

# **Transit Funding: KEY for New Urbanism**

“communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car.”  
--New Urbanism Charter

Sustainable urbanized areas develop  
around and because of  
a network of excellent public transit.

CNU has national clout: therefore let's push for  
a new Transportation Act in 2014  
which supports a robust public transit system.

# Transit Essentials:

- **History of Federal funding structures which favor highway over transit.**
- **How transportation funding happens, at Federal and local levels.**
- **Strategies for funding public transit.**

# *History of Federal funding structures which favor highway over transit.*

- all rail transit privately owned, to mid-20th c.
- first Federal funding—  
farm to market roads, 1916
- precedent established--  
public \$\$= highway,  
private \$\$= transit
- 1991 act, set 1:5 ratio  
funding, transit:highway

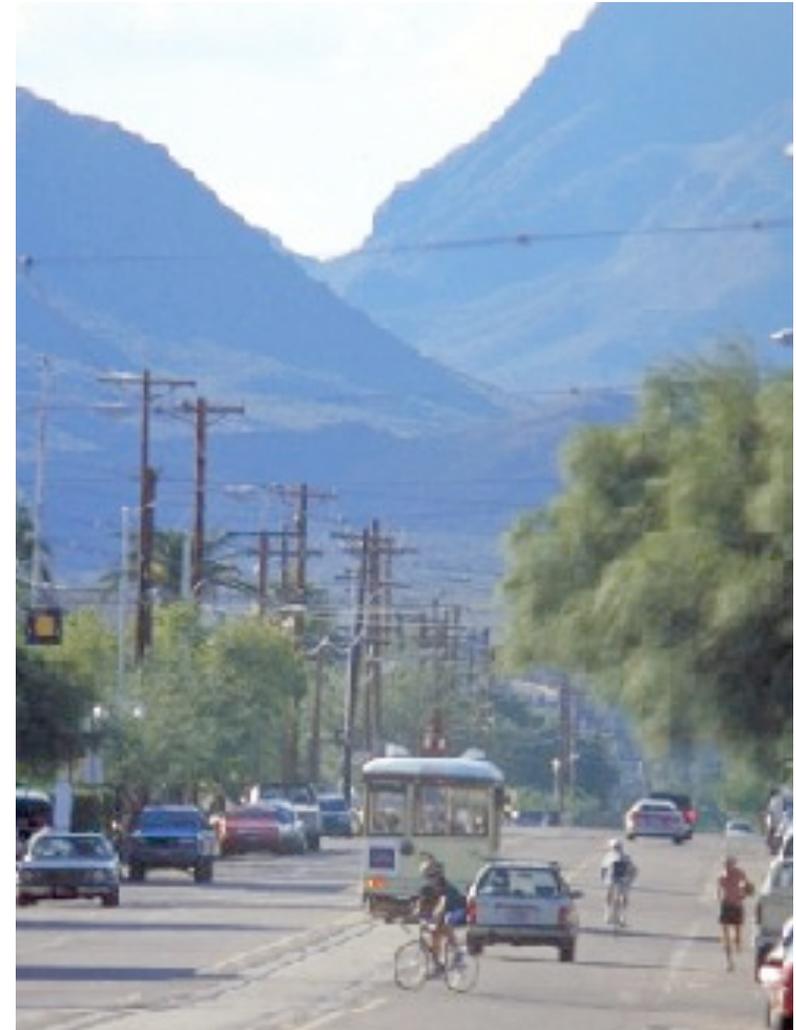
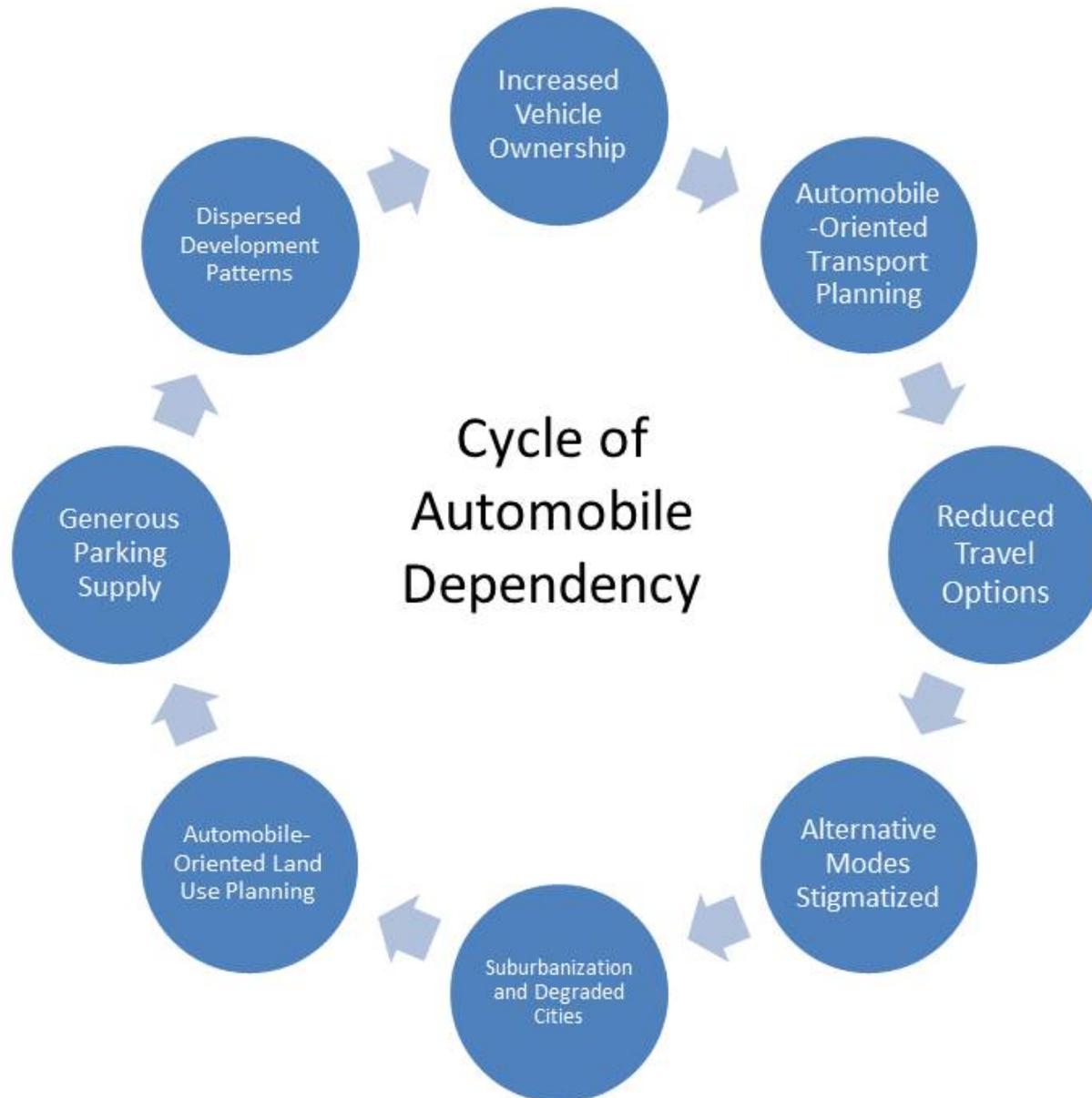


photo via Project for Public Spaces

# Enabling the Automobile

sources: Streetsblog, Victoria Transport Institute



# *How transportation funding works, Federal to local levels.*

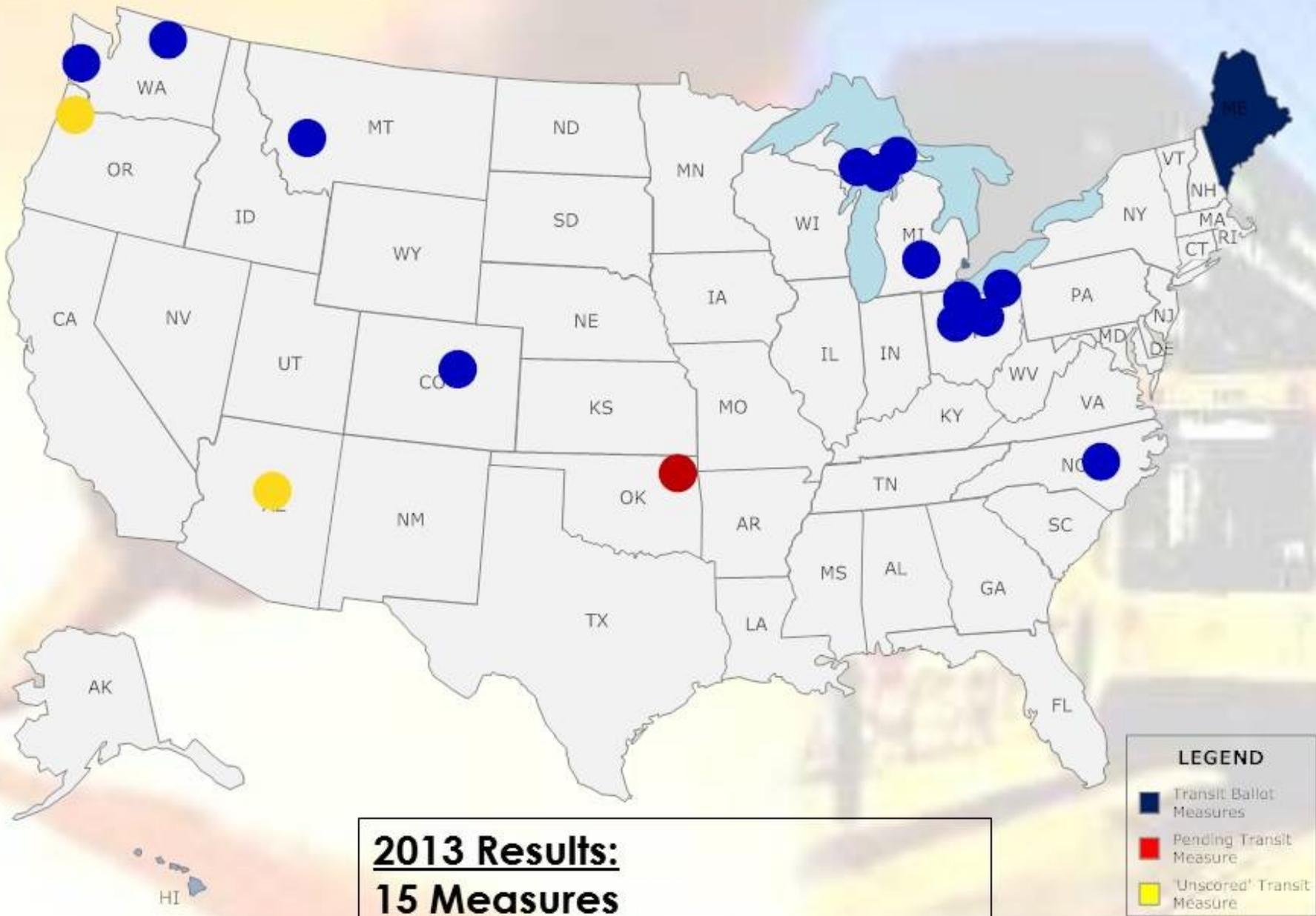
- Federal Act funding sent to states and regions through Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO)
- Federal gas tax fund supplements appropriations, but runs out as of August, 2014
- current Federal Transportation Act due to re-up Sept 30, 2014



## *Strategies for funding public transit.*

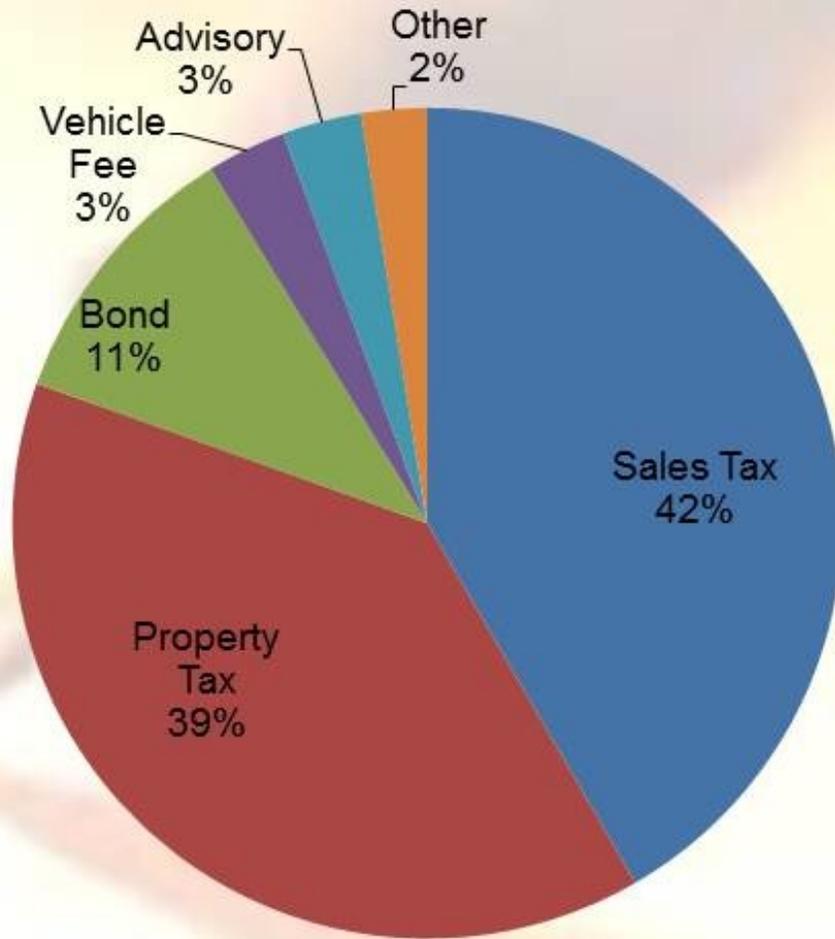
- raise the Federal gas tax, indexed to cost of gasoline
- lobby Congress for improved transit funding in new Transportation Act
- adopt tax on new developments benefitting from transit (ex: mortgage recording tax)
- try local ballot initiatives, as documented by Center for Transportation Excellence

# 2013 Transit Elections

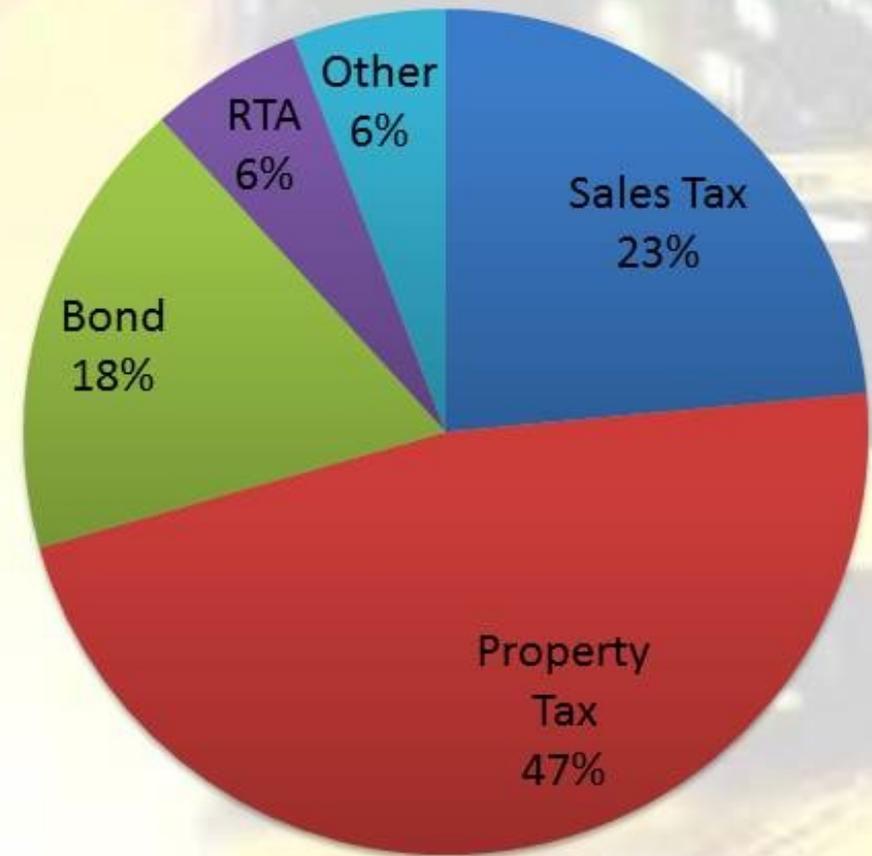


**2013 Results:**  
**15 Measures**  
**10 Wins – 4 Losses – 1 Pending**  
**71.1% Approval Rate**

# Types of Ballot Measures



2000 - 2012



2013

# Transit Key unlocks New Urbanism!! Advocate for Transit \$\$\$ via CNU

## Why??

National in scope

Federal responsibility

Breaks down “silos”

## Why now??

Transportation Act expires  
9-30-14

Administration proposal

House proposal

Senate proposal

Highway Trust Fund insolvent  
by mid-August, 2014

## Who should act??

CNU national leadership

All CNU chapters

## How??

Connect / collaborate with local /  
regional transit advocates

Lobby **loudly** before Congress!!

# Resources and notes

## History:

Penn Station (NYC) built by private funding, 1908; destroyed in 1961 when Penn Central RR needed money. See [video.pbs.org/video/2365182444/](http://video.pbs.org/video/2365182444/)

Streetcars were privately owned, stripped by bus companies — see documentary “Taken for a Ride” <http://www.pbs.org/pov/takenforaride/>. Surviving systems include Boston, San Francisco, Newark, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.

## Federal funding:

MPOs are mandated by the Federal Transportation Act, to coordinate transportation projects in urbanized areas having population of at least 50,000.

The gas tax varies by locality; Federal portion is only 18.4 cents, set in 1993.

First enacted in 1991, the Federal Transportation Act is supposed to cover 7 years; recent Congress failed to do bi-partisan bill, therefore series of extensions. New bill proposed by Obama, Grow America Act, includes \$199 billion for highways and \$72 billion for transit.

## Successes:

One proposal shows that adding 17 cents to Federal portion of gas tax would ensure adequate funding.

Erie County, NY, (Buffalo) has a mortgage recording tax with revenues dedicated to Metro Rail.

In 2013, 71% of the local ballot measures across the country passed. From 2008-2013, local ballot measures had an average approval rate of 76%.

useful websites:

Project for Public Spaces, <http://www.pps.org/transportation/>;  
StreetsblogUSA, <http://usa.streetsblog.org>;  
Center for Transportation Excellence, <http://www.cfte.org>;  
Policy Link, <http://www.policylink.org>;  
Victoria Transport Institute, <http://www.vtpi.org>;  
Transportation for America, <http://t4america.org>;  
Reconnecting America, <http://reconnectingamerica.org>;  
American Public Transportation Association, <http://www.apta.com>

authors:

Gladys Gifford and Lynn Magdol, board members of Citizens for Regional Transit, Buffalo, NY. Gladys is transportation specialist at LWVNYS. See websites: [lwnyns.org](http://lwnyns.org) and [citizenstransit.org](http://citizenstransit.org)