

REMARKS FOR KAREN RAE
ACTING ADMINISTRATOR
FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
WASHINGTON, DC
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- Good afternoon, and thank you, Ross, for your kind introduction and for inviting me here today.
- This is certainly an exciting and historic time for all of us.
- Historic not only in terms that we are taking a major step forward in the development of high-speed rail, but historic in the sense that President Obama has taken such a keen interest in creating a system that will revolutionize the way we travel in America.
- You all know what past Presidents have tried to do...or maybe I should say didn't do...with Amtrak.
- There is no doubt that in President Obama, NARP has an engaged ally with a vision for the real potential of passenger rail. His commitment is perhaps the most significant since Abraham Lincoln pushed for the completion of the transcontinental railroad.
- President Obama's vision to create a lasting rail legacy has certainly energized all of us here, and it is a vision that will carry on for decades.
- The \$8 billion in the Recovery Act and the \$5 billion in the President's budget signal a new chapter in American public transportation.
- For the first time, we're going to integrate passenger rail corridors of 100 to 600 miles with the rest of our transportation network -- and bring rail into the 21st century.
- I'd like to take a moment to recognize the effort of those in the audience who have helped us get to this point.

- Moving ahead, we will build these corridors on a regional basis, so that one day, millions of Americans will have seamless access to airports, light rail stations, and busy urban centers, creating livable cities and inspiring new development.
- Plus, we will continue to upgrade the reliability and service on existing intercity routes. The first installment for this effort already came in the form of \$1.3 billion in Recovery Act funds to Amtrak...and there will be more to come.
- We will work closely with Congress to be sure this type of funding continues, and that passenger rail is included in our plans for making our communities more livable and sustainable.
- We know America has the knowledge, expertise, resources and wherewithal to accomplish this grand vision.
- Just look at our interstate highway system.
- Our interstate highway system has long been the envy of the world. But when it comes to modern high-speed rail – we've had to look elsewhere for success.
- It's time to turn that around.
- It's time to give more Americans the chance to enjoy the convenience and connections provided by high-speed and inter-city passenger rail.
- These systems reduce highway and airport congestion, save energy, and help to revitalize urban areas.
- Those are the public benefits of high-speed rail, but right now, everyone involved with rail – including the media --wants to know more details about our selection process, plans, and who will be granted funds.
- Let me reiterate the President's statement that projects will be selected based on merit. As the competition has not yet opened, we cannot indicate in advance what type of projects might be favored.
- Obviously, we will be looking for projects that address the President's and DOT's strategic goals of:
 - Ensuring safe and efficient transportation choices.
 - Building a foundation for economic competitiveness.
 - Promoting energy efficiency and environmental quality, and

- Supporting interconnected, livable communities.

- The \$8 billion from the Recovery Act is the first downpayment in achieving these goals. And if the first projects stemming from this downpayment are not successful, the future of this program is at risk.

- This is why we have a merit-based system for choosing projects. We need projects that will advance the development of high-speed rail, not railroads to nowhere.

- I know you have a lot of questions and unfortunately we may not be able to answer all of them today, but as representatives of rail passengers nationwide, I think you can appreciate the bottom line of President Obama's commitment and grand vision.

- To quote the President: "Imagine boarding a train in the center of a city. No racing to an airport and across a terminal, no delays, no sitting on the tarmac, no lost luggage, no taking off your shoes. Imagine whisking through towns at speeds over 100 miles an hour, walking only a few steps to public transportation, and ending up just blocks from your destination. Imagine what a great project that would be to rebuild America."

- Thank you. I'll now take your questions.