

STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE
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COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for providing us this opportunity to appear before you this afternoon to testify on provisions affecting transit in H.R. 776, the "Comprehensive National Energy Policy Act."

It gives me great pleasure to appear before this Committee as the first Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration. I commend the Committee for its role in drafting the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, a landmark bill for transportation, which also renamed our agency. We already are

beginning to see significant changes at the local level in transportation policy, which the bill mandates, and I look forward to working with you as we implement the provisions of the legislation.

Since the focus of our testimony today is on alternative fuel issues, let me start by briefly describing some of the things the Federal Transit Administration already is doing in this area, and then I will turn to the specific provisions of H.R. 776 you have asked me to testify on.

Alternative Fuels - Current FTA Activities

Under the Alternatives Fuels Initiative (AFI) program, the FTA has now awarded a total of 60 grants for 938 alternative-fueled vehicles for use in transit service operations.. Of these vehicles, 395 are compressed natural gas (CNG), 10 are liquified natural gas (LNG), 139 are methanol, 177 are ethanol or ethanol injection, and the remainder support clean diesel initiatives. About 175 of these vehicles are currently in revenue service operations.

In addition, FTA will undertake a project with the Southern California Regional Transit District (SCRTD) to evaluate the use of LNG as an alternative fuel for transit buses. LNG offers the potential for faster re-fueling, lower vehicle weight increase, and lower fueling facility costs as compared with CNG. Ten LNG buses will be evaluated in revenue service operations in Los Angeles. An LNG fueling facility will be designed and constructed at an SCRTD garage. Detailed data will be collected on fuel economy, parts replacement and maintenance conducted for the LNG buses. FTA is also pursuing the use of LNG by Houston Metro.

FTA will provide financial and technical support for a project to evaluate the use of advanced sodium sulfur batteries as a power source system for a medium-size transit bus. The Department of Energy will supply the battery to the Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District to be installed in a bus identical to one of the District's current lead-acid battery buses. The performances of these battery-powered buses will be evaluated over a variety of service operations in Santa Barbara.

In addition, six alternative fuels research and development grants totaling more than \$400,000 were awarded recently by Public Technology Inc. (PTI). PTI is the technology arm of the National League of Cities, which has entered into a cooperative agreement with the FTA to support a wide range of outreach activities to support its Clean Air Program. A wide variety of transportation technologies and strategies are supported by the 1992 grants. The six projects will take place in Houston, Pittsburgh, Albuquerque, Denver, Las Vegas, and San Diego.

Lastly, FTA currently is accepting proposals to support advanced transportation systems and electric vehicle research and development. In accordance with the 1991 ISTEA, our objective is to examine new technologies and approaches to meet current and pending air quality and energy security goals.

Comments on H.R. 776

Let me turn now to H.R. 776, and those of its provisions that deal with transit issues.

Section 305

Section 305 of the bill would bar State or local jurisdictions from restricting alternative-fueled vehicles on high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, regardless of the number of passengers in such vehicles. In short, HOV lanes would be open to single-occupancy alternative or dual fueled vehicles operating on alternative fuels. This prohibition would not apply in certain cases, such as in nonattainment areas where HOV lanes are part of an approved State Implementation Plan.

Since most HOV lanes are in cities that are classified as nonattainment areas, this Clean Air exception may minimize the impact of this provision. Nevertheless, I think it is important to address the significant policy issue here. And while we all recognize the value of providing incentives encouraging the use of alternative-fueled vehicles, I think we should at the same time be careful not to impair one of the most effective and efficient forms of mass transit today, the HOV lane. As we at the FTA often note, the Shirley Highway HOV lane in this area moves more passengers during rush hour than does the Metrorail system.

Although the Clean Air Act already provides for exemptions from transportation control measures (like HOV lanes) for alternative fuel fleet vehicles, I would not want to see the effectiveness of HOV lanes lessened. While there are few alternative-fueled vehicles on the road today, that may change significantly over this decade. In particular, we would be concerned about how access to HOV lanes by alternative-fueled vehicles would be managed and enforced, and what impact any such procedures would have on the flow of HOV traffic.

Section 410

Section 410 of the bill would establish State and local alternative fuels and alternative-fueled vehicle incentives and program plans designed to accelerate the introduction and use of such fuels and vehicles. Under this program, States are invited to submit to the Department of Energy plans designed to introduce substantial numbers of alternative-fueled vehicles in each State by the year 2000. Among other things, the plans are to consider the use of HOV lanes for alternative-fueled vehicles. While this section calls for the Secretary Of Energy to consult with

appropriate Federal agencies in carrying it out, Mr. Chairman, I think it would be appropriate for the provision to call specifically for coordination with DOT on issues affecting mass transportation. Again, we strongly support the concept of alternative fuels and, as I noted earlier, the FTA is doing much in this area. But we do think it is important that all of the consequences of a particular program be taken into consideration, and that is why we would like the FTA to be involved in these issues.

Section 411

Mr. Chairman, section 411 deals specifically with some of our existing programs. This section would establish an alternative fuels bus program with an authorization of \$30 million a year for fiscal years 1992 through 1994 for cooperative agreements and joint ventures with cities, counties or transit authorities in areas over 100,000 in population. These agreements and ventures would demonstrate the feasibility of the commercial application, including safety of specific vehicle designs, of using alternative fuels for urban buses.

The local share for such projects would be 50 percent. The program would be administered by the Secretary of Energy in consultation with the FTA.

Let me address that latter point first. We believe it makes good sense to have this program administered by DOT in consultation with the Secretary of Energy, rather than the other way around. Separate administration of the program in the Department of Energy would duplicate existing programs we already have underway, and would only create additional paperwork. On the other hand, administration of this program by DOT through the FTA would prevent this duplication and could get the program up and running faster by piggybacking on our current efforts.

We also suggest that the years covered by this program under the bill, 1992 through 1994, be modified since we are well into 1992. At this point 1993 would be a more practical first year for the program.

Section 507

This section of the bill deals with fleet requirements in the long term, beyond the year 2000. It authorizes the Secretary of Energy to include new urban buses in alternative fuel fleet requirements if the Secretary finds that such application would be consistent with energy security goals and the needs and objectives of encouraging and facilitating the greater use of such buses by the public, taking into consideration the impact of such application on public transit entities. We note that this section calls for the participation of the Secretary of Transportation in the development of its policies. This is an area in which the FTA has expertise, and we would expect to be closely involved in the development of policies affecting urban buses.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my remarks and I will be glad to answer any questions you may have.