



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Rep. Fattah, Philadelphia Unemployment Project Announce Plans to Double ‘Commuter Options’**

*Innovative reverse-commute program sends Philadelphians to suburban jobs;  
Congressman touts opportunity as he also tours major Philadelphia manufacturer*

PHILADELPHIA PA, Feb. 23, 2007 – Congressman Chaka Fattah capped a day that focused on job opportunities for Philadelphians by joining with the Philadelphia Unemployment Project (PUP) to outline plans to double the “Commuter Options” van pool program as it enters its second year.

Congressman Fattah, who developed the concept and won almost \$1.5 million in federal transportation dollars channeled through PUP to provide access to well-paying suburban jobs, called it “just the beginning.”

“Down the road, the whole nation will be talking about this effort,” Fattah said. “I will work to increase the scale of Commuter Options as a viable job-creation program for even more Philadelphians.”

The novelty of Commuter Options is that it funnels a reverse-commute transportation grant through a job developer instead of a transit agency – a job developer specializing in low wage earners or those entering the labor force.

Commuter Options has opened up jobs that were virtually unreachable by transportation-limited city residents before the van pools began forming in March 2006 because SEPTA didn’t have routes, or required lengthy transfer trips, to reach employers.

John Dodds, PUP director, said the program’s first year success, with 20 van pools transporting almost 100 workers to hard-to-reach work sites across all four suburban counties, is on track to be doubled in Year Two. The aim, he said, is for 37 to 40 employee-operated van pools heading out each day from city neighborhoods by February 2008.

Philadelphia residents who work at Brooks-Eckerd Pharmaceuticals in Fairless Hills, Pa., and Quest Diagnostics of Trooper, Pa., as well as officials of the two firms, were on hand to praise Commuter Options for opening doors of employment in a simple and efficient way. The news conference was held at People for People Inc., Brown Street

## *Fattah/ Jobs / Page 2*

at N. Broad Street, where the Earn Center has placed welfare-to-work clients in \$9.50 an hour jobs made possible by the van pools. Michael McIntyre, director of operations at People for People, hosted the conference.

Later in the day, Congressman Fattah toured Cardone Industries Inc. world headquarters, 5501 Whitaker Avenue off Roosevelt Boulevard. He met with Michael Cardone, owner of the largest manufacturer in Philadelphia, with 4,000 employees. It is the world's largest family-owned automotive parts remanufacturer.

“We are seeing the future of the Philadelphia region’s workplace in these two visits. There’s not a person I know who doesn’t want to go to work,” Fattah said. “Here we have a national model reverse commute program that gets Philadelphians to new jobs in the suburbs. And at Cardone we salute a major hometown company that shows how to thrive right in our city with a home-grown workforce and smart business sense.”

Congressman Fattah developed the original concept for Commuter Options for PUP to administer and won a \$1,486,722 grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program with local and state matching. PUP buys the vans, recruits worker-drivers, organizes and administers the pools. Riders share expenses (about \$5-\$6 a day). Jobs pay \$9.50 to \$17 an hour.

Dodds of PUP said, “We see Commuter Options as a flexible, cost efficient way to get people to and from work in decent paying jobs. We have waited for years for good jobs to come back to Philadelphia, but the reality is that those jobs are currently found in the suburbs and our people have a very hard time getting to them.”

Dodds plans to extend Commuter Options to a four-year program, with the goal of at least 50 van pools by the third year.

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