

**By Congressman David Price -**

I would like to thank the distinguished Chairman and Ranking Member for their interest in the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) program. I appreciate this opportunity to offer my views on the program.

I believe that passenger and high speed rail simply must play a more prominent role in our nation's overall transportation system, moving us forward the way the highway system did in the mid-20th century. The need is great: our highways are congested and sure to become more so, and the capacity of our aviation system has only shrunk as airlines have reduced frequencies and completely cut service to points around the country.

High speed rail offers a safe, efficient and environmentally-friendly transportation choice for moving people and goods travelling between major cities. In addition, high speed rail investments have a synergistic impact: they upgrade our rail infrastructure, improve mobility of goods and people, reduce dependence on foreign oil, and create jobs – both in the short-term (planning, engineering, manufacturing equipment) and in the long-term (operations and maintenance). It is estimated that \$1 billion spent on high speed rail creates 34,000 jobs, and rail investments are also a catalyst for attracting state, local and private capital, which in turn creates more jobs.

Unfortunately, without a clear federal policy or dedicated funding source, the U.S. has lagged behind other countries in developing its high-speed rail infrastructure. We have a major competitiveness gap in this area: the U.S. spends only 2.4 percent of GDP on infrastructure; China spends 9 percent.

We made some good headway with the Recovery Act, which provided the first ever major infusion of support for rail outside the northeast corridor. That \$8 billion investment is helping to develop or lay the groundwork for 13 new, large-scale high-speed rail corridors across the country in numerous states. But it has not been an entirely smooth process: the Administration had to stand up a brand new program with minimal administrative funds or staff to administer the grants, and it took a while to get things up and running. I believe they have made very good progress to-date on the Recovery Act funds and expect that most, if not all, of the Recovery Funds will be obligated well before the funds expire in FY 2012. These funds are critical to

laying the groundwork for future high speed rail.

I have seen first-hand these funds being put to use in my home state of North Carolina. Since the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor was designated 20 years ago, states have had to fight for a share of an annual \$25 million funding pot, but even with limited federal investment, North Carolina has been able to make consistent incremental improvements on the corridor. Work, including the construction of new train stations and track improvements, has already helped reduce travel time between Raleigh and Charlotte by one hour. These new federal dollars are already on the ground helping to decrease travel time and frequency of service between Charlotte and Raleigh by half again. But we also have ambitious plans to extend the corridor to Richmond, VA and Washington, DC, ultimately linking the Southeast to the Northeast.

I know that there is the interest and capacity to do much more, and that there are other worthy rail projects nationwide ripe for investment. I also know that the public support for high-speed rail is strong and growing.

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. A vision of a 21st century transportation system with high speed rail is not "pie-in-the-sky." We can make it a reality, but it will not happen overnight. Instead, it will require that we work together to implement a fundamental shift in our transportation policy at the federal level. I look forward to working with you on this effort.

*Congressman Price submitted this Statement for the Record at a House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure Hearing entitled "The Federal Railroad Administration's High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program – Mistakes and Lessons Learned" on December 6, 2011.*