

REMARKS FOR  
JOSEPH SZABO  
ADMINISTRATOR  
FEDERAL RAILROAD  
ADMINISTRATION  
BEFORE THE  
APTA RAIL CONFERENCE  
CHICAGO, IL  
June 15, 2009

- Thank you, Dr. Scott, for your kind introduction.
- As you know, I'm pretty new on the job at FRA, but because of the Recovery Act, I've really had to hit the ground running.
- I've been working in the railroad industry since I got out of high school, and I can tell you this is certainly the most exciting time for the entire industry.
- As never before, FRA is in the spotlight, and we know the pressure is on to get this done correctly right out of the box.
- And not only is FRA in the spotlight, the whole rail transportation industry has received an unprecedented amount of attention which in the coming years will only grow as high-speed rail corridors utilizing intermodal urban stations connect cities and people across America.
- The \$8 billion in the Recovery Act and the \$5 billion in the President's budget signal a new chapter in American public transportation.
- This is a large part of what I call the Rail Renaissance in America, which will integrate our national freight network with a fully developed high-speed passenger network.
- We are fortunate to be at the right place at the right time with the unique opportunity to make this Rail Renaissance last for generations, which certainly makes this a 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 and commuter rail.
- There is no doubt that in President Obama, ATPA has an engaged ally with a vision for the real potential of passenger rail.
- 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 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- 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 and rebalance our entire transportation network
- 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.
- When I was in Europe recently with Secretary LaHood, I saw this impact by riding the high-speed TGV rail system in France and the AVE system in Spain.
- I was inspired and encouraged by what I saw in both countries.
- For example, Spain opened its first high-speed rail line in 1992. And now they've got 2,300 miles planned or in operation, stretching from the southern coast up to Barcelona in the northeast.
- The economic and environmental benefits are very real.
- Forty percent of the Spanish population now lives within 30 miles of a high-speed rail station.
- Simply by virtue of being on the rail line, cities off the beaten track have become high-profile destinations.

- And the Madrid-to-Barcelona spur alone keeps 250,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere each year.
- These are the public benefits of high-speed rail, but right now here in the U.S., everyone involved with rail 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.
- On Wednesday, we will issue our much-anticipated interim guidance for applicants. You will find it posted on the FRA website, and we will be reaching out to state DOT officials to answer questions.
- I know you're all looking for a preview on the guidance. Well, you're not going to get it. However, I can safely state that 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.
  - Supporting interconnected, livable communities.
  - Creating public and customer benefits.
  - And, mitigating risks in order to achieve project success.
- Many of you had attended our seven stakeholder outreach workshops, so you heard these themes many times over.
- In all, more than 1,100 attended these workshops. Everywhere we went, elected and state DOT officials, railroad employees, labor unions, planners, environmental advocates, consultants and engineering firms came to learn

and share ideas about how to make high-speed and intercity rail service a success.

- From the FRA, they learned more from us about what we're looking for, such as:
  - the need for strong partnerships...
  - strong technical, financial and management capabilities...
  - political and community support...
  - and realistic expectations that can result in a successful launch of high-speed rail.
  
- Conversely, we learned a great deal about your concerns, such as:
  - the need for public outreach and education...
  - sustainable state and federal funding...
  - a resolution to liability issues...
  - coordination with freight railroads
  - national equipment, operations and safety standards...
  - interoperability of Positive Train Control...
  - supporting goals for livable and interconnected communities

- I believe these workshops made clear our mutual responsibilities, and as we begin to allocate the first of the \$8 billion from the Recovery Act, we must keep in mind that it is just the first down payment in achieving these goals.
- And if the first of these projects are not successful, the future of the entire 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 projects that play political or regional favorites.
- In order to make this work – and address our transportation challenges – we've got to look beyond our geographic and political boundaries.
- That's why I hope you leave here today with a real sense of mission – and a willingness to collaborate with all the partners involved in your region.
- Finally, I want to leave with you something from President Obama which strikes at the heart of our collective efforts
- 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."
- Let's work together to rebuild America. Thank you.