

TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY LAHOOD ANNOUNCES \$34 MILLION TO ALLEVIATE CONGESTION AT ONE OF THE LARGEST RAIL BOTTLENECKS IN AMERICA



U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.
www.dot.gov/affairs/briefing.htm
News

FRA 20-11
Thursday, September 01, 2011
Contact: Brie N. Sachse
Tel.: (202) 493-6024

U.S. Department of Transportation also Announces \$15 Million to Pave the Way for a Houston – Dallas-Fort Worth High-Speed Passenger Rail Corridor

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today joined with Texas officials and railroad industry leaders to announce nearly \$50 million in rail investments to bolster both passenger and freight service through the state, and jumpstart planning for high-speed rail between Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth.

A \$34 million TIGER II grant will fund major rail improvements on the Tower 55 project in Fort Worth, TX, and reduce traffic delays by 100,000 hours per year. The Tower 55 project will alleviate congestion at one of the busiest railroad intersections in the United States, where ten freight and passenger rail routes converge and carry more than 100 trains per day. The high volume of trains currently results in lengthy delays for area commuters and passengers, which will be greatly reduced thanks to these rail upgrades.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Transportation today announced a \$15 million high-speed rail grant for Texas that will jumpstart engineering and environmental work on a high-speed rail corridor linking two of the largest metro areas in the U.S., Dallas-Fort Worth to Houston. The State of Texas is one of 32 states across the country currently laying the foundation for future high-speed rail service that will connect Americans more quickly, efficiently and safely than ever before.

“These projects are part of President Obama’s bold vision for investing in freight and passenger rail projects that will create jobs and grow our economy over the long-term by moving people and goods more quickly and efficiently than ever before,” said Secretary Ray LaHood. “Through our robust public-private partnership with state, local and industry partners on the Tower 55 project, we’re eliminating a longstanding bottleneck for freight rail, creating capacity to handle future rail demand as our population grows, and strengthening the foundation for economic development across the region.”

In addition to the U.S. Department of Transportation’s investment, the City of Ft. Worth, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), BNSF Railway (BNSF) and Union Pacific Railroad (UP) are providing funding to help install new signaling, bridge upgrades, a third track line, and improved street and pedestrian crossings. Once complete, rail capacity will increase by more than 30 percent, making it more efficient for rail freight shippers and improve commuter rail reliability and performance.

“Tower 55 is a crossroads of the North American continent,” said Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison. “This project will allow the Tower to go from a legacy chokepoint to the model of a freight and passenger checkpoint, a facility featuring efficiency, safety, and convenience.”

According to Senator John Cornyn, "Tower 55 is a crossroads of the Texas economy. These improvements will help ensure our state remains the economic leader it is while improving the safety and commute times of those within Fort Worth."

"The Tower 55 improvement project will create hundreds of jobs and will bring in over \$1 billion to our economy while upgrading one of the most congested rail intersections in the country," said Congresswoman Kay Granger. " Tower 55 is the crossroads of the rail industry in Texas and this grant is a great example of what can be achieved when federal, state, and local partners work together with the private sector to find solutions."

"This is about safety and economic well-being," said Congressman Michael C. Burgess, M.D. "When the trains back up, cities all the way into Denton County face blocked rail crossings. And goods moving from the North to the South and the East to the West are delayed. Improvements to Tower 55 not only benefit Fort Worth, but the state of Texas and the nation as well."

"This project could not have happened without the unprecedented collaboration of a number of entities that supported this essential project," said Texas Transportation Commissioner William Meadows. "The Tower 55 Multimodal Improvement Project exemplifies the strong commitment of the Texas Department of Transportation to comprehensive transportation planning, and an acknowledgment that a transportation system includes many different and diverse components."

"Partnerships have been a vital part of Fort Worth's continued efforts to protect and preserve our quality of life," said Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price. "So, it is appropriate — and not the least bit surprising — that another vital partnership has produced more positive results. This collaboration will address serious challenges to our region's mobility and commerce, and, more importantly, to the safety of our residents."

The Tower 55 project will create approximately 900 jobs, and provide greater safety with reduced delays for motorists and pedestrians at area highway-rail crossings and bridges. With decreased train delays and blocked crossings, the project will achieve a projected 1.9 million ton reduction in carbon emissions from idling locomotives and automobiles. Construction is expected to begin in early 2012. In addition to the \$34 million TIGER II grant, the project will be funded with matching contributions, including: \$1 million from TxDOT; a \$1 million from the City of Ft. Worth; and \$65 million from BNSF and UP.

Under the U.S. Department of Transportation's popular Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program, \$600 million has been awarded to 42 capital construction projects and 33 planning projects in 40 states for crucial upgrades to highways, bridges, transit systems, rail lines, bicycle and pedestrian paths and ports. TIGER II grants were awarded to projects that promote innovative, multimodal transportation, increase energy-efficiency and provide significant economic benefits to an entire metropolitan area, region or the nation.

####