



REPORT FINDS THOUSANDS LIVING IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEAR TRANSIT COULD FACE HIGHER RENTS

Study by Reconnecting America and National Housing Trust for AARP explores impact of expiring federal contracts

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IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS as many as 160,000 renters in 20 metro areas could lose their affordable apartments near transit because the contracts on their privately-owned HUD-subsidized rental units are due to expire. The renewed popularity of urban living means that properties in walkable neighborhoods near transit have increased in value, and that property owners are likely to opt out of the HUD program and convert the housing from affordable to market rate.

These are the results of a recent study by Reconnecting America and the National Housing Trust for AARP, which released the results in Washington, DC, on Sept. 30. The study found that there are more than 250,000 privately owned HUD-subsidized units within a half-mile of existing or proposed rail stations in the 20 regions, and that contracts on two-thirds of these units are due to expire by the end of 2014. Almost a quarter of the units are designated for seniors.

“Affordable housing near public transportation is a very special resource because families who use transit can reduce their transportation expenditures by 16 percent - so these subsidized apartments are made even more affordable because of their location,” noted Reconnecting America President and CEO John Robert Smith. “The federal government should ensure that this housing remains affordable.”

Smith noted that rising gas prices hit lower-income families and families on fixed incomes especially hard since they already spend a greater portion of their income on transportation costs. He added that many of the families currently living in apartments near transit don’t own a car and are dependent on public transit, and should not be forced out of their apartments.

The report recommends that Congress appropriate sufficient federal funding to renew all Section 8 contracts, and increase funding for the Section 202 housing program. The report also recommends that state and local governments allocate funds to preserve affordable housing in transit-rich areas, including the development of affordable housing acquisition funds for properties near transit, and that governments develop “early warning systems” for properties with expiring federal subsidies.

A study entitled “Affordable Housing in Transit-Oriented Development,” released by the General Accounting Office earlier this month, referenced the results of the Reconnecting America/National Housing Trust/AARP study, noting that federal agencies are hampered in their efforts to monitor affordable housing because of a lack of research and data. The GAO study recommended that the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Federal

Transit Agency and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development try harder to work together, preferably in a formal collaboration, to create and preserve affordable housing near transit.

“The HUD/DOT/FTA Interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities is beginning to develop policy that reflects the interconnectedness of housing and transportation that can lead to the creation of sustainable, livable communities,” National Housing Trust President Michael Bodaken said in the AARP press release. “Maintaining and improving affordable housing near transit is essential for ensuring that all Americans can enjoy the benefits of sustainable communities.”

The report, “Preserving Affordability and Access in Livable Communities: Subsidized Housing Opportunities Near Transit and the 50+ Population,” is downloadable [here](#).

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Reconnecting America provides an impartial, fact-based perspective on development-oriented transit and transit-oriented development, and seeks to reinvent the planning and delivery system for building regions and communities around transit and walking rather than solely around the automobile. Reconnecting America manages the Center for Transit-Oriented Development, the only national nonprofit effort funded by Congress to promote best practices in transit-oriented development.