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Major US City “Post-Oil” Preparedness Ranking

San Francisco—As the nation ushers in the new Obama Presidential administration and faces uncertainty in terms of its future economy, imported energy and climate change regulations, a new study ranked the largest 50 US cities by their readiness for this new era.

The study comes in the wake of the housing foreclosure crisis, which originated in the completely auto-dependent outer edges of many of the nation’s metro areas. Record summer gas prices and widespread gas supply shortages that impacted cities in the Southeast made for a potent combination the nation can ill-afford again to face unprepared.

The top ten cities ranked according to providing the best alternatives to foreign oil dependence are as follows:

1. San Francisco
2. New York
3. Washington, DC
4. Seattle
5. Oakland
6. Chicago
7. Portland, OR
8. Philadelphia
9. Baltimore
10. Boston

The study, “Major US City Post-Oil Preparedness,” written by Warren Karlenzig, author of *How Green is Your City? The SustainLane US City Rankings* (New Society Publishers, 2007), ranks the largest 50 US cities based on combined city resident public transit use, city carpooling rates, overall metro area public transit ridership, metro area sprawl, city telecommuting, biking and walking-to-work rates, and use of heating oil.

“Metro areas that have low carbon as well as no-carbon mobility options will be the most able to carry on as the nation faces falling home suburban prices, oil disruptions and new climate change regulations,” said Karlenzig, president of the consulting firm Common Current (San Anselmo, CA).

New York City has the highest resident public transit commute ridership, at 54.6% according to the 2007 Census American Community Survey data used. Oakland and San Francisco topped the list for telecommuters at 7.6% and 6.8%, respectively, which helped San Francisco get the overall edge over New York. Boston had highest scores in combined biking and walking to work, at 14.3%. Mesa, Arizona has the highest carpooling rate at 16.7%. Other national category leaders included Boston in walk-to-work rate, at 13.3%, and Portland, Oregon in bicycle-to-work rate, at 3.9%.

The new study’s data sources and weighting were as follows:

Double Weighting (x2)

- City resident public transit; telecommuting; and bike-or-walk-to-work rates data is from US Bureau of the Census 2007 American Community Survey
- Metro overall transit ridership data is from “2008 Public Transportation Factbook” from the American Public Transit Association and the Texas Mobility Institute

Single Weighting (x1)

- Metro sprawl data is from Smart Growth America 2002 study, “Measuring Sprawl and Its Impact”
- Heating oil use from primary research conducted in 2007

Half Weighting (x.5)

- Carpooling, from the 2007 American Community Survey, was the least weighted.

“In transit, hydrogen fuel cell buses, and light rail lines running on wind power exist now,” Karlenzig said. “Good planning also lets people easily walk or bicycle to jobs, schools, shopping and entertainment, saving them money on transportation, which has become the American family’s second-highest expense after housing.”

At the bottom of the ranking comprising the largest 50 US cities are urban areas that largely lack public transit, telecommuting and walking or biking commute options. The bottom ten cities in the ranking were:

41. Louisville, KY; 42. Omaha, NE; 43. El Paso, TX; 44. Nashville, TN; 45. Memphis, TN (tie); 45. Fort Worth, TX (Tie); 47. Tulsa, OK; 48. Indianapolis, IN; 49. Jacksonville, FL; 50. Oklahoma City, OK

“Telecommuting and carpooling incentives from public agencies and private employers are another great way to insure a less risky future. Other measures include development of new regional and city public transit options, increased infill and mixed-use real estate development, as well as creating more walkable and bikeable communities.”

Other 30 cities’ overall post-oil readiness rankings: Minneapolis (11); Denver (12); Los Angeles (13); Atlanta (14); Long Beach (15); San Diego (16); New Orleans (17); Miami (18); Honolulu (19--tie); Milwaukee (19--tie); Cleveland (21); Sacramento (22); Austin (23); Las Vegas (24); Mesa, AZ (25); Houston (26); Phoenix (27); Tucson (28); Detroit (29); San Jose (30); Albuquerque (31); Dallas (32); San Antonio (33); Arlington, TX (34); Columbus, OH (35); Charlotte, NC (36); Colorado Springs (37); Fresno (38); Kansas City, MO (39); Virginia Beach, VA (40)

About Common Current:

[Common Current](#), (San Anselmo, CA) is a privately held economic development consulting firm working with government, business and non-governmental organizations.

Contact: Warren Karlenzig; (415) 259-6227; email: warren@commoncurrent.com