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Thursday, April 16, 2009

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and its nearly 1,500 members applauds President Barack Obama for his vision in developing much needed high-speed rail in the United States, which will change the way Americans travel.

President Barack Obama released his vision for high-speed rail today at a White House ceremony with Vice President Joe Biden and Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. Transportation and Infrastructure Chair James Oberstar attended the ceremony along with other members of Congress. Prior to the ceremony, Acting Federal Railroad Administrator Karen Rae gave a briefing on the specific details of the Administration's high-speed rail strategic plan. Public transportation leaders in attendance included APTA Chair Dr. Beverly Scott (MARTA) and APTA President William W. Millar.

"The public transportation industry applauds President Obama and his Administration for looking to the future and providing a vision of a better transportation system that will offer people greater travel options," said APTA Chair Dr. Beverly Scott. "High-speed rail will not only be good for mobility, but it will be good for reducing our nation's carbon footprint, for attaining energy independence, and for creating economic prosperity."

In his remarks, President Obama said, "What we're talking about is a vision for high-speed rail in America...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."

"This high-speed rail strategic plan signals a major step forward in transportation policy," said APTA President William W. Millar. "The American public transportation industry stands ready to work with President Obama and his Administration to truly create an interconnected, intermodal transportation system. Finally, America is stepping up to the plate to develop high-speed rail like other countries around the world have.

"The American people have demonstrated that they want more travel options. Just last year, 10.7 billion trips were taken on U.S. public transportation – the highest level of ridership in 52 years," continued Millar. "Now is the time for change and there is no doubt in my mind that the American people will embrace high-speed rail as well."

In addition to the \$8 billion for high-speed rail in the recently passed American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), President Obama said that an additional \$1 billion a year should be directed towards high-speed rail in the next five federal budgets. Ten high-speed rail corridors were identified in the Administration's strategic plan and the first round of grants will be awarded by the end of the summer.

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