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NEW REPORT: MOST AGING BABY BOOMERS WILL FACE POOR MOBILITY OPTIONS

Sacramento, CA, ranks 12th for metro areas its size with poor access to transit for seniors

Sacramento, CA – By 2015, more than 15.5 million Americans ages 65 and older will live in communities where public transportation service is poor or non-existent, a new study shows. That number is expected to continue to grow rapidly as the baby boom generation “ages in place” in suburbs and exurbs with few mobility options for those who do not drive. **In just four years, 48% more seniors in the Sacramento metro area will live with poor transit compared to 2000.**

The report, *Aging in Place, Stuck without Options*, ranks metro areas by the percentage of seniors with poor access to public transportation, now and in the coming years, and presents other data on aging and transportation.

The analysis by the Center for Neighborhood Technology evaluates metro areas within each of five size categories. It shows that, by 2015, 41% percent of seniors in Sacramento will live in neighborhoods with poor access to options other than driving. Kansas City tops the list for worst access to public transit for metropolitan areas of the same size category. In smaller areas, such as Hamilton, OH, 100% of seniors will live without access to public transportation.

Metro Atlanta ranks the worst for metro populations 3 million and over. Kansas City tops the list for metros of 1-3 million, followed by Oklahoma City, Fort Worth, Nashville and Raleigh-Durham. In smaller areas like Hamilton, OH and Hagerstown, MD, **100 percent of seniors** will live without access to public transportation. These conditions present a daunting challenge to local communities as a larger share of their population demands increased mobility options.

“The baby boom generation grew up and reared their own children in communities that, for the first time in human history, were built on the assumption that everyone would be able to drive an automobile,” said John Robert Smith, president and CEO of Reconnecting America and co-chair of Transportation for America. “What happens when people in this largest generation ever, with the longest predicted lifespan ever, outlive their ability to drive for everything? That’s one of the questions we set out to answer in this report.” The number of seniors in Sacramento County is expected to increase 45% from 2010 to 2020, according to the California Department of Finance.

Such a small percentage of older American actually relocate that researchers already are seeing the emergence of so-called “naturally occurring retirement communities.” That phenomenon is growing as baby boomers begin to turn 65. Today, 9 percent of seniors age 65 and older live in suburban or rural communities that are largely car-dependent.

Without access to affordable travel options, seniors age 65 and older who no longer drive make 15 percent fewer trips to the doctor, 59 percent fewer trips to shop or eat out, and 65 percent fewer trips to visit friends and family, than drivers of the same age, research shows. As the cost of owning and fuelling a vehicle rises, many older Americans who can still drive nonetheless will be looking for lower-cost options.

“Older adults rely heavily on public transportation for a greater share of their trips and want to stay in their homes and communities where they are closer to friends, family and vital services,” says Charee Gillins, Associate State Director of Communications, AARP California. “As the aging population increases, improving access to public transit services is critical. It’s a lifeline for many elderly and low-income Californians who want to remain independent but don’t have a car or are unable to drive.”

“The transportation issues of an aging America are national in scope, and cash-strapped state and local governments will be looking for federal support in meeting their needs,” Smith added. As Congress prepares this summer to adopt a new, long-term transportation authorization, *Aging in Place, Stuck without Options* outlines policies to help ensure that older Americans can remain mobile, active and independent:

- Increase funding support for communities looking to improve service such as buses, trains, vanpools, paratransit and ridesharing;
- Ensure that states and regions retain their authority to “flex” a portion of highway funds for transit projects and programs; and
- Include a “complete streets” policy to ensure that streets and intersections around transit stops are safe and inviting for seniors.

“Our transit systems are in big trouble financially,” says Stuart Cohen, Executive Director of TransForm, a non-profit organization focused on creating world-class public transportation. “If we care about our seniors and their growing numbers and needs, we need to fund our transit systems now and we desperately need Senator Boxer to be a leader on this. Congress is threatening to further slash funding; more than ever we need Senator Boxer’s leadership to stand up to calls for cutting transit as her committee finalizes the six-year transportation bill this month.” Senator Barbara Boxer chairs the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

If seniors had access to better public transit they could save money, according to a report by TransForm. People who live in walkable places with good transit access can expect to save an average of \$5,200 per year on transportation costs, according to the report, *Windfall for All: How Connected, Convenient Neighborhoods Can Protect Our Climate and Safeguard California's Economy*.

To view the full report, please click <http://t4america.org/resources/SeniorsMobilityCrisis2011>.

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TRANSPORTATION FOR AMERICA (T4) is the largest, most diverse coalition working on transportation reform today. Our nation’s transportation network is based on a policy that has not been significantly updated since the 1950’s. We believe it is time for a bold new vision — transportation that guarantees our freedom to move however we choose and leads to a stronger economy, greater energy security, cleaner environment, and healthier America for all of us. We’re calling for more responsible investment of our federal tax dollars to create a safer, cleaner, smarter transportation system that works for everyone. www.t4america.org

TRANSFORM (formerly the Transportation and Land Use Coalition) works to create world-class public transportation and walkable communities in the Bay Area and beyond. TransForm builds diverse coalitions, influences policy, and develops innovative programs to improve the lives of all people and protect the environment. TransForm has offices in Oakland, Sacramento, and San Jose. www.TransFormCA.org