

Raleigh, NC - Hello everyone and thank you, Administrator Hedlund, for coming to North Carolina to bring us this excellent news! I am certainly pleased to join this distinguished group -- including Mayor McFarlane and Deputy-Secretary Morris and friends from Triangle Transit -- in celebrating the City of Raleigh and kick-starting the Union Station project.

Ms. Hedlund, I expect your visit to Raleigh will give a perfect example of why the Triangle has received national recognition as a top place to live, work, raise a family, start a business and retire. This praise is well deserved, but we also recognize that the tremendous growth we have experienced in recent decades -- Raleigh being one of the fastest growing cities in the nation -- comes with its own set of challenges.

Putting "smart growth" into practice requires strong leadership, leadership with a tenacity and a collective will to get things done. That kind of leadership has been demonstrated by the City of Raleigh, from the Mayor and City Council, to the City management team, and to the community at large. This multi-modal transportation project is a perfect example of this partnership with support coming from the City, the state DOT, and Triangle Transit.

And I am pleased that with today's award announcement, the federal government has made itself a partner in this project. This, like other TIGER transportation infrastructure investments, will pay dividends for our economy both now and in the future.

What this federal investment recognizes is that Raleigh's Union Station signifies the wave of the future: an America that includes revitalized downtowns, increased mobility for people wherever they live and work, reduced traffic congestion and cleaner air, and smart public policy that brings all levels of government together in support of diverse modes of transportation.

Raleigh's transit and train ridership are on the rise, and current Raleigh facilities are failing to meet the needs of users today, much less anticipated future growth. This well-designed and strategically located facility is going to encourage and accommodate intermodal transportation, including local, regional, and intercity bus service, as well as Amtrak's passenger rail service—moving at faster and faster speeds—and future commuter and light rail. Today we share the excitement at the opportunities this transportation center will bring to Raleigh, and we eagerly anticipate its completion.

I am a Member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee that allocates funding for the Department of Transportation. This has given me the chance to support robust funding for our public transportation programs – from formula funds that support buses and bus service, to the New Starts program that helps communities develop fixed guideway transit systems such as commuter and light rail, bus and trolley. More recently, with the help of the president, we've stepped up the case for developing new high-speed rail.

On this latter program, we have been stymied by the new House Republican leadership. We have faced two years in a row where \$0 have been appropriated for high-speed rail development. Just this week, the House Appropriations Committee approved the Transportation appropriations bill for the upcoming fiscal year, which again allocated \$0 to this important program. We've got to do better- the stakes for Raleigh and North Carolina are great.

The bright spot of this week's Appropriations Committee meeting was that the Committee accepted on a bipartisan basis a provision I authored to move more than \$80 million in funds from a seven-year-old defunct program to the existing grant program to eliminate hazards at highway-railway grade crossings on high speed rail corridors.

North Carolinians are familiar with both the need for and the benefits of this program. Last year there were over 250 fatalities from accidents at grade crossings. This program provides the method to solve the problem; my amendment provided the means. In this era of scarce fiscal resources, I was pleased to help direct these dollars to a program that improves safety, enhances mobility for passenger and freight trains, lays the groundwork for faster and more efficient rail service, and creates jobs.

So we have a lot more work to do! But today we pause to celebrate the progress we've made, a hard-won TIGER grant, moving us significantly towards a new Raleigh Union Station! Congratulations to all who have brought us to this point and thank you for having me here today.