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President's Message

With the recent news of possible fare increases in New York City next year and continued financial difficulties faced by all levels of government and the private sector, there are a few bright spots that are worth mentioning. Although high commuting costs are still with us, it has brought a temporary respite from ever-worsening traffic congestion. The federal government recently released their statistics on vehicle miles traveled throughout the country, showing a startling decrease in auto use. This translates into lower energy consumption, less traffic and a decrease in greenhouse gases harming our air.

And, for all of you participating in any of our TransitChek programs, your employees are benefitting from lower costs than if they were paying for fares with post-tax money. As many of you know, the federal law governing the monthly maximum for transit and commuter parking contains an indexing mechanism tied to increases in the cost of living. Although we won't get notice from the IRS of any increase until late in the year, it is possible that we may see a cap increase for next year. Also, we have been working with many representatives in Congress, particularly U.S. Senator Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Congressman McGovern (D-MA) to push for parity between transit (\$115/month) and parking benefits (\$220/month). With a presidential election ahead of us, it's unlikely we will see action on this soon, but I am hopeful that next year we will finally achieve the goal of raising the transit cap to at least \$220 per month for transit, providing significant financial relief to the many hundreds of thousands of employees in our programs.

Despite these opportunities, we still face difficult times ahead as we begin what I believe to be a period of major changes in our use of energy and its implications on how we travel. Everywhere I look throughout the country, more and more people are looking to use transit and other alternatives to driving alone to work to deal with the high cost of commuting. Yet our alternatives are severely limited due to this country's past heavy reliance on the automobile and the expensive infrastructure we have built to support it. Providing adequate alternatives will require time and significant investments. My hope is that we face this change head on and develop a variety of solutions -- both financial and service-related -- that help us during this period until we achieve a balanced transportation system. At TransitCenter, we hope to play a role in helping you with programs and assistance that you will find of value during this time.

Sincerely,

Larry Filler

President and CEO

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TransitCenter Introduces New Logo



We are proud to officially introduce our new logo, redesigned to strengthen our image created twenty-two years ago. At that time, we were a new activity supported by the transportation and business communities to find ways to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality through greater use of transit. Over the years as our programs expanded and more customers participated we were able to increase our contributions to this mission. Today, we remain stongly committed to helping our customers and the communities we serve by addressing even greater commuting and environment problems than we faced back then.

To clearly communicate this we are introducing our new logo. This new design features a blue and green color scheme intended to convey the company's mission to protect the environment and promote a cleaner environment through the use of mass transit.

"There's a wider audience now recognizing TransitCenter and the TransitChek program not only as a unique and rewarding benefit to offer employees, but as a socially active effort to reduce carbon emissions and support employees facing financial strain due to rising energy costs," said Larry Filler, TransitCenter President and CEO. "We hope that our new logo, and the colors representing a more environmental focus, strenghtens our message to improve the environment through our TransitChek programs and other efforts to support transit and commuter benefits everywhere."

You will begin to see our new logo in our communications first, followed by changes in how our products look. Since changing product designs have to be coordinated with many of our transit and business stakeholders this change will occur over a longer period. We ask for your indulgence during this period as we go through this process.

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Transit Ridership On the Rise Fewer Miles Being Driven

In the wake of increasing gas prices and greater traffic congestion, more Americans are switching to mass transit from driving as a solution for travel and commuting, according to statistics released by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA).

APTA has announced that 2.6 billion Americans took trips using public transportation in the first quarter of 2008, an increase of 85 million trips over the same period in 2007. If those increases continue for the remainder of 2008, the yearly total for trips taken on U.S. public transportation will top last year's total of 10.3 billion trips – the highest number in 50 years.

As more Americans step onto buses, trains and light rail cars, their car usage has decreased. AAA Travel reported a drop in travelers by automobile during the Fourth of July holiday weekend in 2008, marking the first traffic decrease in 10 years. In addition, Americans' gas consumption has dropped 3.3% since last year to 9.347 million barrels a day, the lowest number since 2003. The US Department of Transportation recently released its latest national traffic counts through May 2008 that shows further steep declines in the number of miles Americans are driving. Americans drove 9.6 billion fewer vehicle miles in May 2008 than in May 2007. This represents the third-largest monthly drop in the 66 years such data has been recorded and all three declines occurred this year. For the first five months of 2008 miles traveled declined by 29.8 billion miles compared to the same period last year.

These findings coincide with a rise in usage and acceptance of commuter benefits – another way to make using transit even more cost effective. According to TransitCenter's 2007 Commuter Impact Survey, there was a 44% increase in the deployment of commuter benefits programs in major metropolitan areas in 2007. For more statistics from this survey, visit TransitCenter's Transit Resources web page.

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Tips for First-Time Transit Commuters

As gas prices continue to climb, more and more employees are turning to mass transit as a cost-saving method of commuting to work. According to the BusinessWeek Research Services white paper, "The Impact of Commuting on Employees", 18% of employees switched to mass transit after their companies began offering a commuter benefits plan.

But for those who have never rode mass transit, it can be a daunting experience. Here are a few tips for first-time commuters to help make transit convenient as well as cost-effective:

- Check the Transit Guides at www.transitcenter.com/TransitResources/Guides.aspx for convenient links to local transit agencies in a number of major U.S. cities. Then be sure to familiarize yourself with the transit options available for the city in which you're going to commute.
- Research the route you need to take – there may be multiple options between bus, train and light rail routes that could get you to your destination at varying levels of cost and duration of trip. Many transit operator websites offer useful trip planners to help you make your trip. You can find some of these in our Transit Guides.
- Check the fare in advance and be sure to purchase a ticket or pass in advance if necessary.
- Test out the route on a weekend or during off-peak hours to get a sense of the bus or train station and its location in relation to your destination. Print a map of the surrounding area beforehand so you can easily navigate once you've arrived.
- Always allow extra time for traffic or rail delays.

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Summer Weekend Getaways by Transit



While Americans are driving fewer miles this year, this reduction in travel is not confined to commuting. In fact, more people are finding transit alternatives for their summer getaways. NJ TRANSIT reported 53% increase in sales of beach packages which offer discounts on fares to the Jersey shore using NJ TRANSIT services. In Southern California, MetroLink reported a 60% increase in weekend ridership to beach destinations. And in Washington, D.C., Metro attributed part of its most recent record-breaking ridership numbers to a Washington Nationals baseball game.

Caylin Sanders said she has definitely noticed increased traffic on her website www.escapemaker.com which helps visitors plan weekend getaways and offers public transportation options to all the destination options listed on the site. "We bend over backwards to find public transportation for the getaways we list," says Sanders who founded the site when she herself was looking for ways to getaway for weekends without a car. The site even offers a "Car-Free Getaway & Eco-Friendly Green Travel" section for environmentally conscious travelers and those looking to save money on their vacations using public transportation. Visit www.escapemaker.com/green.html to learn more.

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