



**REMARKS OF
JEFFREY N. SHANE
ASSOCIATE DEPUTY SECRETARY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**RAIL-VOLUTION CONFERENCE
OMNI SHOREHAM HOTEL
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

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It is a wonderful privilege for me to be with you this morning, and to represent Secretary Mineta, who very much wanted to be here. The country lost a great legislator last week with the passing of Congresswoman Patsy Mink of Hawaii, and Secretary Mineta lost a dear personal friend. He is attending her funeral in Honolulu today. He is there as President Bush's personal representative, but also very much in his own right.

It is a great tribute to the importance of this gathering that Senators Jim Jeffords and Paul Sarbanes are here, along with Congressmen Jim Oberstar, Earl Blumenauer and Tom Petri. This is as close to a transportation policy think-tank as you will find in the U.S. Congress.

Each has had a strong and sustained commitment to transit over the years. In challenging times like these, America is very lucky to have champions like you leading the deliberations. You honor us with your presence this morning.

I particularly want to salute Congressman Blumenauer for his vision in establishing the annual Rail-Volution conference, and Dick White and the members of the local steering committee for their hard work in bringing this conference to our Nation's Capital.

Rail-Volution's mission, to promote partnerships, build livable and equitable communities, and to work effectively with citizens to reach a consensus on transportation investments, is at the heart of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, or TEA-21. The flexibility in TEA-21 has provided communities with a wider range of transportation choices. It has provided incentives for public transportation

agencies to work with communities to plan and build compact, mixed-use developments in conjunction with, or near, transit centers. These developments support both established and New Start transportation investments and stimulate the local economy. They help re-establish historic urban centers. They assist communities in dealing with the issues of congestion and air quality. They provide a balanced transportation system promoting smart land-use and sustainable developments.

The American worker – indeed, America’s very way of life -- relies on public transportation. I am pleased to say that, thanks to recent record levels of investment in transit by Federal, State, and local governments, more and more people are riding buses, subways, commuter trains, and trolleys. In fact, last year Americans took a record 9.4 billion transit trips, the highest level in 40 years. On the other hand, a recent report notes that transit’s overall market share has actually been declining since the 1970s – even though in absolute numbers more people are riding transit. It is a hard reality and it presents us with a challenge. It’s a challenge that Jenna Dorn, our great Federal Transit Administrator, is committed to tackling. In fact, Jenna has challenged the FTA and the industry to double ridership. The FTA wants to make sure that taking transit is a choice in every community. They want it to be so appealing and reliable that many more people will park their cars and ride transit instead.

If we can’t convince our growing base of automobile riders to take advantage of the convenience of transit, congestion will strangle our metropolitan areas and hurt America’s productivity. And in this environment we need to recall that, if public transportation does not enjoy the confidence and support of elected officials and the public at large, we will not have the capacity to evacuate our cities when emergencies strike. We need that capability.

The good news is that there are people in this room who have already figured out ways to enhance the availability of transit. We can all learn from them. They have recognized that transit, more than any other mode, has a stake in creating intermodal transportation centers. If we want people to leave their cars, transfer from over-the-road buses, or hop on transit when they get off the plane, we have to make it easy to move from one mode of transportation to another. Intermodal connections are critical to mobility and critical to transit’s success.

The issues – and the solutions – are numerous. And they must be tackled -- not only at the national level, but community by community, neighborhood by neighborhood, customer by customer.

As Jenna Dorn has said, “Public transportation is not about trains and buses and tracks and roads. It’s about people. And, the more we focus our attention on the people we serve, the closer we will get to achieving our vision of public transportation as the mode of choice in America.”

More than ever before, public transportation is serving as a catalyst for expanding economic growth and trade, and for improving the quality of life for all Americans.

In Dallas, for example, citizens are enjoying the remarkable benefits that DART has brought to the city's development and its important dividends for the local economy. Along DART's 20-mile light-rail starter system -- begun six years ago -- the value of private transit-oriented development already exceeds the \$860 million dollar public investment that went in to the development of rail lines and station infrastructure.

Similar economic benefits have been realized in San Francisco, where transit-oriented developments are the most valuable properties in the metro area, with premiums that average 20-25 percent over comparable sites that are not near transit connections.

We are now working with the industry to provide a menu of choices of public transportation for communities that go beyond the typical bus and light rail -- hybrids like the Civic vehicle and monorail in Las Vegas and the latest models of DMUs that are being demonstrated here at Rail-Volution.

In addition, we are also encouraging the use of innovative finance programs such as our Transportation Infrastructure Financing and Innovation Act -- TIFIA -- that provided a \$600 million loan guarantee for WMATA here in the Washington Metropolitan area. These programs are being used across the Nation to build and rehabilitate and modernize existing transportation infrastructure.

These examples illuminate a basic fact about our industry -- for every \$1 billion dollars invested in Federal aid for transportation construction expenditures, an estimated 45,700 jobs are generated nationwide.

Let me close with a few words about reauthorization. Much of what we are able to do today is the result of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. Together, ISTEA and its successor TEA-21 revolutionized the Nation's approach to surface transportation, providing record federal transit funding and generating significant policy changes that benefit public transportation.

Secretary Mineta played a critical role in the development of ISTEA as then Chairman of the House Surface Transportation Subcommittee, and he has been a passionate advocate on transportation issues for many years.

As you are well aware, TEA-21 expires next year, and Secretary Mineta looks forward to working with his former congressional colleagues, industry stakeholders and outside interest groups to craft legislation reauthorizing our Nation's transportation programs.

While key elements of the Administration's reauthorization proposal will seek to preserve and build upon the programmatic reforms of ISTEA and the financial reforms of TEA-21, we have an opportunity -- indeed, a responsibility -- to do more.

To that end, Secretary Mineta has directed the Department to achieve several goals for public transit in the reauthorization process:

First, we want to assure adequate and predictable funding for investment in the Nation's surface transportation system, including public transit.

Second, we will continue to vigorously support the transferability of Federal funds within core program categories.

Third, we will build on the intermodal approaches of ISTEA and TEA-21 by encouraging the development of successful public-private partnerships for large intermodal projects and by using innovative financing programs to encourage greater private investment in transit infrastructure.

Fourth, we want to simplify Federal transportation programs and continue efforts to streamline project approval and implementation, while retaining those essential environmental protections that enhance our quality of life. President Bush's recent executive order on environmental stewardship will serve as an important first step in this direction.

Finally, public transportation is an important component of our nation's emergency response and evacuation plans in the event of natural disasters or terrorist incidents. Therefore, we seek to enhance security by providing the means and mechanisms to perform risk assessment and analysis and to develop appropriate response capabilities.

These core principles seek to enhance the safety and security of all Americans, even as we increase their mobility, reduce congestion, and grow the economy.

These are not incompatible goals. The lessons of TEA-21 demonstrate that they are appropriate, and indeed, necessary goals of national transportation policy, and that they reinforce each other.

There is still time for each of you to offer your ideas on how the reauthorization legislation might be crafted so as to enhance further the quality of the Nation's transportation system. I encourage you to visit our website www.dot.gov and provide your input directly to the Department.

We have arrived at a moment of great opportunity -- an opportunity to work together in crafting legislation to reauthorize the surface transportation programs that will stand for the next six years. Working together, we will formulate safe and efficient surface transportation systems that improve our economy while enhancing our quality of life.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you this morning, and I hope you enjoy this important and very timely conference.

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