



For Immediate Release
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Reconnecting America Applauds Obama Rail, Infrastructure Goals

(January 26, 2011) Reconnecting America applauds President Obama’s remarks last night in the State of the Union with regard to his support for high-speed rail, improved infrastructure, and, in particular, development around rail stations.

Transit-oriented development, or TOD, is what we do. We specialize in building on-the-ground partnerships and convening the players necessary for responsible, equitable development near transit centers. Therefore, we were elated to hear the President recognize that “Jobs...didn’t just come from laying down track.... They came from businesses that opened near a town’s new train station....” Modernizing our infrastructure means providing better transportation choices for people of all walks of life. Everybody wants to live in a community where they have easy access to jobs, quality housing, shopping, schools, healthcare and recreational opportunities.

High-speed rail is also an important goal for the improvement of our nation’s infrastructure. The President’s remarks that “Within 25 years, our goal is to give 80 percent of Americans access to high-speed rail” are commendable and we stand ready to assist in this planning and the TOD that should accompany it.

Reconnecting America’s President, John Robert Smith, has seen the positive impacts of transit-oriented development firsthand. A former four-term Mayor of Meridian, MS, Smith oversaw the renovation and expansion of Meridian’s historic Union Station, which resulted in an economic boost for a downtown that had suffered economic difficulty. “By investing a combined federal, state and local contribution of \$6.6 million to rebuild Union Station, the citizens of Meridian reaped the benefits of an additional \$135 million in private investments in the downtown area. Meridian was transformed from what had once been a ghost town in the evenings and a city that youth wanted to flee after graduation, to a city with a “sense of place” where people wanted to work, live and experience life to the fullest.”

With the main focus in the country’s economy on creating jobs, investing in our nation’s infrastructure and building communities with transportation options will be key in this arena. Reconnecting America welcomes the President’s remarks and looks forward to working with his Administration and the 112th Congress in implementing these recommendations.

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