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TRANSPORTATION GRANT AWARDED TO CCTA

Burlington, VT (November 21, 2011) – The Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA) is pleased to announce it has been awarded a grant of \$3,360,000 through the FY2011 Federal Transit Administration Bus and Bus Facilities Livability Initiative. CCTA's funding application was selected on a competitive basis from proposals submitted by public transportation agencies throughout the country. The grant money will allow CCTA to purchase six 45-foot coach buses to be used on the LINK Express commuter routes, along with the implementation of other system-wide capital improvements such as passenger shelters with solar lights and bike parking.

CCTA Acting General Manager Meredith Birkett briefly described the positive impact the grant award will have on CCTA operations. "The larger coach buses will allow for greater passenger and bicycle capacity on the LINK Express routes without requiring new operating funds. The result is more Vermonters will be able to make use of these affordable commuter options." Birkett also acknowledged that public transit agencies in Vermont are lucky to have the strong Congressional support they have for safe, convenient, and accessible transportation options. The entire Vermont Congressional delegation signed a joint letter of support for CCTA's Livability Initiative grant application.

Senator Leahy has long been a supporter of CCTA and has secured funding for buses and bus facilities in recent years. In response to this most recent funding announcement, Senator Patrick Leahy commented "Since safe and reliable transportation systems keep Vermont businesses and their employees moving, transportation improvements and economic development efforts are closely linked in Vermont." In the last fiscal year, ridership on CCTA's three LINK Express commuter routes increased by 17% and in the past five years, ridership on these routes has increased by 50%. These ridership increases demonstrate the demand for greater capacity on the LINK Express routes and the growing need to connect employees with employment opportunities.

Senator Bernie Sanders, a strong supporter of public transportation and energy independence, also commented on the news of CCTA's grant award. "Vermont is a rural state, and high gas prices place a financial strain on Vermonters who must drive long distances to get to work. This award will allow CCTA to continue investing in public transportation so it can play a larger role in connecting our communities in an affordable manner." Each weekday, over 500 trips are taken on the LINK Express routes and over 9,300 trips are taken on the CCTA system, and the entire system will benefit from improvements funded by this grant.

To raise awareness about carbon emissions and to encourage commuters to try transportation alternatives, an annual Way To Go Commuter Challenge is held each year in Vermont. Standing alongside the champions of the annual weeklong event at National Life in Montpelier this past May, Congressman Peter Welch spoke about the importance of alternatives to the single occupancy vehicle and listened firsthand to the stories of loyal Montpelier LINK Express riders who will enjoy the new buses this grant makes possible. Responding to the grant award notice, Representative Welch said "I was impressed by the significant impact the LINK Express service has on the quality of life for commuters between Burlington and Montpelier when I met with them in May, and am so pleased to hear that the route will soon be able to accommodate even greater numbers of passengers."

CCTA plans to introduce the capital improvements funded by this grant into its system in 2012 and will phase in the entire project over several years.

The mission of CCTA is to operate safe, convenient, accessible, innovative, and sustainable public transportation services in northwest and central Vermont that reduce congestion and pollution, encourage transit oriented development, and enhance the quality of life for all.

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