

Full funding for public transportation!

Stop layoffs and cutbacks!

Of Phyllis Scherrer, SEP candidate for vice president
29 February 2012

The following statement against cuts in public transportation was issued by Phyllis Scherrer, the Socialist Equality Party candidate for vice president of the United States.

Public transportation ridership is increasing to record levels, yet mass transportation systems have been starved of public investment and allowed to decay, where they exist at all.

Transit agencies across the country are facing unprecedented financial crises, with many laying off workers while attacking the wages and benefits of those who remain. They are cutting back service by 50 percent or more in some states, and raising fares. This has been particularly hard on the elderly, disabled, students, or those otherwise unable to provide their own transportation.

The irrationality of these cuts is particularly alarming when one considers that public transportation use has increased 38 percent since 1995. Americans took nearly 10.7 billion trips on public transportation in 2008, a four percent increase over 2007 and the highest level since 1956.

Americans without an alternative form of transportation are being left stranded without access to lifeline services such as transportation to doctors and medical services for the sick and elderly. Many people depend upon public transit to get to work, school, shopping and to visit friends and relatives.

As part of our program the SEP demands that all people must have access to safe and affordable public transportation. This can be accomplished by immediately launching an emergency public works program to provide employment for all. There is plenty of work to do—rebuilding schools, hospitals, public housing, roads, mass transportation, water and sewage

systems, communications networks and other public facilities—to improve the conditions of life for working people.

All across the country, the story is the same. Transit authorities are cutting back on service, laying off workers, and hiking fares.

In Boston, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority is considering two options, raising fares by 43 percent and cutting routes by 25 percent or raising fares by 25 percent and cutting routes by 75 percent.

In Pittsburgh, the transit authority is proposing to cut 35 percent of the routes, including most night and weekend service. Over 100 neighborhoods and communities will lose bus service.

In Detroit, all-night service is being terminated on every bus route, in the poorest major city in the United States, under conditions where half of all buses are idled, on the average, due to inadequate maintenance.

More and deeper cuts are to come

Public transportation ridership has been growing three times faster than the US population. Currently, only 18 cents of every transportation dollar supports public transportation. Yet politicians in both the Democratic and Republican parties are cutting funds from mass transit at the federal, state and local levels.

The transportation bill currently going through Congress would put an end to any reliable federal support to mass transit, devoting all federal highway trust funds to roads. Transit authorities would be required to compete for general fund congressional

appropriations each year, at a time of deep, impending cuts to the federal budget, with a requirement to show an “offset” in other federal spending for each transit dollar appropriated.

If passed, this would force transit authorities to make another round of massive cuts and many systems would be closed down completely.

In the past four years, the federal government has spent trillions of dollars bailing out a tiny handful of bankers and investment firms. Trillions more have been spent on the US military machine. Yet when it comes to social programs such as health care, education, transportation—services that millions of working class people rely upon every day—the politicians say there is no money.

Jerry White and I are running in the 2012 elections because we say that a party of the working class must be built, one that is based on a socialist program in which the vast resources of society are used, not for the benefit of a tiny few but to meet social needs and improve the conditions of life for working people, the great majority of the population.

This must include pouring tens of billions of dollars into rebuilding and extending public transportation. To find out more about the SEP campaign and to get involved, visit www.socialequality.com today.

The Socialist Equality Party is holding a public meeting in Boston this Thursday to advance and elaborate a socialist program to defend transit service and all the social rights of the working class and to rally support for the SEP's 2012 election campaign.

Public Meeting: No to MBTA Service Cuts and Fare Hikes!

Thursday, March 1, 7 p.m.

YMCA, 316 Huntington Avenue,

Boston MA 02115



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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