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**RECONNECTING AMERICA APPLAUDS OBAMA ADMINISTRATION
EFFORTS TO JUMP-START HIGH-SPEED RAIL**

(Feb. 8, 2011) Today, in Philadelphia, Vice President Joe Biden, accompanied by Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, announced a \$53 billion, six-year program to accelerate construction of the nation's high-speed rail network. The plan calls for \$8 billion in fiscal year 2012 to jumpstart the program.

Reconnecting America President and CEO John Robert Smith, who attended the announcement, remarked that our nation is at a precipice, and the economic and environmental challenges we now face require a new way of thinking about how we create connections between cities and regions and how we can support the economic health of communities of all shapes and sizes.

"A National High-Speed Rail System is not only an opportunity to redefine how we travel and how our regional economies grow," Smith said, "it represents the type of innovation and progress that can secure a better future for our grandchildren."

Over the last 50 years, the federal government has spent more than \$400 billion building our interstate highway system. The interstate system opened new territory for economic development and created the interconnected regional economies that drive our growth today. However, with an additional 100 million citizens expected by 2050, the nation needs new infrastructure that has the ability to move more people in more places and at a higher speed.

New investments are already showing measurable results. Since prior funding raised speeds between Harrisburg, PA, and Philadelphia to 110 mph, the corridor has seen rail ridership rise by 57 percent. In fact, more passengers now travel from Harrisburg to Philadelphia - and from Philadelphia to New York City and Washington D.C. - by rail than by plane.

What this means is less demand for foreign oil, lowering our trade deficit; less carbon emissions, yielding significant environmental benefits; and an expanded job pool for every community connected to the system.

"We applaud the administration's vision of connecting higher-speed rail to 80% of American households within 25 years, and today's announcement will move us closer to realizing this bold American ideal," Smith said.

The Vice President did refer to John Robert Smith in his former role as Mayor of Meridian, MS, and the development of Meridian's Union Station. We will post the transcript of his remarks when it becomes available.

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Reconnecting America is a national nonprofit that is helping to transform promising ideas into thriving communities - where transportation choices make it easy to get from place to place, where businesses flourish, and where people from all walks of life can afford to live, work and visit. Reconnecting America is the managing partner of the Center for Transit-Oriented Development, the only national nonprofit effort funded by Congress to promote best practices in transit-oriented development. Reconnecting America is also a founding partner of Transportation for America, a broad coalition of housing, environmental, equal opportunity, public health, urban planning, transportation and other organizations focused on creating a 21st century national transportation program. For more information visit our website, www.reconnectingamerica.org.