

# Congressman Bill Pascrell's Livable Communities Newsletter – Solutions for Cleaner, Safer Living

December, 2001

Issue II

Dear Colleagues:

In the wake of the tragedies of September 11<sup>th</sup>, our country's leaders and its people have shed some of our partisan tendencies and joined together in a fight to preserve the values that Americans hold dear.

With all of this talk about preserving "the American way of life" it is important to remember that we aren't talking about an S.U.V. in every driveway. We are talking about freedom, liberty, diversity, and respect.

As we struggle to protect these values, and drop our partisan chains, it is equally important to remember that some of the issues that were important to us before September 11<sup>th</sup> are still important now.

One such issue is protecting our environment. In addition to debating an economic stimulus package that really stimulates the economy and an airline security bill that really protects passengers, we in Congress should continue to create policies that really protect the environment.

One way to do this is to pass legislation that promotes cleaner air and less noise through reduced traffic congestion. In addition, we should focus on ways to encourage communities to reduce sprawl. These are both initiatives promoted by the Livable Communities Task Force.

This month's newsletter takes a fresh look at mass transportation, highlighting an initiative aimed at meeting the

challenge of getting passengers to and from the train station without using their automobiles. It also highlights the EPA's Brownfields program and showcases ways members can bring this innovative redevelopment opportunity back home to their districts.

If you have any questions or would like additional information on any of the items in this month's newsletter, please contact Mia Dell in my office.

Sincerely,

*Bill Averell J*

**Alternative Transportation of the Month: Community Shuttle Bus Program**



Of all the issues that divide a community and bring out the worst kind of NIMBYism (Not In My Backyard), downtown parking is one of the most rancorous. In a car-based society, finding room for everyone's automobile directly leads to increased sprawl. That is why we need innovative mass transit solutions that alleviate parking problems and encourage commuters to seek mass transit alternatives.

One solution I was proud to create in New Jersey was a grant program for shuttle buses to transport people from their homes to mass transit stations. The Jitney Community Shuttle Bus program, financed by \$3.5 million in funds I obtained, with the support of our colleague Representative Donald Payne (D-NJ), as part of the Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty First Century (TEA-21), provided participant towns with a Jitney bus to bring commuters to and from train and bus stations during the morning and evening rush hours.

In addition to funding for the buses themselves, operating expenses are also a

key part of the program. I worked closely with our State's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to obtain operating funds for this Jitney bus service through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program.

Towns which have always had buses have found the program to be an effective way to reduce downtown traffic congestion and eliminate the need for expansive -- and expensive -- new parking facilities. I firmly believe that the shuttle bus concept has the ability to provide these and other benefits to many suburban communities. It is a program that can easily be included in a plan for reduction of air pollution and the revitalization of depressed commercial areas. Freeing up parking near commuter stops can leave more room for consumers to park and make purchases at our main street small businesses.

In New Jersey, over the past five years, we have gone from one town to six towns to forty-four towns using or preparing to use Jitney service. The Jitney program also

complements existing mass transit infrastructure. It allows more people easier access to a cleaner, safer and more efficient means of getting to and from work. The Jitney bus has been such a hit that many towns have applied for a second bus.

With Jitney bus service, we are bringing commuters to the train and getting cars off our roads. In New Jersey, the state with the highest population density, we have no alternative but to expand the access to -- and use of -- mass transportation. It is about building livable communities for our families and our children, and that is important all across our nation.

We do not invest in our transportation system merely to improve roads and bridges. Transportation is not merely about getting from point A to point B. We invest in transportation to improve the very quality of life for our citizens. That is what the Jitney Community shuttle is all about.

**Profiles in Healthy Living:  
The EPA's Brownfields  
Redevelopment Program**



Brownfields can be found anywhere – in the inner cities, the suburbs and in rural areas. Any time an industry leaves an area or a business closes its doors we face the specter of the unknown – they contaminate not only the aesthetics of the area but also the opportunity for jobs and business development. The General Accounting Office has estimated that there are over 450,000 brownfields properties across America, in every state in the union.

In March of this year, I hosted an immensely successful roundtable addressing

brownfields redevelopment. It served as a forum for representatives from federal and state agencies to discuss the various roles they play in the brownfields redevelopment process and share the resources available to pursue redevelopment.

Many of the attendees commented that this was the only time they had ever been able to speak with representatives from the various federal and state agencies that handle brownfields redevelopment at one time. It is exactly this type of bureaucratic morass that we need to help municipalities navigate through.

We must tap into the resources available to revitalize our brownfields. The nation's Mayors, in a report issued last year, estimated that they lose between \$878 million and \$2.4 billion a year in tax revenues from brownfields sitting idle. Returning these sites to productive use could create some 550,000 new jobs.

Under the current EPA Brownfields initiative, which began in 1995, the EPA has

awarded 307 assessment pilots to local communities, resulting in the assessment of 1,687 brownfields properties, cleanup of 166 properties, redevelopment of 151 properties, and a determination that 590 properties did not need additional cleanup. In addition, these projects have shown that brownfields cleanups can generate economic benefits. To date, 1,580 cleanup jobs and 4,300 redevelopment jobs have been generated under the programs.

It is time to address the issue of our nation's brownfields and begin the process of restoring them to productive use. Revitalizing brownfields could reduce the public's exposure to health-threatening contaminants, make use of existing infrastructure, and provide alternatives to sprawl.

Additional information is available on the EPA's web site at: <http://www.epa.gov>