

News Release

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Modern Transit Partnership Points to Existing Rail Transit Systems for Preview of Regional Rail's Benefits

MTP highlights successes of Portland's TriMet and St. Louis' MetroLink

HARRISBURG (September 16, 2003) — Highlighting the benefits that rail transit will bring to the southcentral Pennsylvania region, Modern Transit Partnership (MTP) President John Ward pointed to the successes of the TriMet system serving Portland, Ore., and the MetroLink system serving St. Louis, Mo.

“The benefits of regional rail that have been enjoyed in other parts of the country illustrate what can be realized here in southcentral Pennsylvania,” Ward said. “These rail systems are living proof that wherever people get to see and ride rail transit, they want more of it.

“For example, downtown Portland has become a more vibrant place without adding any new road capacity in over a quarter-century. And St. Louis' MetroLink has been so well received that new extension projects are in the works and studies continue for several future corridors. These and other regional rail systems across the country are dispelling myths when it comes to coaxing drivers out of their cars and into convenient, safe, affordable and environmentally friendly transit alternatives,” Ward added.

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ADD 1 – MTP Points to Existing Rail Transit Systems

Portland has witnessed a nearly four-fold increase in ridership since the launch of its 16-year-old TriMet system, a 38-mile Metropolitan Area Express (MAX) rail line that connects the cities of Portland, Gresham, Beaverton, Hillsboro, and the Portland International Airport. According to Mary Fetsch, TriMet's communications director, 77 percent of TriMet riders are choice riders — riders who have cars but choose to ride TriMet instead, or choose not to own a car and travel by rail.

As a result, MAX eliminates 54,000 car trips each weekday, easing traffic congestion and enhancing clean-air initiatives. In addition, commuters can park free at 21 TriMet-owned-and-operated Park & Ride lots. These 21 lots offer up to 8,161 parking spaces, with the majority located along the MAX line.

“Portland's experience with MAX demonstrates that rail transit linked with land-use planning can have a dramatic impact in shaping regional growth,” Fetsch said. “To date, \$3 billion in development has occurred within walking distance of MAX stations since the decision to build.”

In St. Louis, the MetroLink rail system has made a significant impact on reducing traffic congestion in the region. MetroLink stretches 34 miles from Lambert-St. Louis International Airport to Southwestern Illinois College in Belleville, Ill. Phase One opened in 1993 and an extension to St. Clair County opened in 2001.

“Before service began, ridership was projected at 17,000 per day,” Larry E. Salci, MetroLink's executive director, said. “In August 1993, the system's first month of operation, approximately 30,000 passengers were riding MetroLink daily.”

ADD 2 – MTP Points to Existing Rail Transit Systems

According to Salci, 68 percent of MetroLink riders own two or more cars and 79 percent of new MetroLink riders are new to public transit. In addition, a single, full MetroLink train at rush hour removes 125 cars from the highway; two MetroLink tracks have the same passenger capacity as 16 lanes of highway; and the average MetroLink commuter can save \$1,500 a year by using public transit instead of driving to work.

“The regional rail plan outlined by CAT and the Modern Transit Partnership can provide the same advantages experienced by cities and regions across the country that have already taken the regional rail plunge,” Ward said. “And now, with the preliminary engineering phase of *CORRIDORone* development underway, the future of enjoying all the benefits of regional rail in southcentral Pennsylvania is right around the bend.”

CORRIDORone is the first corridor to be developed between Cumberland and Lancaster counties. The preliminary engineering phase — which will take about 15 months to complete — represents the final step prior to design and construction of *CORRIDORone*. Service from Harrisburg to Lancaster is slated to begin in late 2005, with east Mechanicsburg to Harrisburg service to follow in 2007.

CAT is the Cumberland-Dauphin-Harrisburg Transit Authority, providing public transportation with 28 bus routes and 17 park-and-ride locations throughout the region. CAT also provides paratransit service to citizens of Dauphin County.

The MTP is a non-profit organization that supports and promotes public transportation with the ultimate goal of bringing regional rail to southcentral Pennsylvania. Launched in 1997 by the CAT board of directors, this partnership is made up of business, community, government and individual members who are striving to develop a regional transportation plan that will meet tomorrow’s transportation and infrastructure needs.

For more information, visit the *CORRIDORone* Web site at www.corridorone.info.

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