

Washington, D.C. – Tuesday, during committee mark-up of the Fiscal Year 2013 House Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill, Representative David Price was successful in adding an amendment to transfer \$83.6 million in funding from a stalled transportation program to an existing, urgently needed safety program. The safety program helps eliminate hazards at highway-railway crossings on high-speed rail corridors like the one in North Carolina.

When Congress enacted the current transportation bill in 2005 (SAFETEA-LU), \$90 million was set-aside to promote the deployment of magnetic levitation (maglev) technology. However, to-date no maglev projects have made it beyond environmental review and none are moving forward, leaving 90 percent of these maglev funds unutilized.

"This is funding that was in 'indefinite detention' at the Department of Transportation," Rep. Price said. "It's just common sense that it can be better used making cost-effective safety improvements, such as adding warning signals and warning signs at crossings, along high-speed rail corridors -- especially those in North Carolina and Virginia."

"This reallocation of scarce federal funds will make states like North Carolina safer for all travelers, by replacing unsafe grade crossings with bridges and installing smarter signals that can detect intrusions and operate more efficiently for freight and passenger train operations," said NC Transportation Secretary Gene Conti. "We look forward to putting dollars and people to work wherever trains and vehicles connect."

There are over 225,000 grade crossings across the country and a collision occurs at one of these crossings 4,000 times per year. Last year alone, there were 236 fatal grade crossing collisions resulting in 265 fatalities, a number Rep. Price worried could only grow as trains operate at higher speeds along high-speed rail corridors. Over the last couple of years, the existing crossing safety program received 70 applications totaling about \$100 million, but only had \$30 million in funding to allocate.

"The bottom-line is this funding will help prevent tragic rail accidents," Rep. Price said, "greatly increasing safety, while simultaneously enhancing mobility for passenger and freight trains and creating jobs. It pairs the means with the need, and it's a 'nuts and bolts' example of how the Appropriations Committee can work across party lines to make good policy."

PRICE SECURES \$83.6 MILLION FOR HIGHWAY-RAIL CROSSING SAFETY

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