

It's time to meet 21st century realities with 21st century rail



By Ray LaHood – Director of Transportation - I went to Capitol Hill this morning because I wanted to share with the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee the good news about American high-speed rail. Since 1991, Presidents and Congressmen—Republicans as well as Democrats—have had an American high-speed rail network on their agenda, in good economic times and bad.

What's changed today is that we have a President and Vice President who are backing up their words with actions. We're not just writing reports and filing them away; we're hiring workers, we're laying track, and we're building stations. And it's a good thing, too. Because, by 2050, America will be home to 100 million additional people, and our highways and airports simply won't be able to handle that growth. And if we can't handle that growth, our economy will be stalled by chokepoints and bottlenecks across the country.

So we're working hard to bring President Obama's vision of high-speed rail to life. We're designing an integrated network with trains moving at different high-end speeds, based on the needs of local communities. Where it makes sense, we're building state-of-the-art, high-speed lines, on par with anything in Europe or Asia, where they've been doing this for years. And feeding into this true high-speed core will be regional service – faster than the best trains we have today.

Finally, we're building-out our emerging corridors. This is happening already in states like Maine, and entrepreneurs are already opening shop along these new local lines. Because of this Administration's willingness to act on high-speed rail, we've got American workers on rail jobsites in 32 different states and the District of Columbia. At the same time, we're supporting jobs in American manufacturing plants and American suppliers. From tracks to ties, to train sets, to construction materials for new stations, this important system is being built by American hands. From here, the future is bright. During the next six months, more than \$1.1 billion of new job-creating construction projects will begin.

We've invested in increasing the Acela's speed from 135 to 186 miles per hour. We've invested in bringing 110 mile-per-hour service to the Midwest. We'll soon break ground on a new line between Portland and Seattle. We continue planning for a southwest network that connects Dallas to Houston and Oklahoma City. And we're committed to helping the people of California achieve their vision for high-speed rail, too. It's not a cheap project, but it's an essential one. And we are in it for the long haul. Our blueprint for building high-speed rail is the same as America's blueprint for building the Interstate Highway System. A half-century ago, when the United States first started going from planning to paving, we didn't know where all the routes were going to be drawn on the map. And we didn't know where every penny of funding was going to come from. But we set a goal, and we got it done. It took 10 administrations and 28 sessions of Congress, but—through boom years as well as bust—our parents and grandparents built the best roadways in the world. Those roadways got us where we are today. They fueled an economy we can all be proud of. But now, it's time to build for the future. Now, it's time to make sure we don't leave our children and grandchildren a transportation system that struggles under the tremendous burden of population growth, resource constraints, and limited highway and runway capacity. Now, it's time to meet our 21st century realities with 21st century rail.