

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell was honored on Tuesday as the South West Transit Association's 2009 Legislator of the Year.

The annual award recognizes a member of the U.S. House or Senate who has significantly advanced the interest of public transportation in the previous year.

Rick Simonetta, CEO of Valley Metro Rail and a SWTA Board member, nominated Congressman Mitchell and was on hand to present the award during the annual SWTA legislative breakfast in Washington, D.C.

"As the son of a railroad engineer and a lifelong advocate for mass transit, this was a tremendous and very humbling honor," Mitchell said. "Arizona has made a quantum leap with the opening of the new Metro Light Rail line, but there is a lot more work to be done. This is a very important year as Congress will consider legislation to reauthorize highway and transit programs. As we move forward, investment in public transportation infrastructure – which creates jobs, sparks economic development and is environmentally responsible – will continue to be a top priority of mine."

The South West Transit Association is a regional association representing the interests of transit agencies and related organizations in Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.