

**Statement of James S. Simpson
Administrator-Designate
Federal Transit Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
Before the
U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs
Confirmation Hearing
March 14, 2006**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I believe one of the highest honors bestowed upon an American citizen is to sit before a United States Senate Committee for a confirmation hearing. I am both humbled and honored for having the opportunity to come before you today.

I want to thank President Bush for having the confidence in me and nominating me to another post within the Department of Transportation. As you may be aware, I currently serve the President as a member of the St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation Advisory Board. I would also like to thank Secretary Mineta for his support of me as Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration.

If confirmed, I would work tirelessly with this Committee, the Congress and the other stakeholders to ensure that all people across this great nation are well served by a safe, cost effective and reliable public transportation system.

Many of my life's experiences have had a profound impact on me as an advocate for public transportation. As the oldest of four children growing up in New York City, I am keenly aware of how public transit impacts the lives of families and individuals. I have witnessed how public transit moves people who are economically disadvantaged from the home to the workplace. Transit made it possible for my mother to commute to Manhattan for employment, which enabled our family to move off welfare. Public transportation provided me with the opportunity to travel from home in Staten Island to school in Brooklyn and to work in Manhattan after school via five buses, one ferry and a subway each day. Mobility through public transit contributed to the richness of my quality of life. Without a family automobile, I viewed affordable public transit as a necessity and as a vehicle that created a sense of freedom. Public transit opened a world of social and cultural diversity. It made summers possible at Coney Island, winters in Central Park, and it exposed me to Times Square, The Museum of Natural History, Yankee Stadium, The World's Fair, Chinatown and Little Italy. It brought families together from diverse neighborhoods and communities. All of these influences, fostered by public transportation, account for much of the reason I stand before this Committee today.

As a business owner in the motor carrier industry, I have experienced first hand the economic and social costs associated with insufficient public transportation. At my Staten Island, New York facility -- a mere fifteen miles from mid-town Manhattan -- my vehicles and employees waste over four hours a day traveling to and from their job site during the morning and evening rush on Interstate 278, a commute that is only a half hour each way off peak. An expanded public transit system can help mitigate highway congestion, lower travel time and increase productivity and profitability for our nation's businesses and individuals alike.

If confirmed as FTA Administrator, I will work diligently with all the stakeholders to foster economic development, enhance mobility and accessibility in rural and urban communities alike, reduce traffic congestion and strengthen the safety and security of the nation's transit systems through cost effective spending on public transportation.

My qualifications to serve as Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration derive from lifelong leadership roles in the transportation field, from my tenure at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority – the nation's largest transit system -- and from my experience as President of my own company, as well as from my personal interest in the aviation industry as a licensed jet and multi-engine pilot.

In 1995, I was appointed by Governor George E. Pataki as a Commissioner and Member of the Board of Directors of the New York State Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which exposed me to a decade of oversight of large-scale, extremely complex transit systems. For most of my two terms at the MTA, I simultaneously served as Chair of the Real Estate and Planning Committee, Chair of the Safety and Security Committee, member of the New York City Transit Committee, member of the Finance Committee, and member of the Corporate Governance Committee. I have been exposed to a multitude of responsibilities and issues including oversight of MTA management and operations, budgets, financial plans, procurement contracts, capital programs, federal and state grants, collective bargaining agreements, fare and toll changes, service changes, public hearings, disadvantaged business and minority and women business enterprise plans and goals, corporate governance, conflict of interest issues and safety and security issues.

In the private sector, I have spent over twenty years running my own company. I believe my knowledge and experience in the realms of management, leadership, finance; planning and organization of my own company have prepared me for many of the challenges inherent in the administration of the Federal Transit Administration.

I have made public service an integral part of my life, as I believe it should be an endeavor undertaken by all responsible business people. Serving our country and the President is an immense privilege and honor and, if confirmed, I would apply my knowledge and skills to the successful management and advancement of our nation's transit systems.

Thank you.