I'M VERY PLEASED TO BE HERE WITH YOU TODAY, AND I'M ESPECIALLY PLEASED TO SERVE AS A CO-CHAIR OF THIS COALITION WITH HOUSTON'S MAYOR, KATHY WHITMIRE. LOOKING AT THE SIZE OF THIS GROUP, IT'S OBVIOUS THAT TRANSIT IS NOT A SPECIAL INTEREST. IT'S A NATIONAL INTEREST. IT CUTS ACROSS ALL LINES.

WE'RE HERE TO FIGHT FOR A COMMON SENSE IDEA. YOU ARE PROOF THAT ALL OVER THE NATION, PEOPLE HAVE WOKEN UP TO THE IDEA THAT YOU CAN'T MOVE FORWARD BY KEEPING YOUR EYES GLUED TO THE PAST. AND NOW YOU'RE HERE TO WAKE UP WASHINGTON. AND YOU WILL, BECAUSE YOU'RE RIGHT.

MASS TRANSIT IS THE KEY TO INDEPENDENCE, EVEN IF SOME PEOPLE THINK THE HEARTBEAT OF AMERICA HAS TO BE A SLAVE TO THE OPEN ROAD.

AND LET'S GET SOMETHING STRAIGHT. WE'RE NOT OUT TO GET RID OF CARS. BUT WE THINK AMERICANS WANT TO HAVE A CHOICE. BECAUSE IT'S BEEN SHOWN THAT WHERE PEOPLE DO HAVE A CHOICE, MORE AND MORE ARE LEAVING THEIR CARS BEHIND. THEY'RE SAVING MONEY AND CHOOSING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION. IT'S CHEAPER. IT'S SAFER. AND IT SAVES ENERGY.

SO WE'RE HERE TO WAKE UP THE ONES WHO ARE STILL ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL. TO REMIND THEM THAT THE COMMITMENT TO MASS TRANSIT IS A PROMISE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THAT'S BEEN BROKEN.

MASS TRANSIT'S TIME HAS COME. OUR FUTURE DEPENDS ON THE CHOICES WE MAKE. WILL IT BE A FUTURE DEDICATED TO MOVING THE MOST CARS, OR THE MOST PEOPLE?

SOME SAY WE CAN'T AFFORD TO INVEST IN MASS TRANSIT. BUT THE POINT IS, WHAT IT WILL COST IF WE DON'T?

MASS TRANSIT IS LINKED TO THE ECONOMY. TO OUR ENERGY CONSUMPTION. TO OUR ABILITY TO COMPETE. AND TO OUR HEALTH AND OUR ENVIRONMENT.

I'M PROUD OF THE FACT THAT NEW JERSEY IS A LEADER IN MASS TRANSIT. WE'VE MADE A MAJOR INVESTMENT. WE HAVE THE ONLY STATEWIDE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IN THE NATION. OUR RIDERSHIP HAS GROWN WHERE FARES HAVE BEEN KEPT DOWN, AND I'M COMMITTED TO KEEPING FARES DOWN THIS YEAR.

BUT OUR PROGRESS IS THREATENED, AND WE'RE NOT ALONE. WITH MORE THAN 80 PERCENT OF THE NATION'S PEOPLE LIVING IN METROPOLITAN AREAS, MASS TRANSIT IS NO LONGER A LUXURY. IT'S A NECESSITY. IT CAN'T BE IGNORED. AND IT CAN'T BE UNDERFUNDED.

WE DEPEND MORE NOW ON FOREIGN OIL THAN EVER. OIL IMPORTS ARE 40 PERCENT OF OUR TRADE DEFICIT.
IN THE PAST 10 YEARS, EVERY SECTOR OF THIS NATION WOKE UP TO THE NEED TO REDUCE ENERGY USE -- EXCEPT ONE. OUR INDUSTRIES REDUCED CONSUMPTION BY 20 PERCENT. THE RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL SECTORS REDUCED BY 19 PERCENT. ELECTRIC UTILITIES BY NEARLY 50 PERCENT. BUT TRANSPORTATION WENT UP -- ALMOST 10 PERCENT.

TODAY, SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACCOUNTS FOR 51 PERCENT OF THE OIL WE CONSUME IN THE UNITED STATES. YET THE PROPOSED TRANSPORTATION BILL OFFERS ONLY ONE ANSWER. MORE OIL.

AND THE MORE OIL WE CONSUME, THE MORE WE THREATEN THE AIR WE BREATHE. VEHICLE EMISSIONS ARE THE LARGEST SOURCE OF AIR POLLUTION IN THE NATION. CITIES AROUND THE COUNTRY CAN NO LONGER ATTAIN CLEAN AIR STANDARDS. WE'RE DRIVING MORE MILES, IN MORE CARS, IN MORE TRAFFIC, WITH FEWER PASSENGERS, THAN EVER BEFORE.

YET THE PROPOSED TRANSPORTATION BILL OFFERS ONLY ONE ANSWER. MORE HIGHWAYS FOR MORE CARS, AND LESS MONEY FOR MASS TRANSIT. THAT'S NOT A POLICY WE CAN AFFORD. IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. IF WE APPLIED THAT THINKING TO THE NATION'S HEALTH CARE CRISIS, WE'D HAVE A POLICY THAT CALLED FOR MORE SICK PEOPLE.

WE'VE GOT TO CHANGE OUR PRIORITIES. IN THE LAST 10 YEARS, FEDERAL HIGHWAY SPENDING WENT UP 85 PERCENT. FEDERAL SPENDING ON AVIATION WENT UP 131 PERCENT. BUT FEDERAL SPENDING ON MASS TRANSIT DROPPED BY NEARLY 50 PERCENT.

THE NEW SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE ACT LOOKS LIKE THE SAME OLD CONVENTIONAL WISDOM. IT PROPOSES A 40 PERCENT INCREASE IN HIGHWAY FUNDING, BUT A REAL DECREASE OF $500 MILLION IN MASS TRANSIT FUNDING.

AND FINALLY, THERE'S THIS: LAST YEAR, THE AUTO INDUSTRY SPENT $5 BILLION IN ADVERTISING. WASHINGTON SPENT $3.2 BILLION ON MASS TRANSIT.

OUR FUTURE RIDES ON MASS TRANSIT. BUT WE WON'T GET THERE WITHOUT LEADERSHIP IN WASHINGTON. BECAUSE THIS ISN'T A LOCAL ISSUE; IT'S A NATIONAL ONE. AND IT ISN'T JUST ABOUT MONEY. IT'S ABOUT THE STRENGTH OF A NATION.

WE JUST FOUGHT A WAR THAT PROVED HOW STRONG WE CAN BE WHEN WE ARE RESOLVED TO STAND UP FOR WHAT'S RIGHT. THAT'S THE RIGHT LESSON TO TAKE FROM OUR SUCCESS. THE WRONG LESSON WOULD BE TO SIT BACK AGAIN AND FOOL OURSELVES INTO STAYING HOOKED ON OIL.

AMERICAN HISTORY WAS WRITTEN BY TRANSPORTATION. IT'S A STORY OF MOVING FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER. BUT TODAY, WE'RE AT A CRITICAL JUNCTURE. EITHER WE MOVE FORWARD OR STAY RIVETED TO THE PAST.

WE CAN WIN THIS FIGHT. BECAUSE IT MAKES SENSE. AND BECAUSE FOR MASS TRANSIT, THE TIME IS NOW.