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Bringing World-Class High-Speed Rail to America:
Special General Session, 12th Annual
Transportation and Infrastructure Summit, MTI
S-09-04

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Bringing World-Class High-Speed Rail to America



MTI Report S-09-04



MINETA TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE

The Norman Y. Mineta International Institute for Surface Transportation Policy Studies (MTI) was established by Congress as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991. Reauthorized in 1998, MTI was selected by the U.S. Department of Transportation through a competitive process in 2002 as a national “Center of Excellence.” The Institute is funded by Congress through the United States Department of Transportation’s Research and Innovative Technology Administration, the California Legislature through the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and by private grants and donations.

The Institute receives oversight from an internationally respected Board of Trustees whose members represent all major surface transportation modes. MTI’s focus on policy and management resulted from a Board assessment of the industry’s unmet needs and led directly to the choice of the San José State University College of Business as the Institute’s home. The Board provides policy direction, assists with needs assessment, and connects the Institute and its programs with the international transportation community.

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MTI works to provide policy-oriented research for all levels of government and the private sector to foster the development of optimum surface transportation systems. Research areas include: transportation security; planning and policy development; interrelationships among transportation, land use, and the environment; transportation finance; and collaborative labor-management relations. Certified Research Associates conduct the research. Certification requires an advanced degree, generally a Ph.D., a record of academic publications, and professional references. Research projects culminate in a peer-reviewed publication, available both in hardcopy and on TransWeb, the MTI website (<http://transweb.sjsu.edu>).

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BRINGING WORLD-CLASS HIGH-SPEED RAIL TO AMERICA

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The Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) thanks the following organizations, cities and individuals for sponsoring and participating in the special general session, “Bringing World-Class High-Speed Rail to America” at the 12th Annual Transportation and Infrastructure Summit, which was held on August 11–14, 2009 in Irving, Texas.

This annual summit was created to educate policy makers from all levels of government about current transportation issues throughout the world, with a goal of sharing dialogue, advocating and networking with transportation and public policy leaders, private sector leaders and trade associations and groups.

Thank you to the event sponsors, the City of Irving and the Greater Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce.

Special thanks to AECOM, a global provider of professional technical and management support services, for sponsoring this special session, and Al Engel, AECOM’s vice president and U.S. high speed rail director.

This special session was moderated by MTI’s Executive Director Rod Diridon, Sr. Participants included:

- Judge Robert Eckels, chair, Texas High-Speed Rail and Transportation Corporation, Houston, Texas
- Rick Harnish, executive director, Midwest High-Speed Rail Association, Chicago, Illinois
- Fiona Ma, majority whip, California State Assembly, San Francisco, California

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FOREWORD

On November 4, 2008, 52.3 percent of California voters said yes to a world-class high-speed rail system by passing Proposition 1A, the Safe, Reliable High-Speed Passenger Train Bond Act for the 21st Century. The bond act, which supplies \$9.95 billion of general obligation bonds, is a down payment for a \$40 billion, public-private partnership high-speed rail system between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

With the implementation of 2009's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the addition of federal economic stimulus funds will go a long way in making California's high-speed rail system a reality. But the state of California is not the only region with high-speed rail plans.

This year, the organizers of this year's 12th Annual Transportation and Infrastructure Summit, held on August 11–14 in Irving, Texas, brought together influential transportation and infrastructure policy experts in the Second Annual Global High-Speed Rail Forum. Attendees took part in discussions ranging from project viability and disbursement of funds to regional project initiatives and their planning, funding and implementation. The Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) was proud to be a summit sponsor and co-host.

It was my honor to present information on California's high-speed rail project to a stakeholders' roundtable meeting on August 11 as a member of American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) High-Speed Rail and Intercity Rail Committee. That same day, I acted as moderator for one of two special sessions, "Bringing World-Class High-Speed Rail to America." This presentation featured representatives from three proposed HSR systems followed by a question and answer period.

Thank you to California Assemblywoman Fiona Ma, Midwest High-Speed Rail Association Executive Director Rick Harnish and Texas High-Speed Rail and Transportation Corporation Chair Robert Eckels for sharing their regions' plans and visions for HSR.

This e-book, a transcript of the proceedings of "Bringing World-Class High-Speed Rail to America, has been edited for clarity."

(insert e-sig/Digital image library>signatures>Rod Diridon, Sr.)

Rod Diridon, Sr.
Executive Director
Mineta Transportation Institute

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 12th Annual Transportation & Infrastructure Summit, held in Irving, Texas on August 11–14, 2009, provided over 1,100 attendees from 30 states and 13 countries the opportunity to network and interact with elected representatives and influential transportation officials from the United States, and to learn about transportation systems on a global scale.

The summit also hosted the Second Annual Global High-Speed Rail Forum. This year's forum brought together developers, business officials, policy makers and rail experts to discuss the development of high-speed rail corridors around the world and in the United States. Topics included a High-Speed Passenger Rail Stakeholders' meeting, and a pair of special general sessions: "World-Class High-Speed Rail" and "Bringing World-Class High-Speed Rail to America," which was moderated by Rod Diridon, Sr., executive director of the Mineta Transportation Institute.

This special session featured representatives from three proposed regional high-speed rail projects currently planned for the United States. Fiona Ma, Majority Whip of the California State Assembly, shared information about California's High-Speed Rail Initiative. Assemblywoman Ma talked about her experience on France's record-breaking TGV train and her vision for bringing a similar system to California. Rick Harnish, executive director for the Midwest High-Speed Rail Association discussed how regional initiatives were working toward improving current Midwestern rail corridors and upgrading to high-speed levels to increase mobility. Robert Eckels, chair of the Texas High-Speed Rail and Transportation Corporation, shared his organization's vision and details of Texas' "T-Bone" high-speed rail project.

The presentations were followed by a brief question and answer period.

BRINGING WORLD-CLASS HIGH-SPEED RAIL TO AMERICA

ROSE CANNADAY

With the Recovery Act applications due in just under two weeks, the nation's high-speed rail corridor representatives are busily crossing their t's and dotting their i's. We'll hear from many of these corridor representatives today, each of whom made the time to be with us at this important summit because of the high caliber of the speakers that attend this. We have administration officials and industry experts that gather here every year. They come from all over the country, and we have a lot of representatives from all over the world.

Welcome to our honored moderator, Mr. Rod Diridon, and our distinguished keynote speakers, Assemblywoman Fiona Ma, who is the majority whip of the California Assembly; Rick Harnish, who's the executive director of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association; and Judge Robert Eckels, chair of the Texas High-Speed Rail and Transportation Corporation. Let us take a minute, though, to thank our generous sponsor for this session, AECOM. Please join me now in thanking AECOM for their dedicated work in increasing the awareness of transportation needs and serving as a global leader in providing professional, technical, and management-support services to the transportation market. AECOM's broad vision and excellence in innovation brings an exciting new dimension to our summit. We commend you and thank you for your support. I believe we have a representative from AECOM—Alan, there you are in the back. Thanks for being here!

Now I would like to introduce Mr. Rod Diridon, who will serve as the moderator of this panel. Rod Diridon has been the executive director of Mineta Transportation Institute since its inception. He is known as the "Father of Modern Transit Service" in Santa Clara County, California, having chaired more than 100 national, state, and local programs and projects, nearly all related to transit and the environment.

Before leading the MTI team, Mr. Diridon completed five terms and served six times as chairperson of both the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors and Transit Board. He has also been chair of the American Public Transit Association, and is North American Vice President and serves on the board of trustees of the Union Internationale des Transports Publique. In Texas, we just say that's the International Transit Association in Brussels.

Mr. Diridon chaired the National Association of Counties Transit and Railroad Committee for 18 years. He has been a member of the Federal Transit Administration's Transit Industry Technical Advisory Committee, and the National Research Council's Transportation Research Board's Transit Cooperation Research Program, which he chaired in 1995.

He currently is chair of the TRB TCRP panel on combating global warming through sustainable transportation policy, and was appointed by the governor in 2001 to the California High-Speed Rail Authority board. He is also on the executive committee of the National Council of University Transportation Centers. In addition, he serves on the board

of directors of the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

He has a BS in accounting and an MSBA from San José State University, and he was president of a private research corporation. And, to top all of that, he served two combat tours as a United States Navy officer in Vietnam. Let's welcome Mr. Rod Diridon.

ROD DIRIDON

That takes too long! It's going to have to be cut down. Rose, thank you so much for the nice comments. The traditional remark now is that my mother would believe them. My father would laugh!

The other "thank you" has to go to Al Engel and AECOM for sponsoring the program today, and for our last panel, for all that they did to add a little light in this rather heated situation. Commissioner Gary Fickes, thank you for hosting us last night. We sure appreciate it.

And let's charge right into the issue at stake today.

Jo Strang is wonderful, and we appreciate her enthusiasm, and know that she's going to do a great job with FRA for us.

In the next days, you're going to hear Gary Kelly, the CEO of Southwest Airlines. It's remarkable that Southwest is here sharing their thoughts with us, when only a few years ago, they would have been lobbing grenades over the transom. The chair of three of the class-one railroads is going to be here, showing that we are working in cooperation with the class-ones, and we have to, of course. Seven members of Congress will be here, led by Congress member John Mica, who's ranking member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure committee. Congress member Corrine Brown, the chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials is going to be here. And your very own, wonderful Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison is going to join you, too, so you've got a real treat coming up over the next couple of days.

High-speed rail, as the president said so emphatically when he pumped his fist in the White House and said, "We're America! We're going to build the best high-speed rail system in the world!" And we believed him, and I still believe him, and high-speed rail. And, in a democracy, the president is right even when you don't agree with him. So I do believe that we are going to see that high-speed rail backbone that he declares as being necessary for the nation.

I think Peter mentioned earlier that high-speed rail is of no use unless we have a good feeder-distribution system in each one of our communities, so we're not here competing against the other modes of transportation. We're here to talk about a comprehensive total transportation system. To do that means that the funding for all transit has to rise. We can't say, "Take money from transit and put it into high-speed rail." That's counter-productive. Funding for all of the transportation modes has to increase so that we can create the kind of transportation system that we saw presented so graphically in our discussions this morning at the round table from Japan, China, France, Germany, and Spain's beautiful

system.

So if we want to be like the other class-one countries of the world in terms of multimodal, sustainable transportation systems, then we have to talk about all of the transportation programs improving, and unfortunately, high-speed rail has to improve the most, because we don't have one in the United States. We've got a long way to come in order to catch up with the others, to create the kind of system that the president envisions, and that we need so terribly badly here.

We do have a personal charge, each one of us. If we are going to expect to ride high-speed rail to this conference 10 years from now, we're going to have to get out and work our fannies off in order to make that come true, and we all have to work consistently with each other. That's why it's so important to work with coalitions like the one coming out of the American Public Transit Association's (APTA) High-Speed and Intercity Rail Committee, or the coalition being developed out of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, your state departments of transportation's standing committees on rail transportation. Those organizations that represent you and me back in Washington need your support so that we are able to ride the high-speed train when David Dean and his very wonderful team brings us together for the national conference in 2023.

Now let me get over to a person who is a favorite person of mine. You know, in California we've been talking about the most advanced research project on high-speed trains in the United States, and we're proud to be in that position, although I have to say that Bob Eckels put the state of Texas in that position way a long time ago, and got derailed, so we're only there by default. California is happy to be there, but we would not be where we are right now if Fiona Ma hadn't come down like the angel of mercy from the state legislature and salvaged us from what would have been the scrap heap of another high-speed train study group that had gone into default.

Fiona started her time as a member of the board of supervisors in San Francisco. She was a spark plug there and did wonderful things for the San Francisco community as the leader of their board of supervisors. Was then elected to the state assembly. She's in her second term now. In her second term, she's been appointed the whip, which means the top person on the majority side, guiding legislation to make sure that it's adopted in accordance with the party platform. She's been a most effective whip in terms of bringing together the votes for controversial and tough measures, and one of those was the high-speed rail legislation that allowed us to have our bonds on the ballot last November in a manner that allowed us to use those funds now as the very, very important local matching funds to the ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009) funds which we had no idea were going to be created back in November, but, very fortunately now, have been created at the national level.

As Speaker, Fiona is in charge of all sorts of responsibilities. She has public education, healthcare and access by the poor, and policies to protect our environment. She has been on key committees in higher education, revenue and taxation, housing, agriculture, labor, public safety, and, most importantly, she is our savior, our champion for high-speed rail. Please welcome Assembly member Fiona Ma.

FIONA MA

Thank you very much. So before I go into my prepared remarks, I'm going to take you back to my day on April 2, 2007. I was in France on a high-speed rail delegation, and I was lucky enough to be invited to take a train ride that day, and this is what was happening in the front of the train. I was sitting in the back of the train. I think I was the only American on the train, and I'm getting goose bumps as I'm watching this, and I think you guys will, too, when you see.

So going through the landscape. Beautiful day out. People were waving flags on the side of the road. Cameras. People up on top of the bridge hoping for a special day today. So the train is getting faster, and after a while, we couldn't see anything out of the windows. The only visible thing we could see was a jet flying next to us, which you will see in a couple of moments. There you go. That was visible.

We were going about as fast as the jet. And so Chuck Wochele of Alstom [Transport] was on there, and they were sitting in front of us with the executives of the other companies, and they were just happy as can be! Cheering. They've got the champagne ready, and I am sitting behind them, anxiously waiting for this train to stop.

There are no seat belts on the train. As I was looking around, I felt like we should have some sort of straps, and Chuck knows they were very, very happy waiting for the moment. We could see the screen as the speed was increasing in the back. And it really felt like we were on a plane that was ready to take off on the runway, yet it never did. So you can kind of imagine, it just keeps going, going. My knuckles are white, and I am getting goose bumps. I drive my Prius and I set it on, you know, 65 miles per hour for my cruise control, so you can kind of imagine, I'm not really a speed junkie.

Three hundred and fifty-seven miles per hour was the top speed, and we broke a record for rail-on-rail, steel-on-steel.

I just kept praying that it wasn't my time! And there we go—574.8 kilometers per hour. And so, as politicians, we always look to be the first for something, and I guess I can say that I am the fastest legislator in the world.

And it was an opportunity I think I was very, very lucky to have. As Rod said, I started my career on the San Francisco board of supervisors, and in San Francisco, we are planning to build a new Transbay Terminal. It is going to be the Grand Central Station of the West, where all our transportation systems will come to one place. However, it is supposed to be built high-speed rail-ready, and so we have been waiting for the day when we can have high-speed rail go into the system.

Fortunately, when I got to the Assembly, my charge was to make sure that the high-speed rail bonds stayed on the ballot. It had been postponed twice before, and, as you can imagine, \$9.9 billion is a lot of money, and you're competing against other financial sources. So what I did was, I started at the leadership level. I got my speaker of the assembly, as well as the leader in the senate to commit not to postpone the ballot initiative again. So that was Fabian Núñez and Don Perata. Now it's very difficult in the assembly because we have term limits. I am only in the assembly for six years, and senators are

only there for eight years, so it's very hard to get people to take on long-term projects when our charge is really to get something done in the short term, put it on our résumé, and then run for our next office.

So what I tried to do is put together a bipartisan, bicameral legislative high-speed rail caucus. I basically sold it to the Republicans as a job creator, and I sold it to the Democrats as a global-warming solution, and so both sides were very happy to be able to, you know, try to come together on some initiative. I think many of you have been watching the state of our budget crisis in California, and the fact that we cannot pass a budget on time really talks to the way our houses are very split in terms of Democrat and Republican politics. So here is something that could bring everyone together.

I managed to get a good group of people together, and then, in 2007, we were already starting to face financial difficulties. The governor wanted to cut the funding for the California High Speed Rail Authority to \$1 million. This is the authority that Rod Diridon is on, and former senator Quentin Kopp. They are the main bodies in charge of putting together this high-speed rail plan.

The governor wanted to cut it to \$1 million, which would have meant all of the engineering and environmental studies that were being done would have to stop, and if that happens, all you engineers and environmental consultants out there you know how difficult it is to try to restart a program. So we really had to fight hard to try to get the money reallocated. We finally got \$21 million back into the budget through the budget-conference committee. We are feeling pretty good that we were able to overcome the one hurdle.

April 2007 came along. I was on the record-breaking train. I came back, and I kind of became the poster child for high-speed rail. I had the opportunity to really talk about my experience, and the fact that every industrialized and non-industrialized nation in the world has high-speed trains, yet America does not. I was able to really bring high-speed rail to the forefront.

December 2007, there was a lot of pressure to postpone the ballot initiative again. We needed a majority to postpone that ballot initiative in the legislature, and so my job was to really distract everybody, to make sure that they did not focus on high-speed rail. A majority is much easier than if we pushed it to the next year, and then we would need a two-thirds vote.

So December passed. Everyone was focused on other things. I was happy. I thought, "Great! We're kind of on track at this moment." Feeling good. No vote delay.

Then, of course, we had to make amendments to the original bond. Six years ago, things changed, and, therefore, legislators wanted amendments. Some of the members didn't like the bonds. Some didn't like the route. Some wanted more oversight. And then the governor really wanted public-private partnerships. He felt that this was the way to get this done, and that we had to split the funding. So the state would provide one-third of the funding, the federal government would provide one-third, and the private sector would provide one-third. So we came to an agreement, a compromise bill. We finally pass it, a two-thirds vote. Again, very difficult. We finally get it to the governor's desk, and the governor says, "I'm not

going to sign any bills unless we pass a budget.”

Well, as you can imagine, we're panicked again, because we don't pass bills on time, the budget bills on time, and so here we are pushing, and asking him to make an exception. "Please sign this one bill. We have a ballot in November. The ballot handbooks are going out." And they did go out with the old language, and we knew that if the voters saw the old language, they would not go for the old language, and so we were not happy, Finally we pushed the governor. He made one exception. He signed this bill, and we had to send supplemental language out after the ballot handbooks were out, and so, as you can imagine, we're all panicking, all of us, trying to pass the initiative, trying to get folks to focus on the supplemental ballot, and not on the original ballot.

I think a couple things were in our favor at the time—a perfect storm. Gas prices went up to \$5 a gallon. The airline industry also was facing difficulties. As you know, the auto industry was facing difficulties, and therefore, kind of the main opponents were busy at the time. So we didn't really have any real opponents.

The newspapers got on board, and the newspapers endorsed this. They thought, "Yeah, it is about time that America gets into the 21st century," and figures out alternative transportation methods, high-speed rail, the whole global-warming initiative. And so the newspapers pretty much up and down the state endorsed the ballot initiative.

Obama at the time was campaigning out in California, and he also started talking about high-speed rail as an economic generator. Having Obama talk about it also helped raise the awareness, and I really focused on the college campuses. The young kids were excited about Obama. We had two very contentious initiatives on the ballot, gay marriage, as well as parental notification, and the young people were active. And so I went and visited about a dozen campuses on the high-speed rail route, got them involved and engaged, and they, I think, really helped push the initiative over the ballot, over the finish line.

And of course the big elephant in the room was the financial crisis in September of 2008. That really panicked, I think, most of us thought that voters would not want to vote for a \$9.95 billion bond measure. And so how do we overcome that?

Election night was very tense. I was in Los Angeles with my speaker. We were supposed to go down for an election-night party, Obama, and the fact that we were behind in the polls, I thought we had lost the election. Rod was probably commiserating with us. Very depressed that night, but then, by the next morning, the initiative did pass with almost 53 percent of the vote.

It has been a very long campaign. I have passed out a handout on the history of HSR in California. We've been working on this officially for about 16 years now. We have come up with many studies and funding difficulties, but I think the fact that the voters passed the initiative gives us a leg up in terms of the stimulus funding that is out there. And now it's about how do we keep this project on track? Now we have the NIMBYs that are coming out. They don't want the train to go through their back yard. We have the financing environment uncertain at this moment, whether we're going to be able to get all the necessary funding to make this happen. We're still waiting for the environmental studies and the engineering

studies. Hopefully, those are on track.

And it's about all of us, here in this room, whether we can put enough pressure to make sure that all of our states get the necessary attention and the funding. It's great that there are 10 designated segments around the U.S., that Obama is very positive. We've got, great legislators in California, Boxer and Feinstein, and Pelosi, who are pushing this, as well as Congressman Jim Costa. I think that's always important to have allies and champions in the federal government.

And then Rod Diridon this morning talked about our governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger. Now he is fully on board, and, I think, taking credit for the passage of Proposition 1A, which is fine. We're willing to share the credit. The governor was at a meeting, and he pounded his fist on the table and said, "I want to see a ground-breaking by the time I leave office. Is that going to happen?" And, of course, you know, ground breakings take a long time. It's not going to happen in the next year. So I think members started saying, "Well, you know, Mr. Governor, it's going to take..." "—because I want to see a ground-breaking!" And, if you know our governor whatever he wants, he wants. And so I think the wise folks in the room said, "Fine. We will find the shovels, and we will make sure you have a ground breaking."

The mayor in San Francisco is also termed out, and he would like to see a ground breaking at the Transbay Terminal, and so we have a lot of political force trying to make sure this project stays on track. It is not easy. The political will is not easy. You all are train advocates. My job is to try to keep the train moving, keep it on track, and I just want to thank all of you for all of your support, for coming out to testify, and to speak, and to keep the op-eds going in all the newspapers. We need to keep the pressure on, and make sure that we build this train, especially in California. If California can do it, the rest of the nation can do it. So thank you very much for your support. I look forward to working with you for at least the next 10 years to come, and we can take the train from San Francisco to Los Angeles in 2 1/2 hours.

ROD DIRIDON

Thank you, Fiona. You know, if we could put her into a bottle, it would bubble, but it would also be intoxicating. So let's figure out how we can do that, and maybe we can share her with the rest of the world, and that would be a great benefit. Fiona has to leave for a plane shortly, and please forgive her when she has to. Thank you for taking the time away from your legislative duties to be with us.

Let's move on down now to the next speaker, who has done a remarkable job, from a different perspective. Rick Harnish started a small association, an accumulation of advocates for high-speed rail, a long time ago, before many of us were even thinking about it. His title now is the executive director of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association, which is the huge association that covers 11 states around the hub, Chicago.

Rick kind of brought that embryonic idea forward, and in 1991, he led a successful membership drive that brought his members from 57 up to 700 members. He then ran a fund raising drive that allowed the 700-some-odd members to begin functioning effectively. He became the executive director and was hired by those members. Then, through that

coalition, he worked with the state of Illinois to increase their Amtrak investment from \$12 million to \$28 million per year, doubling the amount of trains being supported by Amtrak coming out of Chicago. He's then worked with the state to target the investment in rail transportation in the state, increasing it from \$100 million a year to \$300 million a year, to revive not only heavy rail, but also the light-rail circulator in downtown Chicago. Remember we said before, the circulators are as important as high-speed rail, because, without the circulator, high-speed rail won't work, either.

So he's working on a comprehensive system. He's now expanded his activities to create the Train Riders Alliance, another coalition operating under his association that has now 35,000 members, operating in the core area of Illinois; and of that 35,000-member group, 16,000 of them sent letters to the governor recently reminding him not to cut Amtrak funding, which was on his chopping block for the last budget. Lo and behold! When 16,000 people send you little love letters and ask you to do something, the governor took Amtrak off the chopping block. So, Rick, thank you for all you do for rail across the nation, and let's all welcome Rick Harnish.

RICK HARNISH

Thank you. You know, that last one you talked about was really fun. It was in 2007. The previous year we had got Illinois to double the Amtrak budget. Then you may have heard that we had a very dysfunctional government for a while, until a very public incident happened this past January.

So our previous governor wanted to do some things. I can't really remember what was on the side of things he wanted to do, but he said to the general assembly, "If you don't do these things, then I am going to cut these programs." And it was a big long list of programs. I think that he intended to cut another increase in Amtrak service, but there wasn't an increase in that budget, and so what he ended up doing was threaten to cut the incredibly popular program down to zero. We took a day to make sure that he really was threatening to do this, and then when we finally decided, yes, he was serious about it, and we needed to do something, we did this email campaign, and it's amazing how things changed. In an hour and a half, the governor's email box flooded with emails that said "Don't cut Amtrak."

That was on Wednesday. On Thursday, he announced that he had taken Amtrak off the list, and rape counseling off the list, but everything else got cut on Friday. So grass-roots effort can really help, and it really does make a big difference in how we govern.

Part of this effort is going to have to be from the ground up, and getting the people that want to take the trains to say over and over and over again, "I want to take the train." Leave the details to the professionals, but if we can just get people frequently saying, "I want to take the train," that's going to make a huge difference.

Another thing that we did, and just for fun, I'd like to take credit for the California thing passing, because it passed on that thin margin, right? We did an email campaign called "Tell your California friend to vote 'yes' " and we generated thousands of emails from people all around the country to their friends in California, reminding them to vote yes for

high-speed rail. We worked closely with CALPIRG (California Public Interest Research Group) that then did a campaign called “Tell Kevin Bacon to vote ‘yes’ for high-speed rail,” and then it was pointed out that Kevin Bacon lives in New York.

This is obviously not the Midwest. It’s actually Paris, Gare de Lyon in Paris. If you’ve ever been there, or if you’ve seen “Mr. Bean’s Holiday,” the photographer is standing at the restaurant where he had the incident with the seafood dish. This happens to be last year, on Friday of their Fourteenth of July weekend, which is the same as our Fourth of July weekend here, and this is the station where you would get on your train going to the Mediterranean coast.

It’s 500 miles to Marseilles, but then you actually go further along the coast to get to where you’re going, if you’re spending that weekend on the beach. And there’s a train leaving every seven minutes, and if you could understand French, you would hear them saying, “Don’t try to buy a ticket. We’re all sold out.” And they’re all going to the coast for a three-day weekend.

And if you look, this picture shows something very important. Trains work on a completely different scale than airplanes. So what looks busy at an airport looks vacant at a railroad station, right? So if most of our airports appear to be very busy, it’s really just because they’re incredibly inefficient, because everybody’s got to bring their own car, because you’ve got to do all this stuff, right? If you look at these trains, you’ve got one, two, three, four, five high-speed trains sitting next to each other there. It’s about the size space that you need to dock a 737, roughly, right? A 737, if you’re on Southwest, is 137 seats.

Let’s start with this train there—750 seats, 1,100 seats, 1,100 seats, 750, 750, 1,100—leaving every seven minutes for the coast. Now, if you’re in Paris for a three-day weekend, you can go to the beach. You couldn’t do that before high-speed rail, and there are a lot of business trips that you can take now that you couldn’t take without high-speed rail. So it changes the way our economy functions tremendously, in ways that are incredibly difficult to measure, but it’s incredibly important that we do it.

Now the other thing is you’ve got this space here that’s about the size of one airport terminal that’s handling everything. And right next to that rail terminal, you’ve got high-rise buildings in a row. You’ve got a subway station underneath so you can get to the entire city quickly, and, if you still want to take a taxi, you can. So this really is critical in changing the way we do business. And I’ll get more into why changing our business is important, but let’s talk about the most important reason to you, for why you want high-speed rail. It’s because you want to take the train, right?

No more squeezing into a center seat. No more taking off your shoes to get on the train. None of that business, right? I hope! Well, you know, I was reminded yesterday that soon we’re going to have to give our social security number and our date of birth to get on an airplane, but look at this. You can actually talk to each other face-to-face if you want while you’re traveling. You can do business if you want at a large table, right? You can go have dinner on the longer-distance trains. That picture in the lower left-hand corner would be basically leaving Dallas at eight o’clock at night, and getting to Chicago at eight in the morning. So you could have a full day’s business in both places and do your traveling while

you're sleeping.

The lower right-hand corner is on a train that we took to go to the Alps—168 miles an hour to Lyon, it's one of the first lines, so it's only 168 miles an hour to Lyon. On the weekends, you can actually take the TGV all the way up into the Alps, and you're at the bottom of your slope, ready to ski.

Notice this woman here. She's completely ripped and she's not holding onto anything. We're going 168 miles an hour and she can just stand there talking with her friends like she would in a bar. So we see something you want to have. It's going to make your life "funner." It's going to make it more productive and you will travel more because of it.

Here's what makes this an absolutely critical thing, and why I would say to you that this should be your number-one transportation priority. I am going to make a prediction that in five, no more than ten years, airport congestion will not be an issue, and highway congestion will not be an issue. And here's part of the reason why.

If you look at the blue line, that is the average price of gasoline. If you look at the red line, that is the rate of oil production out of the North Sea, and there are a couple significant dates on here. Six-Day war. We don't remember the oil embargo that happened because of the Six-Day war because we had Texas. We didn't have to worry about oil supplies in the late '60s. We did have to worry about it in the early '70s because we no longer had the surplus of supply here in Texas that we had in the '60s.

So a group of Europeans and Americans said, "We're going to go get this oil out of the North Sea, and we're going to go get it out of Mexico." And it started coming online, and if it weren't for the Persian Gulf War, the first Persian Gulf War, and the Iranian revolution, we would have had it pretty close to tracking inversely between the price of gasoline and the rate of production out of the North Sea and out of Mexico.

And you can see what happens when production peaked there. That's when the price of gas starts going up, and that's when we started having those issues with the recession in the early 2000s. The recession that we got out of by encouraging people to buy homes that maybe they couldn't afford, and by bringing car purchases forward from the late 2010s. That's right about when that stuff started happening, when production started going down. And then it really got bad last year, and I'm sorry that I haven't updated this slide yet, so we don't have the roller-coaster from last year on there.

Our lives are going to change, and the question is, are we going to manage that change in a way that's going to make us okay? Or are we just going to let it happen? And are we going to continue with desperate measures like cash-for-clunkers, and other things like that? I argue that we should start putting people and freight on trains as fast as we can, and that's basically what motivates me to keep this job going, despite the ups and downs of it.

So there's kind of the "why-we-need-to-do-this" on the oil scale. On the other side of it, in terms of emissions, trains will reduce our emissions into the atmosphere and deal with that global-warming issue.

Now let's talk for a minute about Spain, which you'll hear more about tomorrow. I like to use Spain as a comparison to my region in the Midwest. If you look at Madrid, it's about in the center of the country, just like Chicago is in the center of the Midwest. It's about the same size. So you've got Madrid-to-Seville is the distance of Chicago to St. Louis or Chicago to Detroit. Madrid-to-Barcelona is Chicago-to-Minneapolis/St. Paul. They would do Chicago to St. Louis in two hours; Chicago to Minneapolis/St. Paul they would do in 2:40 now, getting it under 2 ½ hours. Spending this year is about \$13 billion on railroad infrastructure. That includes freight, commuter, standard intercity, and high-speed rail.

There's an interesting comparison here, Madrid to Valencia, where they upgraded the old line for 125 miles an hour. They're now building a high-speed line parallel to it so that when they switch to the high-speed line, they'll be able to run high-speed freight from their two ports directly into Madrid, getting a lot of freight off the highway and putting it on the railroad. So it's a very exciting program that they have there.

Now if you switch to about the same size circle in the Midwest, this is what we have. We've got a skeletal system that has good geographic coverage, but not very much in terms of transit-time competitiveness. A high level of ridership, though, given what the service is.

So I started this a month after President Bush was inaugurated, as a full-time employee. Went to the FRA to talk about our exciting plans, and they said, "There will be no progress at the federal level as long as President Bush is in office."

So, given that reality, I took a step back, and I said, "Well, if we can't do anything at the federal level, we have to pick one state and one project that we can make some sort of progress on incrementally, while we're in this stage of the game, to break the stalemate that we had over Amtrak and other things."

So what we did was look at Chicago-to-Springfield, basically one state. Our capitol is in Springfield, but all officers have offices in both Chicago and Springfield, and the nicer office tends to be in Chicago, so you've got a lot of trips in between, happening between those two.

We looked at what makes the Chicago to Springfield trip competitive—five trains a day, the trip under three hours. So in 2004, we started pushing that really hard. A very solid grass-roots effort, at the mayoral level, to say we want five trains a day at three hours. We made a lot of progress in 2004 and 2005.

However, we noticed an interesting thing. People from Rockford who have no service today from the quad cities, and from Quincy and McCone that are on the line that we weren't talking about, all were really supporting us, because they wanted that success in Illinois to show that we could do things for their cities. The other line, going to Champaign and Carbondale, we weren't really getting a lot of traction.

So we changed the message in 2005–2006 to doubling service in the entire state, and that's what we got in the 2006 spring legislative session. Trains started running in November of 2006. I think that really started the process of getting people to say, "Well, maybe we really can do something." So that was 2006.

In 2007, we focused on the transit problems that we had in Chicago and the rest of the state, but we continued to talk about a statewide rail plan, and basically upgrading everything we had. Make sure all those cities had decent service into Chicago, into Springfield, and get a decent chunk of money out of the state legislature to fund this statewide plan—basically what California did in 1990 with their Amtrak service.

So we finally were successful in that, in this past legislative session, and it was really fun. In the last week of session, we took really strong support from the head of the senate transportation committee, and the head of the house railroad committee. In a week, we took the number from \$300 million that was proposed up to \$450 million, \$300 million for CREATE (Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency program), \$150 million for Amtrak expansion.

Then the head of the senate transportation committee, Senator Sandoval, asked us to join him in a meeting with the governor on Wednesday, and the governor said, “I want high-speed rail money in. Help us.” And so we did, and it was really fun to be at a press conference on Friday with the governor saying, “I’m not going to sign this bill because it doesn’t have any high-speed rail money in it.” And, by Monday, there was. There was \$400 million for high-speed rail. So we were the first state purely with legislative action to put that money directly into a railroad infrastructure, because 1990 was a vote by the public.

So we’re set in terms of getting this basic rail plan. We’re well on the way to that. And if we look at what I want the dream to be, this is kind of close to what I think the dream should be. So my opinions change here and there. There haven’t been any studies done, but let’s focus again on Illinois.

If you take that yellow line that goes Chicago to Springfield, and then it turns into a purple line down to St. Louis. I’m sorry. I wanted to talk about the other states first, in order to kind of create come around.

So Ohio right now, as part of the stimulus money, has requested a lot of money to do planning, and to get started on creating service that doesn’t exist today between Cincinnati, Columbus, and Cleveland, and that’s very exciting.

Michigan and Indiana have been working on their pieces of the Chicago-to-Detroit corridors, and the Chicago-to-Cleveland corridors, and hope to get planning money for that.

Wisconsin hopes to upgrade Chicago-to-Milwaukee to 110, and extend that service out to Madison. There’s no service to Madison today. Due to some historical issues, the train actually misses Madison, the capital.

And Minnesota is asking for some planning money. The city of Rochester and the Mayo Clinic will want to start the conversation about 220, and they have started that on their own right now, and talking about what does it take to get 220 to Rochester from Chicago.

Iowa is doing some exciting things tagged into our expansions we’re going to do in Illinois, and Missouri is going to work very closely with Union Pacific in order to do some capacity

upgrades to their line, so that they can run more frequent service between St. Louis and Kansas City.

So that brings us back to Illinois, Chicago to St. Louis. The state is talking about taking that single track with passing sidings mainline, and double-tracking it, working very closely with Union Pacific to go 110 miles an hour, double-track the mainline. That allows the Union Pacific to vastly upgrade the amount of service that they provide in terms of freight service, while then getting the transit time down to about four hours to St. Louis nine times a day. And that's very exciting, because that will be, probably, the test bed for how to do fast passenger trains on a heavy-haul railroad. That's an exciting project. We support that and we want it to move forward.

The challenge is it's not high-speed rail. And the folks in St. Louis are starting to say, "We need to become part of Chicago." And to become part of Chicago, they need to be less than two hours away. And they're starting to say, "How do we get the process started so we get to less than two hours from Chicago?"

And so what we did, because IDOT just simply doesn't have the resources to do this, is we have some donors in Chicago that want high-speed rail to really happen, and we have these folks in St. Louis that want to make high-speed rail happen. They funded a feasibility study to show what it would take to make that happen, and we did the first phase publicly. We released the technical side of that in June, which shows that it is possible to do an hour-and-fifty-two-minute trip. And what we assumed was, we would go on a different route. Instead of going straight down, we would make a turn via Champaign, and the state would purchase from the railroad half of their right-of-way, build the railroad a new main line, grade-separate the whole thing, and then put the high-speed tracks next to it. And then we're doing the benefit study of that, and that will be out in the next about half a month.

And that's basically what's happening in the Midwest. I want to finish with some discussion of the Eisenhower plan that the people were talking about earlier today.

You know, the first interstate highway map was actually drawn in 1937. It wasn't Eisenhower's idea. He was the champion, the political glue that made it happen.

ROBERT ECKELS

[Editor's note: Several minutes of audio absent]

... to where we are today and what we are trying to accomplish and it really goes back historically. Rod mentioned the Texas history on this program. Historically, the triangle in the mid-nineties that was in the legislature that was put together to try and put Houston, Dallas, Austin, and San Antonio. It collapsed. There was a lot of opposition. Lately evolved into a triangle with 800 to 1,000 miles of track. They picked up College Station as the center between Houston, Dallas, and Austin, kind of a spoke, and we thought it was mainly just because they were wishing they could get it, but it collapsed, primarily for financing. There was a lot of opposition from the rural areas, a lot of opposition from the airlines, from the agricultural interests, the small cities, the people along the route, and money that was not available to make the system work.

And so it came time to come up with a different plan, something that would take high-speed

rail in the future, and we went and started talking to the people that were opposed to it. Listened to the opponents to the plan before, and brought them on board to talk about what they would like to see in a high-speed rail, and what you have today is an organization with people like Commissioner Fickes. Folks like Commissioner Dickey from Dallas County, so you've got Tarrant and Dallas County. I came out of Harris County when we started this, from the Houston region. Mayor Jones from Temple. Mayor White from College Station, and folks all along the route.

We've expanded now. We had the folks from Little Rock here earlier, Buddie and the mayor from North Little Rock, too, as well as others. And so we are trying to appeal not just to the big markets in Houston and Dallas, which are the two biggest markets in Texas, but to the folks along the route, and make sure there's a benefit for the entire state

What you see in this slide is the federal high-speed routes that were originally planned, and the big hole, of course, for us, was that Houston and Dallas, the two biggest markets, were not linked together. So the I-35 corridor and the rest of the state linked in with Houston, which was tied into New Orleans, Atlanta, and the East Coast.

Our solution was this "T." We call it the "Texas T-Bone." It is also wishful thinking on our part to call it the T-Bone. We tied into the Temple and Killeen areas, and it picks up Ft. Hood. You've heard a lot of talk about Department of Defense (unintelligible). We have not seen that yet, but it does reduce the total miles of track, and when you start moving additional distance you pick up Houston and Dallas and Austin and San Antonio, it's about 60 miles, but critical, at the very high speed.

The extensions that you've seen coming on here again, we run out through East Texas to Beaumont, New Orleans, north from the Dallas/Fort Worth area, up to Little Rock and Memphis. North to Oklahoma City, and the trip would only be about two hours at 350 miles an hour from here to Chicago.

South, there would be ultimately extensions into the Rio Grande Valley. Where that might be is yet to be determined. El Paso is enthusiastic about our project. Not that they think that we're going to run a train from Houston to El Paso, but that they're looking into Albuquerque and Denver. So the ultimate goal is to link these areas together; and the question was, "Why Texas? And why do you make it look today?"

Again, as in all things here, the biggest challenge is dollars, but we think that the market in Texas is unique, a little different than California. We're taking a little different approach than the California folks have taken. We have a pretty good population center. Again, we talked about the Houston and Dallas markets. Houston is about six million today. The Dallas/Fort Worth area is probably 6 1/2 million, a pretty big market on their own. And we have the airlines engaged with us now. You'll hear from Southwest later. Continental and American, actually, numbers are up.

[Editor's note: Seven minutes of audio absent. Resumes with Rod Diridon.]

ROD DIRIDON

So Munich and China are building high-speed trains faster than you can imagine, and

we're not going to be in the same class economically with them in the very near future. That means our standard of living in the United States is going to drop below the rest of the standards of living in the world.

[Editor's note: Audio absent. Resumes with audience questions and presenters' answers.]

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

ROD DIRIDON

Let me comment on what the world definition is and the United States. The European definition of “high-speed rail” is 125 mph and faster, but FRA’s definition is 90 mph and faster. In the United States, we have Texas, Florida, California, and maybe the Northeast Corridor, and then we have the other seven designated corridors from the FRA map that are incremental-upgrade corridors, at the 120- to 130-mile-per-hour level using more-traditional rolling stock. Virtually all of the current rolling stock can make 120 miles an hour if it has a track bed that will support that.

True high speed has to be on a separate right-of-way, completely grade-separated, chain link fence-protected on either side, with good security, and that’s what’s been done around the world. The advantage is that we don’t have to reinvent the wheel. It’s been invented for us, and tried and fine-tuned by France and Germany and Spain and Japan and Taiwan and Korea and other industrialized countries. They have figured out how to do it, so we don’t have to make the mistakes that were made in the early times. We’ll have the proven technology to implement in the United States.

UNNAMED PARTICIPANT

I was hoping that TODs (transit-oriented development) are important to have, and that would cut down the time that you want to go from a place.

ROBERT ECKELS

The question was about transit-oriented development, development along, in and around the stations, and whether that would cut down the speed of this trip, if you happened to make stops along the route.

Every system we’ve looked at around the world has, when you stop, whenever the trains stop, it may stop. So the fact there’s a station doesn’t mean every train stops there. Our route, the “T” route through Temple and Killeen—love the mayor—but probably not every train stops in Temple. Probably there would be stops along the route in Temple. There would be stops in Hillsborough. There would be stops in College Station, but there would also be express routes that wouldn’t stop at any of those stations in between. It would just depend on the demand, and that could just change the train. They’d just go off on a side track and the rest of them go on by.

ROD DIRIDON

Other questions? Yes, sir.

UNNAMED PARTICIPANT

I had a question for Mr. Harnish. All of your current Amtrak system needs high-speed upgrades. Can you give a response to that?

RICK HARNISH

So what the states are talking about is upgrading the existing Amtrak routes with additional passing sidings, a lot more capacity, and better signaling systems so that the trains can run faster. Except for our study that we just did this past summer, there hasn't been a lot of work on where you actually would build new track to put in 220-mile-an-hour high-speed trains. The state that actually did the most work on that was Ohio, which had a very detailed plan, but that was 10 or 20 years ago.

ROD DIRIDON

Other questions? Yes, sir.

UNNAMED PARTICIPANT

This question is for Rick. I think we have something similar in Texas that's going on in the Midwest, Houston area, something through Austin, Dallas, rail and other matters done on a regional basis. For example, New York to Chicago and CREATE, and then your organization in high-speed rail. How is that all working together in duplicate?

RICK HARNISH

So we made a decision as a country in 1970, and implemented it in 1971, to do something that I think was a mistake. We separated the operator of the passenger trains from the owner of the infrastructure and the operator of the freight trains. And the way we did it might not have made sense. But on a policy basis then, what we've got is the passenger trains are dealt with in one policy department at the federal and state governments, and the freight trains are dealt with through a different policy effort. In the case of passenger trains, it's the FTA, or Amtrak. In the case of the freight railroads, it's private investors. And so they're separate even though they're not separable.

So we have a problem in Chicago, which is there was never a master plan for railroad infrastructure in Chicago, and it's a spaghetti bowl, and years of trying to cut back infrastructure in Chicago have made it a very congested place, and so the six class-ones, the city and the state and the feds have cooperated on a plan to clean that up a lot, and it's called CREATE. Part of what we were advocating for was the \$300 million that will go into CREATE, and that has huge benefits for both freight and passenger, because it speeds everybody up as they're coming through the city, and there's also a separate piece of money there for Amtrak. So I'm sure if that answers your question, but I'm trying.

So our goal is to promote federal, state, and local investment in railroad infrastructure, and the dream is that we're going to have our cities within two hours of each other, but there's a lot of steps in between. We are for every proposal to increase railroad infrastructure, and so we do support CREATE and the other efforts. I think that answers it. Bob?

ROBERT ECKELS

On that same issue, you talk about San Antonio, Austin, Houston, Dallas/Fort Worth area. We've got the same issue and all, whatever there is. In the Houston region, we have

created a freight-rail district. We're partnering with the railroads. We are working closely with Mark Ellis at Cheravidna. He and I talk pretty regularly. We view all of those systems, whether it's the commuter rail, the Houston Metro, DART, Capitol Metro, all as feeders to this system. We know it doesn't work unless it all works. And so we'll probably be, in the Houston region, sharing at least the areas within the urban centers with those commuter-rail operators and the toll-road authority and anybody else on the transportation side. We're really working closely with them.

ROD DIRIDON

Commissioner?

MAURINE DICKEY

I'm Maurine Dickey and Commissioner from Dallas County and on the High Speed Rail Corporation (Texas High Speed Rail & Transportation Corp.), and I have a question that might seem a little ticklish. I've heard this comment from others, and I want to see what you think. It seems like the FRA has a different vision than some of us that have studied high-speed rail. That is, it seems like trains/high-speed rail is a glorified Amtrak, or a train that's been beefed up beyond Amtrak. That's not the vision that we have had of high-speed rail, and I kind of compare that to the space program. You know, we had an FAA, but we didn't have the FAA handling the space program. As high-speed rail, which is a different technology, is a different financing policy, it's different policies. It's a different animal. Do you all ever see the high-speed rail being governed by its own agency, as NASA governs the space program?

ROD DIRIDON

Commissioner, that's a good question. Give a crack at it gentlemen, and then join in, please?

ROBERT ECKELS

We've talked about that here locally. What's the role? The real question comes in with high-speed, and I don't know what your experience is in California in getting approval for the different technology for high-speed rail, the wider vehicles, crash-avoidance as opposed to crash-protection, grade separation. Just, as FRA said, they'll see one of those trains.

ROD DIRIDON

I think Bob has really covered an element of it very well. Let's go back to motivation, though, which is what you're hearing from FRA right now. Originally, when PRIIA (Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act) was passed, and then the stimulus bill was passed, the president was emphatic about not wanting what he called "peanut butter," where you spread this relatively limited amount of funds, \$8 billion sounds big, but we're talking about \$80 billion-plus for high-speed rail in the nation. If you just spread that \$8 billion over all of the different projects, you're not going to get anything. You won't even have enough to finish one little element of any project.

So he gave instructions to the secretary of transportation, who declared an intent not to have peanut butter, but rather to cover two or three—and that’s their quote, two or three projects—that would evolve into an operating segment. Remember I asked the FRA person what an “operating segment” was in her mind.

Well, since that statement, FRA has had the world fall on them in terms of all of those Congress members who would have high-speed rail elements that wouldn’t be covered if they’re only going to be covering two or three operating segments. So there’s a huge pressure on now for FRA to use the peanut butter approach.

Now, as much as that’s self-serving, because California is really ready, and we’ll probably get a significant amount of funding. If we don’t build some operating segments with that relatively limited amount of funds, then we’re not going to have an example to show the nation of an operating high-speed train system in the United States, and we have to get to that point fast. If, for example, Texas or California were to get an operating segment taken care of out of the funding available in the stimulus bill, and the news focused on that operating segment going into operation with the pretty, new vehicles going 200 miles an hour, all across the nation there would be a clamor for high-speed trains. There would then be the funding to create high-speed trains across the nation. But we’ve got to get to the operating segment.

So what you heard from FRA today is schizophrenic. They are being told by the president that they want some operating segments. They’re being told by Congress member after Congress member, “You better fund high-speed rail in my district.” Those are incompatible objectives, and I don’t know how they’re going to get through it. We need to help them get through it by sticking with the president’s objectives of creating some operating segments. I think that’s the paradox that you’re seeing, and without a whole lot of additional funding, and Oberstar’s \$50 billion in his reauthorization bill, might be the way out. Without an additional funding of substantial proportion, we’re going to have a track wreck, pardon the cliché, in the legislature and in the FRA over the next several months.

RICK HARNISH

Can I answer that?

In the mid-‘30s, this country had an effort to change the way we did passenger trains, and have a passenger-train revolution. It didn’t work, or it collapsed for various reasons, one of them being World War II. We tried to do it again in the mid-‘50s, and it didn’t work. We tried to do it in the late ‘60s. We didn’t make it quite happen. We tried it in the ‘80s and then the late ‘90s. We keep getting close to having this revolution, and we don’t get there.

Now imagine you’re in the agency that has been involved, and you’ve got the corporate memory of all of this, and we’re now on another rise up, right? It would be very difficult to say, “This is the time, and we really are going to push this, because this is the time that it’s going to work,” if you are part of that corporate memory. So part of our job is to make it, “This is the time.” We had a discussion a couple of weeks ago over \$4 billion for high-speed rail in the 2010 appropriation, and we did an email campaign based on the Latham amendment. After we did that email campaign, the Latham amendment was not approved,

which would have cut the funding. I got a call from his staff to re-educate me about, you know, 'cause clearly, I was misinformed, and they are not against passenger trains.

But what they wanted to do was take that \$3 billion that they were proposing to take out of the high-speed rail funding and put it into the highway trust fund, and the reason for that is the highway trust was bankrupt. We have not told all our legislators that we're willing to pay for the highway system that we're demanding from them, okay? And so the highway trust fund's bankrupt. So it comes back to that question of priorities. Are we willing to say, "This is the time it's going to work, and we're going to sacrifice other things to make it happen?" That's why it's going to take a much bigger effort to get folks like the FRA to say, "This really is the time and we're going to make this work."

ROD DIRIDON

It goes back to the issue of, "It all has to go together." We can't have high-speed rail as the only mode of transportation being built, and have the other modes doing nothing, or being cut. That's an incompatible political situation, so we have to have funding for transportation broadly across the nation.

The last question is going to go to Ray Lanman. Ray is the founding chair of the APTA High-Speed and Intercity Rail committee, which is very proud to be associated with this event today.

RAY LANMAN

This question is for Rick, I think. You mentioned Amtrak routes and funding for Amtrak routes. We heard from people earlier today referring to Amtrak, and it's actually part of ARRA. Are any of the states considering competition with operations, commuter services that might make them more efficient and expects the power of the states?

RICK HARNISH

Our policy in this country is that Amtrak is the national operator, and that's pretty much our policy. There might be the potential for other operators to do different things, but without changing the law, it's not going to be on a big basis.

ROBERT ECKELS

We're route-neutral in Texas. We're technology-neutral. We're operator-neutral. We will go with whoever brings the big check and starts the process.

ROD DIRIDON

We're the same way in California. We're going to have a design-build-operate-and-maintain contract. So if Amtrak is the operator that bids effectively, then they're going to be the operator. If Southwest Airlines is the operator that bids effectively, then they're going to run the operation. So we're happy to have competition, and the competition will yield the best deal for the taxpayers and the users.

I think that concludes it. I did see one more chair of the American Public Transit Association sitting over here, Joe Alexander. APTA is a national spearpoint for high-speed rail advocacy, and that's thank you for your cordiality.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
AECOM	Global provider of professional technical and management support services
APTA	American Public Transit Association
CALPIRG	California Public Interest Research Group
CREATE	Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program
DART	Dallas Area Rapid Transit
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FRA	Federal Railroad Administration
IDOT	Illinois Department of Transportation
MTI	Mineta Transportation Institute
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NIMBY	Not In My Backyard
PRIIA	Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act
TRB TCRP	Transportation Research Board Transit Cooperative Research Program

SPEAKER BIOS

ROD DIRIDON, SR.

Rod Diridon, Sr., the “father” of modern transit service in the Silicon Valley, is the executive director of the Mineta Transportation Institute and a passionate advocate of all things rail. The son of an immigrant Italian railroad brakeman, Diridon worked his way through San José State University as a brakeman and fireman on the railroad. He began his political career in 1971 as the youngest person to be elected to the Saratoga City Council, and he continued in public service after serving 20 years and six terms as chair of both the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors and Transit Board.

Diridon is the only person to have chaired the San Francisco Bay area’s (nine counties, 119 cities, 27 transit agencies) three regional governments: the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, and the Association of Bay Area Governments. He has served as chair for APTA, for the National Research Council’s Transportation Research Board’s Transit Oversight and Project Selection Committee, and for APTA’s High Speed and Intercity Rail Committee and National High Speed Rail Corridors’ Coalition, and is the president and founder of the California Trolley and Railroad Corporation.

ROBERT ECKLES

Judge Robert Eckels, chair of the Texas High-Speed Rail and Transportation Corporation is a national leader on issues of health care policy, homeland security, transportation, public finance/public private partnerships and the environment. He previously served as a judge in Harris County, Texas, and was credited with restoring the county’s strong bond ratings, improving disaster and emergency response, transportation and healthcare and helping finance three state-of-the-art sports facilities in and near downtown Houston without using property or sales taxes. He led the county to build the now 500-mile county toll road system into one of the strongest performing toll road systems in the nation.

Eckels was elected as a state representative in his 20s, and served six terms before becoming a Harris County judge. He was nationally recognized nationally for opening the Harris County Reliant Park and Astrodome for Hurricane Katrina evacuees, the largest shelter operation in U.S. history, followed by the evacuation of over 2.5 million people in the face of Hurricane Rita, the largest evacuation in U.S. history.

He has received numerous awards and national recognition and serves numerous civic organizations.

RICHARD HARNISH

Richard Harnish is the Executive Director of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association, a membership-based non-profit organization established to advocate for fast, frequent and dependable trains linking Midwestern hub cities, making travel between the cities between one and three hours.

Harnish helped establish the Midwest High Speed Rail Association in 1993, and became its executive director in 2001 following a successful fundraising campaign. The Association has grown from 20 members in 1993 to nearly 1,700. He has lead several grassroots campaigns, the most important of which is winning a doubling of Amtrak service linking downstate Illinois to Chicago.

Prior to his employment at the Midwest High Speed Rail Association, Harnish was a logistic manager at American President Lines, which is the world's fifth-largest container transportation and shipping company, and held that same position at JB Hunt, a Arkansas-based trucking and transportation company. He has also managed industrial real estate on Chicago's west side.

FIONA MA

Fiona Ma was elected to represent the California's 12th Assembly District in November 2006. She formerly served on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

Assemblywoman Ma was appointed Majority Whip, where she is responsible for ensuring the passage of crucial legislation to improve public education, expand healthcare access and protect the environment. She has been named to several key committees including Higher Education, Revenue and Taxation, Housing, Agriculture, Labor, and Public Safety, and serves as the Chair of the Assembly Select Committee on Domestic Violence.

Assemblywoman Ma is the joint author of Proposition 1-A, the Safe, Reliable High-Speed Passenger Train Bond Act for the 21st Century, which was approved by voters in November 2008. She is also the Legislature's leading advocate to bring high-speed trains to California.

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