

Administrator Speeches 2013

5/31/2013	Re-opening of the Rockaways (NY) A Line Train	
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Thank you, Tom, Chairman Fererra, and the entire MTA team. I am Peter Rogoff. I'm President Obama's Federal Transit Administrator.

You know, on November 3rd of last year just days after Hurricane Sandy, we celebrated the fact that we had reunified the city of New York in its Subway system. We had reopened the tunnels under the East River, and we had connected Brooklyn, Queens, and Manhattan. But the real day to celebrate is today because today we reunified Queens with Queens.

Today we get the people of the Rockaways all the way home.

Today we really unified the entire city of New York. You know, the people of the Rockaways have been extraordinarily patient.

For months now, they have faced a daily choice of having a commute that was either twice as long or twice as expensive as what they were accustomed to when the A was running.

This day, reopening the A line, has been a long time coming. But I can tell you, as someone who heads an agency that builds rail lines all across the country, the fact that they were able to rebuild this many miles of rail in just seven months, getting it rebuilt, tested, and ready, is an extraordinary feat accomplished by the MTA. They should be congratulated.

We accomplished this feat together because the MTA wasted no time in getting to work on rebuilding this line. We also accomplished this feat because the Obama Administration wasted no time in getting the funding up here to help pay for the rebuilding of this line.

Immediately after the storm, President Obama came to New York and New Jersey and saw all the devastation and told all of us within his administration that we were going to cut the red tape and we were going to get the dollars and the assistance on the ground to the people who need it immediately.

That's why the Federal Transit Administration was in a position to provide up to 90 percent of the funding for this rebuilding effort of New York's and New Jersey's transit system.

To date, as Tom pointed out, the FTA has allocated more than \$2.8 billion dollars for the rebuilding of transit just on the MTA. And those dollars are not just response and recovery dollars. Those dollars include almost \$900 million dollars for what we call resiliency investments. These are the investments we are going to make to make sure that the transit infrastructure of New York is not destroyed again in the next storm.

As many of you know, some of the transit facilities that flooded during Hurricane Sandy had just flooded a little bit more than a year before under Hurricane Irene. President Obama knows that we can do this smarter and we can do it better.

The taxpayers of the United States should not have to pay to rebuild a facility that has been destroyed twice. More importantly, the transit riders of New York should not have to put up with the stress, the cost, the inconvenience of having the same transit facilities destroyed storm after storm after storm.

So we are going to invest dollars to make sure that we can protect this infrastructure and keep people moving throughout the tri-state area. That's why the Obama administration is going to continue to partner with the MTA.

You know, when we make Federal policy and federal funding decisions for transit, we need to remember that New York and New Jersey is the epicenter of transit in the United States.

The morning after Hurricane Sandy hit, more than half the transit trips in America were not available. And a few days after the storm, after Boston was able to come back online, and Washington DC and Philadelphia, still, close to 40 percent of the transit trips in America were not available until we could get the MTA, New Jersey Transit, and the systems around here back online.

This A line that we are restoring today carries more than 30,000 people a day. I can tell you that we have plenty of rail lines all across America that do not reach 30,000 passengers on their busiest day of the year.

And that's why the Obama Administration recognizes that this is the transit epicenter of the United States. That's why we're sending billions of dollars here for its rebuilding. These are the kinds of investments that people support. Investments that restore service to people that historically need them.

So congratulations to the MTA. Congratulations to the Rockaways. Thank you to the people of the Rockaways for being so patient.

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