



**Regional  
Transportation  
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## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Traffic Congestion Continues Grip on Northeastern Illinois** *Wasted fuel, time top \$4 billion; higher transit demand points to needed investment*

CHICAGO – Newly released data from Texas A&M University’s Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) placed the Chicago region second in rush hour travel among major metropolitan regions and third worst in the nation for wasted time, fuel and total congestion costs (\$4.2 billion annually). The study shows that northeastern Illinois’ regional public transportation system helped commuters save nearly 49 million hours of travel time and provided \$1.1 billion in travel savings in 2007.

“Congestion continues to be a major challenge to our region, our economy and our environment,” said Steve Schlickman, RTA Executive Director. “While our transit system helps address this challenge, it is clear that increased transit demand means we should be investing more to expand the system to help reduce traffic costs.”

The RTA’s long-range strategic plan, *Moving Beyond Congestion*, cites a need for \$16 billion in capital investments over the next five years to maintain, enhance and expand the transit system, the nation’s second largest. Transit demand in the region is at its highest level in nearly 20 years, with recent increases breaking all-time records. Expanding and improving service could provide additional benefits to the region and reduce travel times for everyone – whether they use the system or not. The study found that the Chicagoland region is 2<sup>nd</sup> in availability of transit options, but additional service is still needed to accommodate the ridership demand and address the traffic congestion.

The TTI study comes on the heels of a report issued in May by the Federal Transit Administration that found a dire need to reinvest in the nation’s transit systems. The report found that approximately \$50 billion is needed to bring the nation’s seven largest rail systems, including the CTA, up to a state of good repair. Additional funding is needed for Metra and Pace.

“Investing in our transit system not only improves service for our riders, but spurs growth in our local economy, creates jobs and reduces travel times for drivers,” explained Schlickman. “Improving the region’s transportation system provides a greater return on the taxpayers’ money than just about any other investment we can make.”

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The Illinois General Assembly approved two capital investment plans this past spring, but they have yet to be implemented by the state. The two plans will provide the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra and Pace with approximately \$2.7 billion for capital investments once enacted. The federal government's economic recovery plan has already allocated area transit systems \$414 million. While these funds will help improve the system's current condition, significant additional investments will be required to expand the system to reach more riders and increase the level of service across the region.

“The RTA is working with the CTA, Metra and Pace to use the new funds to improve the current system, and we is ready to work with lawmakers in both Springfield and Washington, DC to provide more hybrid buses, newer trains, upgraded signals, tracks and stations to accommodate more service,” said Schlickman.

The RTA provides financial oversight and regional planning for the CTA, Metra and Pace. Together, the service boards make up the nation's second largest transit system, valued at over \$35 billion dollars and comprised of 3,800 buses and vans, 2,300 train cars, 1,490 miles of track, 915 bridges and 300 rail stations. The system provides approximately 2 million rides each day across northeastern Illinois.

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*About the RTA: The RTA provides financial oversight, funding and regional planning for the three public transit operations in Northeastern Illinois: The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) bus and train, Metra commuter rail and Pace suburban bus and paratransit. For more information, visit [www.rtachicago.com](http://www.rtachicago.com) and [www.MovingBeyondCongestion.org](http://www.MovingBeyondCongestion.org).*