

Cary, NC - Thank you, Chuck Watts, for the gracious introduction – and thank you all for being here to share in today's good news. It's always a pleasure to see our transportation Secretary Gene Conti, and I especially want to thank Administrator Szabo for coming down from Washington to help us mark this occasion. Earlier this year, we heralded the news that North Carolina would join an elite group of only seven states receiving a portion of the high-speed rail funding included in the Recovery Act. Today, we come together again to witness the rubber hitting the road – or, more accurately, the metal hitting the rails.

This day has been a long time coming. As some of you will remember, it has been twenty years since Congress first designated the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor, and more than a decade since Governor Jim Hunt challenged our state to achieve two-hour rail service from Raleigh to Charlotte.

We've come a long way toward that goal, but for the most part, we've been on our own. Over the last two decades, the federal investment in this or any other high-speed rail corridor outside the Northeast has been very, very modest. The burden fell almost completely to the states, and in light of the enormous capital investments needed, our progress was – like the train to Charlotte – steady, but slow.

That all changed with President Obama, who made a major federal investment in high-speed rail one of his top priorities for the Recovery Act. The approval by Congress of \$8 billion for the development of high-speed rail is a threefold win for our country and our state: it creates well-paying construction and manufacturing jobs in the near-term; it makes North Carolina a more attractive place to live and do business in the long-term; and it makes our communities more livable and environmentally sustainable.

Competition for this Recovery Act funding was intense, and it is a huge tribute to the vision of Governor Hunt, the tireless efforts of Pat Simmons and others at NCDOT, and the advocacy of community leaders all along the corridor, that our state received such a significant award: \$545 million to modernize North Carolina's rail system and increase rail speeds. Half a billion dollars is no small change.

We will still have a ways to go to complete the corridor and take it all the way to Washington, DC. But this investment represents the turning point for high-speed rail in our state. We can

REMARKS AT CARY RAIL STATION ON NCDOT HIGH SPEED RAIL FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT

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finally see that light at the end of the tunnel. One day soon, North Carolina won't be merely known as the "good roads" state; she'll also be "the high-speed rail state." And I look forward to working with President Obama, Administrator Szabo, Governor Perdue, and Secretary Conti, and others, to make it happen.

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