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Contact: Paul Griffo

Tel.: (202) 366-4064

**U.S. Transportation Secretary Announces \$280 Million for Streetcars
First Funds for Administration's Livability Initiative Will Create Jobs**

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today announced the availability of \$280 million for urban circulator projects such as streetcars, buses, and bus facilities to support communities, expand business opportunities and improve people's quality of life while also creating jobs.

The money represents the first batch of funding by the Obama Administration for its Livability Initiative, a joint venture of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

"This represents a significant effort to promote livable communities, improve the quality of life for more Americans and create more transportation choices that serve the needs of individual communities," Secretary LaHood said. "Fostering the concept of livability in transportation projects will stimulate America's neighborhoods to become safer, healthier and more vibrant."

Secretary LaHood made the announcement at the historic Carrollton Car Barn streetcar facility with New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin during a tour of the city's Katrina recovery efforts.

"Not only will these urban circulator and bus projects provide Americans with new neighborhood-friendly transit systems, they will give us a cleaner environment and create much-needed jobs," Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff said.

A maximum amount of \$25 million per project will be made available from approximately \$130 million in unallocated discretionary New Starts/Small Starts Program funds. Eligible projects include streetcars and other urban circulator systems. Priority will be given to projects that connect destinations and foster the redevelopment of communities into walkable, mixed use, high-density environments.

A second pot of money totaling \$150 million in unallocated discretionary Bus and Bus Facility funds will be available for projects that will foster the preservation and enhancement of urban and rural communities by providing new mobility options which provide access to jobs, healthcare, and education, and/or contribute to the redevelopment of neighborhoods into pedestrian-friendly vibrant environments.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) plans to announce grants early in 2010. Key lawmakers on Capitol Hill greeted the news with enthusiasm.

"This grant program will create jobs and reduce pollution while saving commuters in Connecticut and across the country time and money," said Senate Banking Committee Chairman Chris Dodd (D-CT), author of legislation to help towns and regions plan and implement development projects that integrate needs for transportation, housing, land use, and economic development. "I look forward to working with the Department of Transportation, along with HUD and EPA, as we work to make communities across the country more livable."

"I applaud this important step in recognizing the environmental and economic development benefits of streetcars and other sustainable transit projects," House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Jim Oberstar (D-MN) said. "I have always embraced the vision to improve the sustainability of our communities through new transit and livability initiatives, and I look forward to working with the Administration to accomplish our shared goals."

"Unlike the Bush Administration and its failed transit policies, this Administration clearly understands the need to fund low-cost, energy-efficient, made-in-America projects like streetcars," Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Chairman of the House Highways and Transit Subcommitteesaid. "These competitive grant programs will invest in good-paying jobs, livable communities, and a less-congested, more fuel-efficient future."

"This investment in buses, streetcars and sustainable transit projects will reduce congestion and lay a strong foundation for jobs and economic growth in communities around the country," said Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), Chairman of the Senate Transportation and Housing Appropriations Subcommittee, who included funding for the Administration's livable communities initiative in the 2010 Senate bill. "I applaud the Obama Administration for making good on the promise to invest in infrastructure that strengthens both our economy and our environment. I look forward to continuing to work with the Administration on these sustainable, livable and job-creating investments."

"This is exactly the kind of effort that I have been urging the Department to take. The Secretary's call for transit investments in innovative streetcar, bus and transit systems will build more livable communities for families while helping to reduce our nation's carbon footprint," said Congressman John W. Olver (D-MA), Chairman of the House Transportation and Housing Appropriations Subcommittee.

"As a longtime champion of streetcars, it is rewarding to see this administration prioritize community livability and invest in our nation's transportation systems," Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) said. "Making a down payment on streetcars, better bus access, and improved public transit means investing in our Nation's economic success. The Obama Administration is following through on its commitment to be a better partner to local communities by laying the physical groundwork for good jobs and healthier, more secure communities."