

RECONNECTING AMERICA

OBAMA ADMINISTRATION CHARTS NEW COURSE FOR TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING INVESTMENTS

Emphasis on coordination and collaboration, sustainability and livability

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WASHINGTON DC - The Obama Administration is clearly charting a new course for policy and investments in housing and transportation with announcements in recent weeks by U.S. DOT Secretary Ray LaHood, HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan and EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson. The three agencies have formed an interagency partnership that signals an unprecedented level of collaboration among the agencies, with the goal of achieving sustainability and livability through coordinated transportation and housing policies and investments. Reconnecting America's analyses of these developments is provided at the links below.

"The 20th century was about disinvestment in American cities large and small, but the 21st century is going to be about re-stabilization," said Reconnecting America President and CEO John Robert Smith. "The Obama administration understands how critical these investments in livability and sustainability are to creating jobs and a sustainable quality of life, and this commitment takes on even greater meaning because these are lean economic times." The new year began with the announcement by LaHood that the Federal Transit Administration would be changing the funding criteria used to determine which transit projects win funding. The intent is to emphasize projects that promote livability and give more emphasis to economic development, land use and environmental benefits, including reduced greenhouse gas emissions. This was followed by President Obama's award of \$8 billion for 13 high-speed rail corridors that would put Americans to work laying track, manufacturing rail cars, and in planning, engineering and rail maintenance and operations.

Obama's proposed FY 2011 budget, released a few days later, also signaled a clear commitment to the federal interagency partnership with \$527 million for Sustainable Communities grants for transportation investments, and he proposed \$4 billion for a National Infrastructure Innovation and Finance fund for transportation projects of national and regional significance, \$1.8 billion for New Starts projects, and \$20 million for a new Office of Livable Communities under the U.S. DOT Secretary's Office.

Secretary Donovan announced HUD's complementary Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities on Feb. 4, to be headed by former Reconnecting America President and CEO Shelley Poticha, and a \$100 million grant program for integrated regional planning initiatives that she will be administering. He also announced \$10 million for the development of an affordability index to measure the cost of where a home is located in relation to transportation, jobs and schools - not unlike the affordability index development by the Center for Transit-Oriented Development several years ago. We are posting relevant documents related to all of these recent announcements here, including our analysis of the \$1.8 billion New Starts/Small Starts program, our analysis of President Obama's budget, the Center for Transit-Oriented Development's citation in the U.S. DOT's 2009

“Record of Accomplishment,” and a USA Today story quoting Reconnecting America CEO John Robert Smith on high-speed rail. There are more documents relating to each of these developments if you look through the stories posted under “Feature Stories” in the upper lefthand corner of our website.

- New Starts/Small Starts FY11 Program Analysis
- Budget analysis of programs related to livable and sustainable communities and transportation choice
- US DOT Record of Accomplishment
- High-speed trains get green light (USA Today)

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Reconnecting America provides an impartial, fact-based perspective on development-oriented transit and transit-oriented development, and seeks to reinvent the planning and delivery system for building regions and communities around transit and walking rather than solely around the automobile. Reconnecting America manages the Center for Transit-Oriented Development, the only national nonprofit effort funded by Congress to promote best practices in transit-oriented development.