*Arise Policy Choices 2007*

# Public Transportation: A Legacy of Neglect

**BACKGROUND:**

**A 1952 amendment to Alabama's Constitution makes it illegal to use state gas tax and license fee revenues – a logical source of transit funds – for any purpose other than building and maintaining roads and bridges.**

**Two bills** have been proposed this year to provide funding for public transportation:

- **The constitutional solution: HB417** by Rep. Laura Hall would amend Alabama's Constitution to add public transportation costs as permissible expenditures from state gas tax and license fee revenues. Any state dollars appropriated in the future for public transit would qualify for federal matching funds as high as 4-to-1.

- **Assistance for Jefferson County: HB164** by Rep. Mac Gipson would allow county commissions to increase gasoline taxes by as much as six cents a gallon. In 66 counties, the proceeds from this increase in taxes could only be used to repair and maintain county roads and bridges; *only* the Jefferson County Commission *could* choose to designate all or a portion of this increase for public transportation. The measure would require that country commissions use at least 85 percent of the revenues to pay road builders for the services allowed; the remaining 15 percent could only be used to purchase materials used in road building and maintenance. *HB164 provides the potential for increased local funding for transit needs in Jefferson County only and does nothing to address these needs in the state's other urban or rural counties.*

## BOTTOM LINE:

- **Inadequate funding for public transit keeps thousands of Alabamians from meeting basic needs.**

- **Alabama is one of only five states in the nation that invest no state funds in public transportation.**

- **HB417 would break the constitutional lock on transit funding.**