

Administrator Speeches 2012

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Employees of Bus Manufacturer Gillig LLC - Hayward, CA

4/11/2012

[Audio of Administrator Rogoff remarks (Windows Media)]

Well thanks and let me say first and foremost I'm really thrilled to be here. I'm very lucky to have had President Obama nominate and have me confirmed as the Federal Transit Administrator. But one of the most important things I do is allocate some ten and a half billion dollars a year of federal tax dollars—taxes paid by you and me—and turn those dollars into orders for buses like these.

If I have one message for all of you, it's really just to pass along the thanks of President Obama, Secretary LaHood and his whole team for the high-quality work that you do in turning out the highest quality buses that American manufacturing is producing today.

You know, it may not be something that you feel in your gut every day when you're working on the line, but what you're accomplishing here with every vehicle is really part of a movement. Transit ridership is now up to its highest level in five years. We have had now in the last two quarters the biggest upticks in transit ridership for two consecutive quarters than we've experienced for decades.

There is an inevitability about the growth in transit that's going to come because the American population is going to grow by some 100 million citizens in just the next 40 years. And we know that it's not going to happen, and were not going to have the kind of economy that going to support growth—growth in job creation, growth in the quality of life for us and kids—by just expanding highway capacity.

President Obama has articulated an all-of-the-above strategy for dealing with higher gas prices, and getting more of these vehicles out on the road is an elemental part of that strategy, not only because of the new fuel-efficient technologies you are putting into these vehicles, but also just giving more Americans more choices on how they get around every day. We know that bus transportation isn't going to be an option for everyone. Speak for myself: I take a bus and a train to work every day; my wife drives every day. That's what makes sense for my commute versus her commute. But what's important is that in my neighborhood we have a choice. And part of President Obama's all-of-the-above strategy on dealing with gas prices is to give more Americans that choice. People can save thousands of dollars a year, thousands of dollars they keep in their pockets rather than hand over at the gas pump, by utilizing the transit services that you people make available.

So, like I said, you may not feel it in your gut every day and every hour of working on the line, but this is part of a movement that is elemental to the recovery of our economy and it's elemental to the prosperity of our economy going forward. So again on behalf of President Obama I want to thank you. You're the people making it happen.

Very quickly, one of the other things I would just like to talk about is uniquely American manufacturing. When President Obama and our team took office, our economy was hemorrhaging 800,000 jobs a month. It was a time of unprecedented economic contraction and the worst recession since the great depression. And we have slowly but surely been turning that around.

American manufacturing employment is now up to the highest level it's been in years, certainly before we came into office but more importantly it's on the grow. And this administration is taking posture that we're going to claw and fight to get every American manufacturing job back we can. Part of our proposal as an administration, specifically as it relates to transportation, is to raise the American content of buses and railcars that are brought with American tax dollars. These are taxes paid by you and me and all the other American tax payers for public investments in public transportation. And we have not only the right but the obligation to insist that those dollars are plowed into American jobs.

So I've had the benefit of testifying before Congress saying that we want the percentage of these American vehicles to grow not just from the minimum sixty percent—and you do better than here at Gillig—but also to grow it by ten percent a year every year until we can get it to 100 percent. This is not just about getting more jobs here at the Gillig plant. To the credit of this company and the management team and the commitment of folks, employment thankfully has stayed relatively stable here at Gillig. But when you look at the supplier base, and when you look at some of the other manufacturers they've really spiked up and down as orders have come and gone.

Part of the solution for that is for Congress to pass a long-term transportation bill. The last long-term transportation bill expired in 2009. President Obama has said that we need to take half the savings that were going to enjoy from bringing our troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan and plow half of that money into deficit reduction and half that money into investments like these. A long-term transportation bill that will fund our transportation enterprises, our transit agencies, for a full five or six years so they have the financial surety and the confidence that they can put in an order not for one, two or five vehicles but orders for ten, twenty, fifty, or a hundred vehicles and know they're going to have the resources to pay them.

We frankly need your help in making that happen. Congress has been kicking the can down the road now several times, and most recently they

kicked the can down the road another 90 days. And that's starting to show up in order books, not in just this company, but companies around the country. That's not a formula for giving people options to not pay money at the gas pump. That's a formula for just kicking the can down the road. We need your help and the help of you and all your neighbors in convincing Congress that a long term transportation bill—especially in a period of \$4 gasoline is an absolute must. So let me thank you for your efforts. Again it's a longwinded speech with one message, and that is that the Obama Administration is thanking you for the great work you do in turning out some of the best vehicles anywhere in the world every day.

###

Tour of BART's Hayward Maintenance Yard, Hayward, CA

4/11/2012

[Audio of Administrator Rogoff remarks (Windows Media)]

Well, thank you very much.

It's important to remember that the year that BART opened its doors was the same year that Richard Nixon made his historic trip to China.

And at that time the price of gasoline was 36 cents a gallon.

I'm here in the Bay Area for many things. This one is perhaps the most important.

Tomorrow we are going to break ground on an extension of BART going down to San Jose.

And the Federal Transit Administration, as part of that project, is committing some \$900 million to a \$2.3 billion expansion of BART.

But what this facility shows us, and what the conditions that BART riders are experiencing everyday show, is that it's not enough to invest in a systems expansion. What is absolutely critical is that we reinvest in its ongoing needs.

President Obama has articulated a policy to deal with higher gas prices. It's an all-of-the-above policy.

It includes expanded oil and gas exploration, it includes investment in wind and solar power. It also includes investment in seeing to it that transit is a real option for more Americans.

That's what BART-to-San Jose is going to do. But in order for transit to be a real meaningful option for people to avoid the pain at the gas pump, that service needs to be reliable and desirable. Absent reinvesting in the systems like BART, in the major maintenance, the replacement of rail cars that are now the oldest rail cars running in the United States.

If we don't replace those rail cars, transit will no longer be a meaningful and real option for avoiding the pain at the gas pump. Every year since the Obama administration has taken office the transit budget we put forward to Congress have highlighted investments in state of good repair of our systems as the highest budget priority.

They are not always the sexiest investments, but they are the investments that absolutely have to be made in order for rail transit and bus transit to remain a reliable and desirable option. We currently have an estimated backlog of some \$80 billion nationwide in terms of major maintenance that

needs to get done in order to maintain conditions of our existing transit services.

Those amounts exceed \$4.4 billion right here in the Bay Area. That's not just BART, it's very critical investments that need to be made in Muni, Caltrain, SamTrans and all the other providers in this area.

But again, if we don't make those necessary reinvestments in these systems, we're going to lose ridership rather than gain it. And in a time of \$4 gasoline we need to be talking about growing ridership and giving more families the opportunity to avoid that pain at the gas pump.

Let me just say also that it's absolutely critical that Congress move forward—as Barbara Lee knows and as Pete Stark knows—it's absolutely critical that Congress moves forward on a multi-year transportation authorization bill that will give agencies like BART, like Muni, like the other transit providers in the area the certainty of knowing that federal funds are on the way.

President Obama has articulated a plan to fund a well-funded multi-year transportation investment bill that would take half the savings that we'll enjoy from bringing our troops back from Iraq and Afghanistan and reinvesting those dollars back in American infrastructure for highways and transit.

It's absolutely essential that Congress moves forward with this course and not continue to kick the can down the road through short-term extensions.

Congresswoman Lee, Pete Stark, others like them know this well.

We need to reinvest here in America.

We need to try and claw back every manufacturing job that we've lost and we've been successful in that over the last few years, especially in areas like transit.

But in order for us to make real progress, in order for us to make sure we're going to have the dollars to replace BART's railcars, make the necessary investments so that BART and all the other transit providers are providing reliable and desirable service, we need a multi-year transportation bill coming out of Congress this year and we look forward to the leadership of people like Barbara Lee in helping make that happen.

Thank you very much.

###

The BART-to-Silicon Valley Groundbreaking Ceremony, San Jose, CA

4/12/2012

[Audio of Administrator Rogoff remarks (Windows Media)]

I am thrilled on behalf of President Obama and Secretary LaHood to be delivering \$900 million of California taxpayer money back to finally extend BART to Silicon Valley.

This project has been talked about for decades. In fact, it was pointed out this morning that Santa Clara was part of BART's original plans in the late 1950s. Finally today, we're going to break ground on this plan and make it reality.

The \$900 million that President Obama is dedicating to this project is gladly given. Why? Well there are a lot of reasons. First, the people of this region have voted not once but twice to partner with us and tax themselves. We are thrilled to provide this \$900 million because we know it's going to improve the quality of life for people in this community. We also know it's going to serve important goals in cleaning up our air and giving people a meaningful choice in how to get to work and how to get around the area.

We're going to create thousands of jobs right now, precisely when we need them—tens of thousands, if you add up the direct construction jobs, the operational jobs, the vendor jobs. Like I said, jobs right now when we need them.

So perhaps the best reason we are thrilled to support projects like this all over the country is this: this \$20 bill in this region of the country won't even buy five gallons of gasoline. President Obama has articulated a strategy for dealing with the gas prices that's an "all-of-the-above" strategy. It's more oil and gas exploration, it's investments in wind and solar, but importantly, it's also about letting people avoid the pain at the gas pump by using transit as a meaningful alternative. Giving people a real choice. That's what this project is going to do. It's going to give people a real choice.

So is today a day to celebrate? You bet! But let me put out a very brief warning. BART is currently running the oldest railcars in America. Not only for BART, but for MUNI, SamTrans, for Caltrain—there's billions of dollars of reinvestment that needs to be made in our transit systems to keep those systems a meaningful and valuable choice so people can save the time and save the money at the gas pump.

So while we're celebrating the expansion of this system—and it is something to celebrate—let's also keep our mind focused on the fact that we need to reinvest in the system we've got. That's the way we can ensure that people are going to save the time on their commute, save money at the gas pump, and do the right thing so that the transit services that we're extending for

ourselves today will be available and be meaningful alternatives for our kids tomorrow.

Thanks very much. On behalf of the President and Secretary, congratulations to everybody.

###

The Silicon Valley Leadership Group - Santa Clara, CA

4/12/2012

[Audio of Administrator Rogoff remarks (Windows Media)]

Thank you so much, Todd. Let me just say on behalf of President Obama and Secretary LaHood, that we are thrilled to deliver \$900 million in tax dollars from Silicon Valley back to the Silicon Valley.

One of the things we commonly say at the U.S. Department of Transportation is, when it comes to the really ambitious projects, most of them have not dozens but maybe hundreds of near-death experiences, and this project certainly has had its share of near-death experiences. But the reason why we are finally breaking ground today has been a story of persistence. Certainly patience, but also persistence.

It's been the patience and persistence of the voters of this region, who have voted not only once but twice to put up their own dollars to make BART service to Silicon Valley a reality. It's also been the persistence of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group. I've had the benefit of working on this honest project, not just in my current position but in my prior position heading up the staff of the Senate Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee for several years. I remember meeting with Mayor Gonzales about this project many years ago.

But the persistence of the Silicon Valley Business Group that has come and visited us every year consistently has seen to it that this project never fell off anyone's radar screen. It also has to do with the persistence of your congressional delegation. But perhaps most importantly, a very treasured member of the Appropriations Committee, Dianne Feinstein.

One thing I've always pointed out: people may bemoan the fact that a state as large as California only has two senators, but my lord, they're not shrinking violets. And they don't hang back when it comes to articulating the needs and the long overdue balance of funding that needs to come in when you're talking about things like transit investments in areas as congested as this region. And Dianne Feinstein has been beyond the leading spokesperson on this for well over a decade now. It's taken this long.

Let me just tell you something as business people that you already know, and that is it's not enough to just make your initial investment. Especially in this region, people know that in order to be on the cutting edge, in order to be innovative, you must continue to reinvest.

So is today a day to celebrate? Absolutely! We're finally going to extend BART down to Berryessa and San Jose. But let me caution all of you to keep your eye on the ball. The BART service that we are extending down here is currently running the oldest railcars in the United States. They are

currently 40 years old. By the time we replace them, they're going to be 50 years old.

I spent yesterday down in Hayward at a BART rail rehabilitation plant. They are working miracles to keep those railcars on the road, a lot of it coming from very innovative ideas from the maintenance employees themselves. But this region as a region needs to stay focused not just on expansion but on reinvesting on the service we've got.

President Obama's strategy for dealing with oil prices is an all-of-the-above strategy. And in addition to further exploration for oil and gas, investments in wind and solar, giving Americans a reliable transit option is critical to the all-of-the-above strategy. But for people to use that transit option, the transit needs to be reliable and desirable. And if we don't reinvest in the existing infrastructure and only focus on expansion, we're going to lose that opportunity. We're going to lose that reliability and desirability and we will re-congest the highways with people whose transit trip is just not reliable.

So let me encourage you, now that we are getting BART down here, to use your leadership skills and your voice as a community to bringing to bear on Congress on the need for long-term transportation bill that reinvests in our transportation network and reinvest in keeping our transportation system safe and reliable.

Your other senator, the other shrinking violet, Barbara Boxer, just concluded many weeks on the floor getting a bipartisan transportation bill off the Senate floor with 74 votes. She joined forces with a senator with as different political philosophy as Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma to come together in a bipartisan way to move our country forward.

That is the kind of bipartisanship that Secretary Mineta and I were promoting this morning that has been absent far too much in this Congress. President Obama needs Democrats and Republicans to join together to make the necessary investments and we need your help in convincing Congress to do so.

Thanks again for having me. Today's a great day to celebrate. Let's keep our eye on reinvesting in the systems we have. Thanks very much.

###

Press Conference Announcing First-Ever Federal Safety Standards for Transit Hyattsville, MD

7/16/2012

[\[Audio of Administrator Rogoff remarks \(MP3\)\]](#)

Today we really are celebrating a truly historic achievement. It has been since 1964 that the U.S. Department of Transportation has been prohibited by law from issuing even the most basic minimum common-sense safety standards for transit of any kind. That prohibition was put in law the same year that the Beatles flew over the Atlantic Ocean to come play on the Ed Sullivan show. I was four years old and [Representative] Donna Edwards wasn't close to being born.

Importantly, let's talk about what that prohibition has meant. That means since 1964 we have had a gaping loophole in transit safety oversight. In this area it means that if you take the MARC train or the VRE train into Union Station or L'Enfant Plaza and then transfer onto Washington Metro; you go from riding on a train that has been subject to voluminous federal safety standards with hundreds of inspectors all over the country onto a system that has no safety standards dictated by the federal government whatsoever. The same is true in Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, and San Francisco and Los Angeles, and that's a very important thing to remember. While we're here talking about the Fort Totten crash, tragic as it was, this is not just a Washington D.C. issue. This is an issue about transit safety across America, and it has taken national legislators, like [Senator] Barbara Mikulski, [Senator] Ben Cardin, [and Representative] Donna Edwards, to step up, not just for this region, but for the entire country.

Immediately after the Fort Totten crash in 2009, Secretary LaHood tasked [Deputy Secretary] John Porcari with convening many of us around the department to really look at what the safety standards were and how they needed to be improved. The upshot of Secretary LaHood's efforts was that in December 2009, President Obama instructed the Secretary to join with the Maryland delegation and transmit legislation to Congress calling for meaningful transit safety oversight for the federal government. It has taken awhile to get this done, and is a testament to the diligence of the Maryland delegation and a great many others on the Banking Committee in the Senate and elsewhere to make this happen. But what it means is that today, now that Congress has answered the call of the President and the Maryland delegation, we can finally ensure that the growing number of citizens that use transit every day will no longer be second-class citizens when it comes to federal safety oversight. This is a huge advance that's taken close to half a century to bring about.

As I said it's not just the Fort Totten crash that moved the President forward to transmit this legislation. We saw fires that were the source of concern on the Chicago transit system, we saw fatal crashes on the T system up in Boston, we saw unsafe practices that we were concerned about in streetcars in San Francisco, and similarly, it's not just the riders that prompted President Obama to act, it was the people standing behind us: the workers. Working on an active rail line to keep transit service moving for the millions of passengers that use it every day is extraordinarily dangerous work. And we unfortunately experience fatalities among transit workers not only here at Washington Metro, but in other systems across the country.

These new safety standards are going to go a long way for better ensuring that transit is not just reliable and desirable, but safe. I also want to say a specific thank you to the National Transportation Safety Board and their leadership. National Transportation Safety Board for decades has been investigating transit accidents and transmitting recommendations to the Federal Transit Administration on what we should do. And far too often the answer that we had to send back is "we would love to do that, but we don't have the statutory authority to actually implement the safety improvements that you recommend." That ends today, and it has taken far too long to get here. I also want to make note of the fact that Secretary LaHood has given us the tools to hit the ground running on this initiative. Even before we had this legislative authority, two years ago he established a transit rail advisory committee for safety. That committee is going to be guiding our efforts; it's made up of academic experts, it's made up of safety experts, it's made up of transit operators, it's made up of transit overseers. They will be our guiding light in how we move out on this initiative. I also want to say importantly on behalf of the entire Federal Transit Administration that we are truly daunted and humbled by the new responsibility that President Obama, the Maryland delegation, the entire Congress has given us to stand up this important new initiative. As Deputy Secretary Porcari said: "we are going to save lives with this," and we can't do it soon enough.

So thank you all, thank you Maryland delegation for their leadership. I'd now like to introduce an outstanding safety advocate. I've had the pleasure of working with Chairwoman Debbie Hersman of the NTSB in prior assignments. She is a true leading national expert, not just on rail and transit safety but aviation safety, motor carrier safety, and a great many other areas. She's a great leader in this effort for the nation.

Thank you.

###

APTA Annual Meeting 2012 - Seattle, WA

10/1/2012

Remarks As Prepared For Delivery

Peter Rogoff, Administrator Federal Transit Administration

APTA Annual Keynote Address

Good morning, everyone.

The first time I stood before you at an APTA Annual Meeting as the FTA Administrator, in October 2009, I told you that FTA was going to “lean forward.” And that I needed the transit industry to “lean forward” with us.

Together, we are “leaning forward” in spectacular ways.

Transit is no longer an after-thought or a back-water at DOT.

In state after state, city after city, public transportation is on the rise. And the people want more.

The White House knows it. Secretary LaHood knows it. Governors and Mayors of all political stripes know it.

I’d like to share with you how we got to this point—and describe the path I think we’re on to keep transit, and this nation, moving forward.

We started out with GOALS.

Transit is at the very center of so many of President Obama’s domestic priorities.

Whether it is:

- Reducing our dependence on foreign oil;
- Improving the daily lives of working families;
- Putting people back to work;
- Cleaning up our air;
- Decongesting our highways; or
- Helping working families keep more of their hard earned money in their pocket,

Public transit is at the center of all of it.

Between the:

- Recovery Act,
- the White House’s Energy plans, and
- Secretary LaHood’s strategic plan,

- our Administration has launched some very clear and ambitious goals for public transportation.

As with all things at DOT, our first and highest priority was SAFETY.

In order to make sure that a very safe mode of transportation stays safe, we established the goal of reversing a provision in law since 1964 that has kept the FTA from issuing even the most basic common sense safety standards for transit.

In order to make sure that our critical transit infrastructure not fall into a spiral of continuing deterioration and disrepair, we established the goal of promoting and addressing the need to reinvest in the state of good repair of our systems.

In order to put taxpayer dollars to work more quickly and eliminate red tape, we established the goal of streamlining our approval processes so the public can enjoy the benefits of these projects far sooner.

In order to ensure that all transportation decision making across the nation considers transit as a meaningful option, we established the goal of having transit at the table, whenever and wherever local funding decisions are made.

And in order to fulfill the President's goals to reinvest in America on projects that not just create jobs but also improve our quality life for generations to come, we established the goal of promoting transformational projects and making sure that every Federal transit dollar be spent right here at home to employ more Americans.

In reflecting on these goals, I have to say with all modesty that I believe we have been extraordinarily successful. And we owe a great deal of that success to the new MAP-21 law.

Indeed, MAP-21 can be viewed as the culmination of the priorities and policies we have fought for and implemented consistently since Day One of this Administration.

When it comes to Safety, it was back in December 2009 when the Administration transmitted legislation to Congress seeking new federal transit safety oversight authority for FTA.

It was the only time any President in history transmitted a bill to Congress dealing exclusively with public transportation.

Now, MAP-21 grants FTA new safety authority for the first time since 1964.

FTA will at last be able to establish and enforce basic safety standards to better ensure the safety of tens of millions of passengers that ride public transportation each day.

In the months ahead, we will work closely with our industry partner and, especially, our TRACS advisory committee -- to chart a new course on how best to implement the law in a way that is focused on raising everyone's game when it comes to safety and in a cost effective way.

When it comes to our goal of addressing the state of good repair of our system, over the last 42 months, FTA has transformed what began as a report requested by then-Senator Obama and some of his colleagues on the state of our major urban rail systems into the nation's first federally funded stand-alone program to repair and upgrade transit rail and bus systems throughout the United States.

To get to that point, we directed \$1.9 billion—about a fifth of our share of Recovery Act funds—for this very purpose, along with more than \$2.5 billion in discretionary dollars.

We launched a national conversation on SGR:

I invited reporters to walk the tracks with me to see first-hand, for example, what a system like SEPTA in Philadelphia is up against.

We put out the first FTA grants specifically for new asset management systems.

The upshot is we've helped to replace thousands of obsolete buses, shelters, and rail cars that might otherwise still be in service today.

And MAP-21 followed our request to fold the discretionary bus program into a formula program focused solely on state of good repair needs, so every agency has a predictable stream of Federal funds to help address the backlog.

Two other critical MAP-21 changes.

- For the first time, all transit capital needs must be included in long-range investment plans—a move that will result in a more disciplined and strategic approach to building SGR needs into the planning process.
- And second, the law will now require that transit agencies be represented on every MPO board.

Yes, through MAP-21, we finally got that guaranteed seat at the table where the decisions are being made.

When it comes to streamlining, the cumbersome FTA process, especially when it came to our new starts investments, was the number one issue I heard about when seeking confirmation in the Senate.

And it was the number one transit issue that Secretary LaHood heard about during his confirmation process.

Everyone knows that the new starts process is cumbersome, burdensome, and time-consuming.

But we reached out, we listened, and we made regulatory changes while asking Congress to make even more meaningful changes in the law.

MAP-21 has now made those changes by, among other things, eliminating the Alternatives Analysis requirement in favor of reviewing alternatives performed during metropolitan planning and environmental review.

We are making additional changes through rulemaking that will put better and more realistic measures in place to determine a project's environmental benefits, its impact on local economic development, and proximity to affordable housing.

And we will reduce the volume and complexity of information you need to submit.

And there is more to come: We are also working on a final rule to streamline the NEPA process.

The final goal I'll mention is making transit central to our nation's economic recovery—putting our industry at the top of the President's recovery agenda.

FTA's share of the Recovery Act helped to create thousands of good, construction-related jobs at a time they were needed most.

We've invested a record-setting \$7.9 billion to enhance major transit rail and bus projects across 13 cities in 10 states--from San Francisco to Denver to Washington, D.C.

Our recently executed and pending New Starts and Small Starts grant agreements are on track, together, to create 88,500 jobs.

And our unwavering commitment to the Buy America program is revitalizing manufacturing here in the U.S., bringing good jobs back home from overseas, and creating new jobs too.

Since 2009, we've reduce the number of Buy America waivers from 40 down to about 3—a sure sign that more companies are stepping up to the plate to build and assemble transportation vehicles and components in Michigan, South Carolina, and elsewhere.

In reflecting on why we have succeeded at so many of our goals, I think the answer comes down to two words – leadership and professionalism.

When it comes to leadership, we have a President who gets it. A President who may have taken more transit trips in his own life than all preceding Presidents over the entirety of their lives, collectively.

We have a President who will stand before a joint session of Congress and speak specifically about the needs for improved transit in specified corridors around the nation.

When was the last time that happened? Don't wrack your brain trying to remember. Because it never happened before.

We have a President who made clear that, if Congress presented him with bill that eliminated all trust fund dollars to transit, he would veto it.

And in Secretary LaHood, we have a leader who mentions light rail as often as highways and bridges.

In Secretary LaHood, I had an ally who would not let the issue of transit safety rest until the Congress approved it some two and half years after we first asked for it.

In Secretary LaHood, we all have an ally who allowed more than a third of the roughly \$3 billion expended in his TIGER program to go toward transit projects across the country.

Today, we have a renaissance of streetcars sprouting up across America, many of them with DOT funds. The TIGER program has contributed as much to this streetcar renaissance as the FTA's New Start and Urban Circulator programs. It's been a very successful partnership that couldn't have happened without the Secretary's leadership.

Another reason we have been successful in achieving our goals is because of our continued efforts to tell America about transit's critical role.

We are on Facebook, we are on Twitter, and Secretary LaHood is featuring transit stories on his FastLane blog seemingly every other day. We are talking about what YOU do. And we are talking about it relentlessly.

In 2008, the FTA put out a total of 7 press releases over that 12 month period. Today, Brian Farber and his outstanding team are putting out 7 press releases before breakfast - talking about you.

When you look at FTA's new expanded responsibility for Safety and the State of Good Repair of our systems, I certainly hope that Congress has granted us this additional authority because of the way we have demonstrated the professionalism to step up to new challenges in recent years - as well as old challenges that weren't adequately addressed in the past.

Here are a few examples.

We've known for years that the guidance we published on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and Environmental Justice was conflicting and confusing - almost deliberately so. It wasn't serving the targeted populations well and it wasn't giving transit agencies a clear definition of compliance.

Rather than let that situation languish, we addressed it head-on.

Earlier this year, we put new guidance on the street that clearly and distinctly explains what compliance looks like for Title VI and Environmental Justice.

We faced oversight head-on, too.

This past year, we launched a completely revamped State Management Review process. And this year, we will be launching a brand new triennial review process.

I want to ask, everyone in the audience who been through an FTA triennial review, please raise your hand. Now please continue to raise your hand only if you thought that the process added great value to your ability to serve your transit passengers. That's what I'm talking about.

The new triennial review process will be:

- more focused,
- more risk based, and
- will look forward at what challenges await your agency and how the FTA can help.

It will no longer be just a backward looking "gotcha" game that burns up time and money to little productive end.

And there's more to come: 22 years after the passage of the ADA, FTA will finally issue clear new guidance in the very near future on how to implement this landmark law.

While we still have a way to go, the FTA is moving forward with speaking with clarity and consistency.

We are burying the day when you could get 10 different legal interpretations or 10 different sets of rules, depending on which FTA Region you happen to operate in.

With greater professionalism comes greater clarity and consistency. These qualities will be essential if we are going to implement our new authorities in MAP-21 in a workable way where the benefits will really reach America's growing number of transit users.

And as long as I have the privilege of serving, you have my commitment that FTA will not be "making it up as we go along."

As important as it is to recognize where we have succeeded and why, we need to recognize where we didn't succeed and why. As I have made clear, the MAP-21 law has many of the right policy priorities. They are the same priorities that the Administration has highlighted since the get-go. But where MAP-21 falls short is in the funding levels.

President Obama's budget proposed a budget calling for a five year authorization bill that allowed for substantial growth across almost all FTA programs. He paid for it by taking half the savings from the drawdown of forces in Iraq and Afghanistan and putting them into a surface transportation bill and putting the other half into deficit reduction.

Congress went another way. As a result, we have only a 2-year bill at frozen funding levels. I know and you know that to truly fulfill the policy visions of MAP-21, frozen funding isn't going to cut it.

But the other fact is that when the next Congress is seated in January, they will already have to be about the business of planning the NEXT reauthorization.

Please know that the Obama Administration will be right back at it, talking about the need to invest in America's future - a future with expanded transit opportunities for all.

The transit agenda cannot and will not go away.

That's because, now more than ever, transit is an integral and inevitable part of our society, our culture, and essential to our economic welfare.

Ridership has grown in 24 of the last 30 months—and the second half of 2012 may well shatter the record-setting 10.3 billion trips taken in 2008.

Transit is inevitable because there's a major paradigm shift under way in this country that has a profound impact on how people want to move around—and how they're able to move around.

By 2050, the U.S. will be home to nearly 150 million more people than live here now - but a smaller percentage of them will be working, as the tail end of the Baby Boom grows old.

Meanwhile, fewer young adults are seeking drivers' licenses—many prefer to take transit.

As much as we would like it to be otherwise, nobody is predicting a period of prolonged stability of low gas prices going forward.

So we will continue to advance transit in this country because it is inevitable. . . and because it reflects all the things this Administration cares about:

- saving working families money;
- reducing our dependence on oil; and
- relieving congestion on our highways.

Transit has secured its seat at the table. And we should all be immensely proud of that.

Thank you.

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Charlotte Blue Line Extension Full Funding Grant Agreement Signing Ceremony

10/16/2012

October 16, 2012, Charlotte Blue Line Extension Full Funding Grant Agreement Signing Ceremony

Thank you, Mayor [Foxx].

Today we are here to celebrate a giant leap forward in the relationship between the Obama Administration and the City of Charlotte and greater Mecklenburg County.

It was about ten months ago that Mayor Foxx, Carolyn Flowers and I stood roughly at this same spot to announce an \$18 million grant to extend the platforms and provide for longer trains to the existing Blue Line system.

That investment was needed because when it came to ridership on this Charlotte light rail system you guys were blowing the roof off. You had more people gravitate to this light rail system than any planner had ever expected any time soon. That was an important step forward.

Today we are celebrating a giant leap forward. Today on behalf of Secretary LaHood and President Obama, I'm thrilled to sign a federal commitment for \$580 million to extend this line all the way to UNC Charlotte.

With these federal funds, we are going to double ridership again and double the length of this line.

The Obama Administration is very proud to bring \$580 million of North Carolina taxpayer money back to North Carolina to create thousands of jobs and create those jobs on a project that's going to improve the quality of life of Mecklenburg County for generations to come.

The Obama Administration supports investments like these because they embody so many of the President's goals for the nation. A line like this is going to enable working families to keep more of their money in their wallet rather than hand them over at the gas pump. It's going to lower our dependence on foreign oil.

It is going to give our children, our seniors, and all of our citizens cleaner air to breathe. It's going to be economic development and jobs all along the corridor. And it's going to connect two campuses of one of the greatest universities in the nation: UNC Charlotte.

You know, Secretary LaHood and I were in Phoenix this past week and there are a lot of parallels between what's going on in greater-Phoenix and what's going on in Charlotte.

In Phoenix, as in Charlotte, early naysayers said that people weren't going to get on light rail. People said it couldn't work here; that people weren't going to get out of their cars.

In Phoenix, as in Charlotte, ridership went through the roof beyond what anyone expected and now we're about the business of extending this system to the next community and the next community.

In Phoenix, as in Charlotte, we connected campuses of a great university. Arizona State University has its main campus in Tempe, it's got a new downtown campus and the light rail is serving as the connection. That's what we're going to have here in Charlotte between the Center City Campus and the main campus of UNC Charlotte.

Let me add another thing that we probably don't talk about enough. Giving the students the opportunity to come down and enjoy themselves on a Saturday night and not drive back inures to the benefit of the entire community.

As the Mayor pointed out, Charlotte continues to be a city on the grow. And, one thing we learned at US DOT from the recent census is that this country is going to have 150 million more people by the year 2050. A hundred-fifty million more people. And a lot of that growth is going to happen in cities that are already experiencing very fast growth like this one.

Faced with that challenge, you have two choices: you can plan for it or be overwhelmed by it and have that growth undermine your quality of life.

The leaders on this stage, Mayor Foxx, your Congressional delegation, the city council, are showing the vision and wisdom to be planning for it and they deserve a lot of credit. Even taking the tough votes to raise local money to make this happen because to fail to make those investments a much more congested [US Route] 29 and a much more congested [Interstate] 85.

You know, this project will serve to benefit even those Mecklenburg County residents that may choose to never use light rail just by taking cars off those very congested highways.

So, this is a win-win-win for everybody.

Let me just say something that echoes what the Mayor said. One of the reasons the Obama Administration enjoys partnering with this community is the strong bipartisan support that is shown for these types of investments.

[Congressmembers] Mel Watt, Sue Myrick, Senator Hagan, Senator Burr, the Governor, all of the overall community, the Chamber of Commerce, local organizations all bind together to improve the quality of life of greater-Charlotte and make sure that the growth in the future doesn't overwhelm this community.

It's that kind of unanimity of purpose, it's that kind of bipartisanship that we need more of in Washington, DC. I want to commend this community for leading the way for the rest of the nation on showing us how it's done.

Thanks very much.

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Honolulu Rail Transit Grant Signing Ceremony

Honolulu Rail Transit Grant Signing Ceremony in Honor of Senator Daniel Inouye

12/19/2012

Joining with you all today is probably the most bittersweet moment in my professional career. I am grateful that we have finally arrived at this day, and saddened that the man who led us here is no longer with us.

It was in this very room in September of 1993 that the Senate Appropriations Committee approved and reported the Transportation Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 1994.

During that Committee meeting, the responsibility fell to me to explain to Senator Inouye that the legislation before him proposed to take back \$74 million in funds he had previously secured for a rail project in Honolulu and redistribute them to other projects.

The funds went to a project in Boston, Massachusetts being championed by Senator Ted Kennedy, and a project in Milwaukee, Wisconsin that was being championed by Senator Kasten.

The redistribution of Honolulu's funds was the result of a member of the Honolulu City Council suddenly flipping her vote, killing the rail project by a vote of 5-4. And as soon as the vote was taken, that same Councilwoman flew to a neighbor island to hide from public view.

Senator Inouye certainly understood why we had to redistribute the money. He was gracious and understanding, as always. But he told me and the other staffers that were gathered around him that day that "he would be back."

Senator Inouye said he would continue to fight for this project because the congestion problem on the island of Oahu was real, and the hard working people of his state really needed a rail transit option.

Since that day 19 years ago, the congestion on H-1 has gotten steadily worse. The working people in West Oahu have spent more and more time in traffic away from their families, and Dan Inouye has kept fighting to bring them a rail transit option - an option that would get them home in time for dinner. An option to get home in time to supervise homework. An option to see their young children before they had to go to bed.

Thankfully, Senator Inouye did not need to fight this battle on his own. In recent years especially, it has truly been a group effort.

Senator Akaka, from his position on the authorizing committee, made sure that we continued to have the program and policies in place to finance a project of this size.

Representatives Hirono and Hanabusa led the fight in the House of Representatives.

Mayor Carlisle, and Mayor Hannemann before him, continued to drive things forward and set up a truly independent and professional rail transit authority. There was a time when Mufi Hanemann was trying to drive this train so fast, I think some of us worried he was going to drive it right off a cliff. But instead, great progress was made.

The Honolulu City Council has done extraordinary work, making sure the local policies and resources are in place. This is no longer a City Council with 5-to-4 votes that flip back and forth. The measures passed a few weeks ago to move forward with this project prevailed on votes of 8-to-1.

The State legislature cooperated at several stages, especially in hearing Senator Inouye's requests that they NOT divert tax revenues dedicated to transit to other purposes, and make sure that those funds stayed available for transit.

And most importantly, the taxpayers of Oahu have been paying the tax revenue for years now, so they could someday have a rail project and create thousands of desperately needed jobs along the way.

Just this past June, Senator Inouye took to the Senate floor and explained to his colleagues the critical need to move forward with this project. He said "Honolulu recently received the dubious distinction as the city in the United States most besieged by traffic gridlock, surpassing even Los Angeles, New York and Chicago...Rail transit on Oahu has been debated and discussed for nearly forty years and the time for talk is over." Today, the time for talk is indeed over.

Today, now that the required 30 days for congressional review have passed, Secretary Ray LaHood has directed me to sign the Full Funding Grant Agreement for the Honolulu Rail Project.

Today, we finalize the Federal contribution and make the first \$255 million in construction dollars available for the project.

Today we move forward to produce the thousands of promised jobs and shorter commutes.

Nineteen years ago, Senator Inouye promised me that he would be back.

None of us could imagine that when we finally reached this day, he wouldn't be here to join us.

But this event today is truly a culmination of his ceaseless efforts to improve the quality of life for working families in Hawaii.

There may be no better way to honor his memory than to fulfill the goal he has pursued for decades.

Thank you.

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