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DOT 110-11

Monday, August 22, 2011

Secretary LaHood Announces NEARLY \$745 Million IN RAIL FUNDING for Major Upgrades & CONSTRUCTION Along Northeast Corridor

Improvements Will Allow Future Amtrak Acela Service to Reach Speeds of 186 mph

WASHINGTON – U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today announced nearly \$745 million for construction along the Northeast Corridor (NEC) to upgrade some of the most heavily-used sections. The NEC will receive \$449.94 million to upgrade electrical systems and tracks between Trenton, NJ and New York City, resulting in improved on-time performance and reliability, and an initial increase in top operating speeds up to 160 mph and future maximum speeds of 186 mph. Another \$294.78 million will alleviate major delays for trains coming in and out of Manhattan with new routes that allow Amtrak trains to bypass the busiest passenger rail junction in the nation.

“These grants are a win for our economy and a win for commuters all along the Northeast Corridor,” said Secretary LaHood. “We are creating new construction jobs, ordering American-made supplies and improving transportation opportunities across a region where 50 million Americans live and work.”

Today’s announcement is part of the Obama Administration’s unprecedented capital investment in the Northeast Corridor, and the improvements will allow for the fastest passenger train speeds attained in North America to date. Thanks to these investments, *Acela Express* trains will soon reach up to 160 mph (up from 135 mph today) along a 24-mile segment of the corridor between Trenton and New Brunswick, NJ, with the replacement of electrical catenary, supplemented power supply, and modernized signals and tracks. In the future, as Amtrak purchases new, next generation high-speed train sets, passengers will travel at world-class speeds of 186 mph along the improved track.

Improvements to the Harold Interlocking rail junction in Queens will eliminate congestion between intercity and commuter trains and allow for the future growth of high-speed service along the corridor. A new flyover will separate Amtrak trains travelling between New York and Boston from Long Island Railroad and Metro-North commuter trains, and NJ Transit trains accessing Sunnyside Maintenance Yard in Queens.

“With gas prices on the rise and congestion clogging our roads, more and more Americans are choosing to travel by train,” said Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph C. Szabo. “With our population expected to grow by 100 million more people between now and 2050, we are investing in a high-speed rail system that connects to other modes of transportation, reduces congestion and improves the efficiency and reliability of travel in America. Increasing speeds and improving service on the Northeast Corridor, which is the most heavily-traveled passenger rail corridor in the nation, is a crucial part of our effort.”

Both projects are expected to generate 12,000 jobs. Pre-construction work between Trenton and New York City will begin in late 2011, with initial construction commencing in 2012. The project is expected to create 400 jobs per year over the period of construction. Through the Obama Administration’s strict implementation of the “Buy America” requirement, the opportunity for U.S. manufacturers and suppliers continues as more than 100 miles of wire, hundreds of catenary poles, and a large volume of electrical equipment such as transformers will be used as part of the upgrades.

Construction on Harold Interlocking will begin in September 2012, creating 9,200 jobs over the length of the project, and include the procurement of new switches, miles of track, concrete ties, bridges, signal towers, catenary poles, and retaining walls.

Thirty-two states across the U.S. and the District of Columbia are currently laying the foundation for high-speed rail corridors to link Americans with faster and more energy-efficient travel options. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and annual appropriations have provided \$10.1 billion to put America on track towards providing new and expanded rail access to communities and improving the reliability, speed, and frequency of existing service. Of that, more than \$7.3 billion has been obligated to date.

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