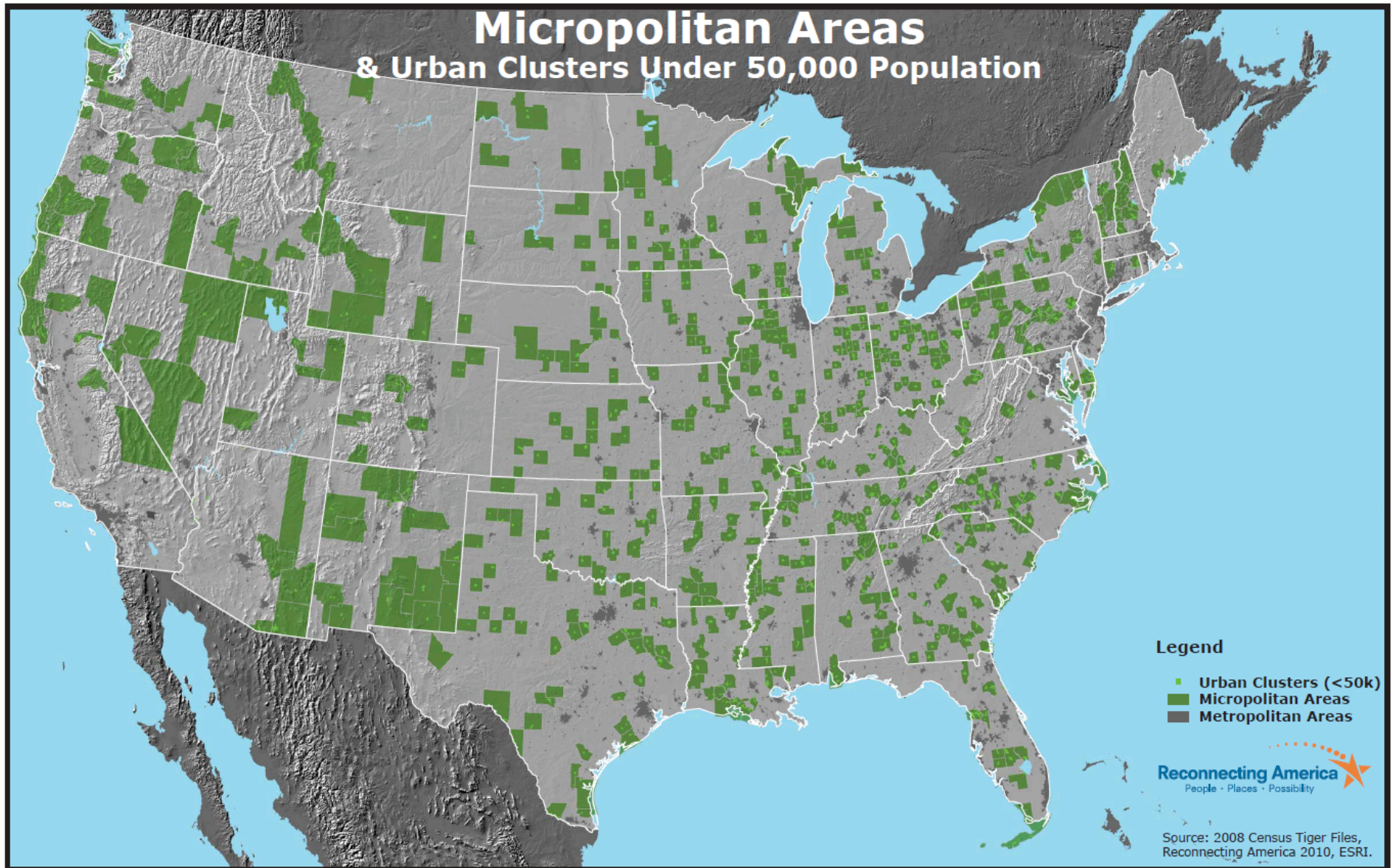
Housing and Transportation Costs - % Income Change

- Data Not Available
- Less than 45%
- 45% and Greater

H+T has been developed as a more complete measure of affordability beyond the standard method of assessing only Housing Costs. By taking into account both the cost of housing as well as the cost of transportation associated with the location of the home, H+T provides a more complete understanding of affordability. Dividing these costs by Representative Regional Incomes illustrates the



Context



Findings

1. Small towns view transit as essential
2. No one size fits all
3. Economic and mobility benefit for smaller communities
4. Many actors are involved in implementing successful outcomes
5. Funding pieced together from many sources



River Rail Streetcar in Little Rock and North Little Rock, Arkansas

Photo: Joe Stocks

Local/Regional Bus Networks



Photo source: Fastlane, USDOT

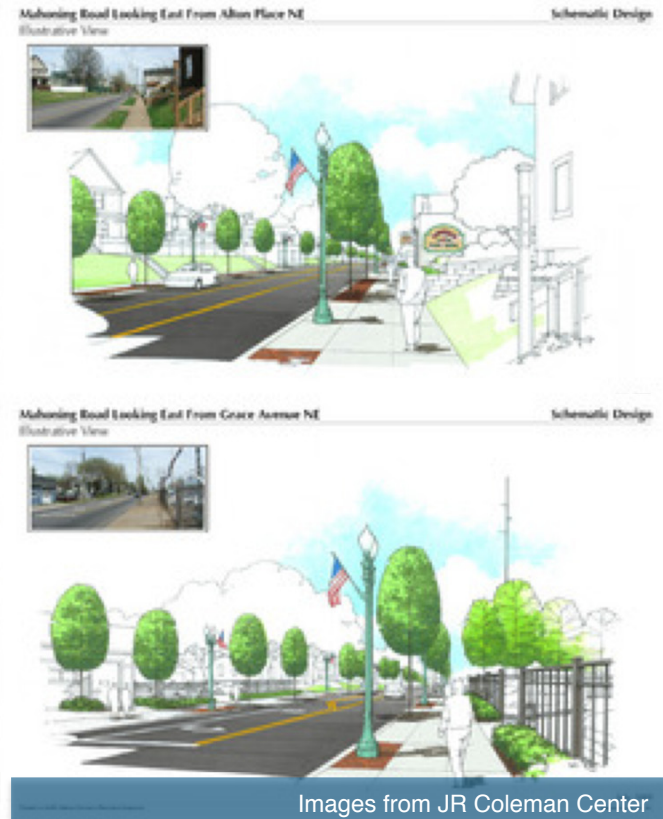
1. Focus improvements on one or two transit corridors
 - Transit improvements
 - Transit-supportive improvements
2. Funding is limited for major capital projects

Photo: Joe Stocks

Local/Regional Bus Networks

1. Case study: Canton, OH and the Mahoning Corridor

1. Connects downtown to northeast Canton, “main street” for northeast neighborhoods
2. Ridership anchors at both ends
3. Partnership with local CDC
4. FTA awarded Bus and Bus Livability: \$2.7 million



Circulator System

1. Connect multiple downtown destinations
2. Foster city center reinvestment/vitality
3. Help support more compact growth
4. Most common in university towns or tourism economies



Circulator System

Case study: Streamline Circulators in Bozeman, MT

1. Four free circulators within four square miles
2. Connect downtown, Montana State University, medical center, tourist destinations Bozeman High and major retail
3. Federal funding plays a key role

Streamline Annual Funding

(includes circulators and demand responsive service)

FTA Section 5311	\$ 548,000
Local Match	
Montana State University	\$ 90,000
City of Bozeman	\$ 60,000
Gallatin County	\$ 40,000
United Way	\$ 28,000
Belgrade County	\$ 8,000
Other	\$ 154,000

Source: Kack, Headwaters Recycle Conference

Intermodal Transit Centers

1. Improve the quality of transit service by making transfers easier
2. Serve as central, public investment to support revitalization of downtown
3. Provide needed amenities, including daycare centers and retail in central location
4. Federal support through TIGER and Bus and Bus Livability Programs



Intermodal Transit Centers

Case study: Prairie Hills Transit in Spearfish, SD

1. Nonprofit transit agency
2. Operate demand response style service (ie, Dial-a-ride)
3. New transit center includes space for a daycare center
4. City of Spearfish contributed the land and ARRA funding from DOT provided \$1.5 million



Photo source: Aaron Rosenblatt/Rapid City Journal

Intercity Transit/Rail Improvements

1. Support small town life, while protecting from growing congestion from auto travel
2. Provide access to economic opportunity to residents
3. Improvements fall into two categories



Intercity Transit/Rail Improvements

Case study: Fredericksburg, VA

- 25,000 people, historic downtown
- Halfway between Richmond, VA and DC, terrible commute congestion
- Solution: improve service by expanding track capacity
- \$75 million in ARRA funding



For more information

- Full report available in Spring 2012.
- Thanks to the Rockefeller Foundation and the Community Transportation Association (CTAA) for supporting this research.

Other resources:

- Community Transportation Association, www.ctaa.org
- NADO, www.ruraltransportation.org
- Reconnecting America, Featured Topic web page on Livability in Smaller Cities:
- RUPRI, Rural Policy Research Institute, www.rupri.org
- Transportation for America
- EPA, Putting Smart Growth to Work in Rural Communities,



Thank you!

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