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Statement of U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood

On President Obama's Signing of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

“Today President Obama kept faith with the American people. Less than one month after taking the oath of office, he signed the landmark American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

“I thank and congratulate President Barack Obama for this impressive and hard-won victory.

“This is the day America starts back. Resources to help America are now available. At the Department of Transportation we will make sure the transportation money in this law gets Americans to work quickly.

“Transportation is a great enabler of economic growth, the lifeblood of commerce. It moves people to jobs and goods to the marketplace. Without strong transportation arteries, economies stagnate.

“We will use the transportation funding in the Act to deliver jobs and restore our nation's economy. We will emphasize sustainable investment and focus our policies on the people, businesses and communities who use the transportation systems. And, we will focus on the quality of our environment. We will build and restore our transportation foundations until the American dream is returned.

“We will invest in jobs to expand transit capacity and modernize transit systems. Transit is a centerpiece of my focus on livable communities and our Department will work closely with Vice President Biden's "Middle-class Taskforce" on transit initiatives.

“We will invest in jobs to allow Amtrak to add and modernize cars and engines and upgrade its tracks.

“We will invest in jobs to expand airport capacity and make safety improvements.

“We will invest in jobs to build and rehabilitate and make safer roads, highways, bridges and ports.

“And we will invest in jobs to launch high-speed rail in America. This will transform intercity transportation in America, reduce our carbon footprint, relieve congestion on the roads and in the skies, and take advantage of a mode of transportation that has already benefited Europe and Japan for many years.

“There are those who argue that we need to waive environmental regulations to put people to work more quickly, but that is simply not the case. We have a backlog of worthwhile transportation projects waiting for funding that have already met those standards. We are ready to build a new transportation infrastructure and we will work to keep it green.

“I have met with state officials and other transportation stakeholders, and we have discussed how the money can be spent quickly to create jobs on projects that make long-term sense for our transportation systems in communities across the nation. We also reviewed the need for transparency and full accountability on this spending. We will do things by the book.

“We at the Department of Transportation are ready to go.

“I look forward to hearing the sounds of shovels and hammers and bulldozers and, in some cases, of moving that first shovelful of dirt myself.”

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