

Washington, D.C. - Today, Rep. David Price (D-NC) joined other Co-Chairs at the first meeting of the bicameral High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Caucus in calling on Congress to see high speed rail investments as a key part of creating jobs now and ensuring our future economic competitiveness. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood took questions from advocates and reporters on recent grants and the future of federal support for high speed rail. The caucus is dedicated to supporting federal legislative and funding policies to ensure the long-term viability of high-speed and intercity passenger rail.

"High speed rail needs to play a bigger role in our nation's overall transportation system so we can move people and goods from one place to another faster and more efficiently," Rep. Price said in his remarks. "Proposed rail investments will relieve congestion, reduce our dependence on foreign oil, and create jobs—including 20,000 jobs in North Carolina alone. And, if we want to stay competitive in the international economy, we simply cannot continue to lag behind countries like China in developing a 21st Century infrastructure."

Over the last 15 years, North Carolina has invested approximately \$300 million in state intercity rail service capacity, including the construction of new train stations and track improvements. These investments have helped reduce travel time between Raleigh and Charlotte by one hour. State intercity passenger rail ridership has increased 44 percent in the last five years.

Congress included \$8 billion in high speed rail funding in the Recovery Act. The North Carolina Department of Transportation pursued funding from this pool with the support of the entire North Carolina congressional delegation, ultimately winning \$520 million in funding to make improvements along the Raleigh to Charlotte corridor and \$25 million for smaller corridor projects. The U.S. Department of Transportation has designated 10 high speed rail corridors including the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor, which runs from Washington, D.C. to Charlotte via Richmond, VA and Raleigh.

Secretary LaHood cited infrastructure investments as both crucial to immediate job creation, and the long-term economic success of the country. Secretary LaHood called on congressional leaders to continue funding high speed rail projects, and to continue transportation investments as a part of deficit reduction measures.

"You can pay down the debt and deficit, and you can have priorities," LaHood said.

President Obama has set a goal of providing 80 percent of Americans with access to high speed rail within 25 years. High speed rail investments also align with the President's plan to "Win the Future" by preserving investments in the programs that make us strong—infrastructure, education, research, innovation—and ensure our future economic competitiveness. At the President and Secretary LaHood's direction the U.S Department of Transportation continues to work with States to plan and develop high speed and intercity passenger rail corridors that range from upgrades to existing services to entirely new rail lines exclusively devoted to 150 to 220 mph trains.

Opponents of high speed rail have tried to stop planned projects in some states. Florida rejected its high speed rail funding earlier this year, leading to larger grants for projects in other corridors. North Carolina received \$4 million in additional funding for the Richmond to Raleigh corridor.

"I am pleased by the progress we have had in North Carolina, but there is more to be done in NC and nationwide -- particularly if we hope to achieve the vision of providing 80 percent of Americans access to high speed rail within 25 years," Rep. Price said in his remarks. "This vision stands in stark contrast to that of high speed rail opponents, whose ideas about infrastructure investments are penny-wise and pound foolish."

Other Co-Chairs of the caucus include Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), Senator Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ), Rep. Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Rep. Corrine Brown (FL-3), Rep. Zoe Lofgren (CA-16), Rep. Tim Walz (MN-1) and Rep. John Olver (MA-1). Each founding Co-Chair represents a region containing a major high-speed and intercity rail corridor that, when completed, will make up a national high speed rail network anticipated to both directly and indirectly spur the creation of hundreds of thousands of good-paying jobs across the country.



U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood (center) speaks at the first meeting of the High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Caucus and Board (left) and U.S. Representative Song (right) at the meeting.