

Tauscher Announces 4.1 Million in Funding For Congestion Relief and Opportunities

Washington, DC – Rep. Ellen Tauscher announced today that she has secured \$4.1 million in funding for local transportation improvements in and around the Bay Area and an innovative loan opportunity for first-time homebuyers in eastern Contra Costa and Alameda Counties.

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July 24, 2007

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Rep. Ellen Tauscher Announces \$4.1 Million in Funding For Congestion Relief and Opportunities to Expand Home Ownership

Includes Inter-modal Station Serving Fairfield and Vacaville, Park and Ride Lots for Tri-Delta Transit, Bus Rapid Transit to Reduce Congestion on I-580, and a Housing Opportunity Center in the Tri-Valley

Washington, DC – Rep. Ellen Tauscher announced today that she has secured \$4.1 million in funding for local transportation improvements in and around the Bay Area and an innovative loan opportunity for first-time homebuyers in eastern Contra Costa and Alameda Counties. The local projects are part of the 2008 Transportation/HUD Appropriations bill which is expected to pass the House late this evening.

“We are spending more time commuting around the region than we are enjoying everything our communities have to offer or spending time at home with our families,” said Rep. Tauscher. “These projects represent a wide array of transportation solutions designed to relieve congestion, get us out of our cars when possible, and provide alternatives to traditional ways of getting around. Whether you are driving, walking, biking or taking a train these projects will help make your commute safer and shorter.”

The transportation projects are highlighted by a \$3.5 million Bus Rapid Transit program for the Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (LAVTA) requested jointly with Rep. Jerry McNerney. This project will reduce the congestion on I-580 by offering an alternative for commuters traveling through the Tri-Valley by connecting the BART Dublin/Pleasanton station to the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory via downtown Livermore and Pleasanton.

Continued funding was made available for an inter-modal station for Fairfield and Vacaville. At the crossroads of Jepson Parkway and Peabody Road, one mile north of Travis AFB, the inter-modal station will provide car, bus, bike, vanpool, and pedestrian access to the Capitol Corridor Passenger Rail Service.

New park and ride lots will also be built for Tri-Delta Transit to reduce traffic congestion on both Highway 4 and Vasco Road. One facility will be built in the Antioch/Brentwood area and another in Discovery Bay serving commuters traveling west to the greater San Francisco Bay Area, and south to the Tri-Valley area with continuing stops in route to the Silicon Valley.

In the Housing and Urban Development section of the bill Rep. Tauscher secured \$150,000 for the Tri-Valley Housing Opportunity Center. The center serves to provide housing assistance for first time buyers in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. "We need to provide an incentive for first time buyers to come to the Tri-Valley in order to keep up the economic vitality and growth of the region. We are quickly becoming one of the most expensive housing markets in the nation, meaning an opportunity center like this will help make first time buying in the Tri-Valley a little easier for people just starting off," said Rep. Tauscher.

A full description of each project follows below.

Transportation/HUD Earmarks

1. Fairfield/Vacaville Intermodal Station -- \$200,000 -- The Fairfield / Vacaville Intermodal Station is a development at the crossroads of Jepson Parkway and Peabody Road, located one mile north of Travis Air Force Base. The overall project will provide automobile, bus, bicycle, vanpool, and pedestrian access to Capitol Corridor Passenger Rail Service. Phase I of the project will provide the basic pedestrian improvements, platforms and rail improvements, parking, bus, and vehicular access necessary to obtain service approval from the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Board.
2. Tri-Delta Transit Park and Ride Lots -- \$250,000 -- The two corridors (Highway 4 and Vasco Road) being served by these park and ride lots are at saturation points with traffic levels and Tri-Delta Transit service will offer significant transit options to the commuters currently using these corridors. One of the facilities would be located in the Antioch/Brentwood area, and the other facility would be located in the Discovery Bay area. The Park and Ride lots will serve the towns and cities of Antioch, Pittsburg, Oakley, Brentwood, Byron, Bethel Island, Discovery Bay, and Knightsen. The facilities would allow passengers traveling west to job centers in the greater San Francisco Bay Area and south to the Tri Valley area to transfer to buses and continue stops to Silicon Valley. Traffic congestion along Highway 4 and Vasco Road would be reduced since fewer cars would be traveling along this route. It is estimated that 73,000 passengers would use the park and rides each year. The project is on the regional transportation plan, administered through the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Oakland, California.
3. LAVTA Bus Rapid Transit Project -- \$3.5 million -- Traffic gridlock on I-580 in the Tri-Valley has created the second worst commute in the Bay Area, which adversely affects not only commuters but seriously hampers efficient movement of goods between the Port of Oakland and the rapidly growing Central Valley. Funding would be used for a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project that will reduce congestion on Interstate 580 by providing a rapid transit alternative for commuters traveling through the Tri-Valley region by connecting the BART Dublin/Pleasanton station to the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory via downtown Livermore and Pleasanton. This particular route was identified by BART as the most viable BRT service in the region since Route 10 is one of the most successful bus routes in California outside the dense urban cores in terms of a strong ridership base. The project would build off of Line 10's success, improving its travel time, reliability and frequency. It is forecast that the buses would run every 7.5 minutes, more than meeting every BART train.

There is expected to be significant demand, especially from Livermore, to use the line to get to the Dublin/Pleasanton BART stations. This project would provide rail-like service with the flexibility of a bus. With fewer stops and faster boarding, it would provide increased frequencies and improved on-time performance. Also, by utilizing existing traffic signal priority technology, the project would allow faster travel. Additionally, boarding times would be greatly reduced by utilizing off-vehicle fare collection, front and back door boarding, and automatic passenger count technology. The FTA Small Starts Program authorized in SAFETEA-LU was created for smaller projects to extend eligibility to include bus corridor improvements such as BRT. ***This was a joint request with made with Congressman Jerry McNerney (CA-11)

4. Tri-Valley Housing Opportunity Center -- \$150,000 – The Tri-Valley Housing Opportunity Center would use funds to increase the homeownership rate for first-time buyers in eastern Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. The five cities of the Tri-Valley now make up one of the costliest housing markets in the nation. Median home prices range from a low of \$660,000 in Livermore up to \$874,000 in Danville. As a result, there is a tremendous need for affordable housing in the Tri-Valley area. Housing prices in the Tri-Valley have increased over 125 percent in the last five years, while the median income has increased by only 8.2 percent. Housing assistance would be provided initially to approximately 60 households using the requested funds. The funds would be used to provide short-term low-interest rate loans that would be paid back over time. Repaid funds would be placed in a revolving loan fund to be used to provide additional housing assistance. The down payment assistance would be coordinated with existing homebuyer training, other types of states and local assistance and local housing services to create a comprehensive program that would leverage the funds to the maximum amount possible while providing a full range of services for homebuyers.

*** Funding for these projects is subject to approval by the Senate and then President Bush. The appropriations process is expected to be complete by the start of the next fiscal year on October 1, 2007.