MISSION FOR AMERICA · CHAPTER 16 · AT A GLANCE

The National Mission for Public Transport

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Most Americans have no way to get around except an expensive car. Transit ridership per person is a fraction of what peer nations achieve, American roads are among the deadliest in the developed world, and transit agencies cut service and raise fares because Washington pays to build transit and leaves agencies to pay for running it. The Highway Trust Fund is set to run dry in 2028, and the country that built the transcontinental railroad has yet to connect its first two cities by high-speed rail. The Mission for Public Transport will build a network so cheap and complete that any American can get anywhere without owning a car.

This mission will:

- Put a cheap or free ride within reach of every American from the opening months, by subsidizing trips on the ride-hailing and robotaxi platforms already on the road in the towns and rural areas transit does not reach, then launching two or three competing public rideshare companies that offer the same ride for less.
- Roll out e-bikes, e-scooters, cargo bikes, small electric pods, and neighborhood electric vehicles in every city and suburb, built in American factories and covered by the same fare as the bus and the train.
- Build rail again, both kinds at once. Conventional intercity trains will open on dozens of corridors within five years on existing freight track, following the Mardi Gras line between New Orleans and Mobile, which carried more than double its expected riders in its first year. High-speed rail construction will begin on seven priority corridors under a new Federal Rail Authority with the power to acquire land and build directly.
- Make every public bus zero-emission within a decade, built to a few standard designs, bought in bulk through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, and made in American factories, with a regional electric coach network as an alternative to short flights.
- Pay for transit operations in big cities again, with a permanent federal funding stream tied to good wages, training, and better bus networks, so agencies can fill their jobs and run frequent service.
- Replace the Highway Trust Fund with a National Transportation Fund that pays for transit in proportion to ridership, counts the real costs of every project, and requires dense housing and an end to parking minimums around every federally funded station.

Transit in America has starved because Washington funds only construction, lets every agency order its own custom buses, and leaves rail to fight for land state by state. The Mission changes each of those. The RFC will pool the country's demand for buses and light electric vehicles, finance the factories that build them, and fund the Federal Rail Authority's construction directly. The authority will keep design in-house with its own engineers, bid construction in competitive packages, and publish every cost line by line. A new Federal Infrastructure Court will hear challenges to major rail projects quickly.

The result is a country where owning a car is optional. Families save the cost of a second car or any car at all, streets get safer, the air gets cleaner, and hundreds of thousands of people get good jobs building and running the system.