REGIONAL SEMINARS SPOTLIGHT IMPORTANCE OF SHARING INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND SUCCESSES IN IMPLEMENTING HIGH-SPEED RAIL

Approximately 500 decision-makers attended the three regional seminars on high-speed rail organized by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and the International Union of Railways (UIC). Experts from France, Germany, Japan, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland shared their experience and knowledge, and FRA Administrator Joseph Szabo and FRA Deputy Administrator Karen Rae were keynote speakers at the workshops.

This is the first set of seminars developed under a new partnership between APTA and UIC. The two groups signed a memorandum of understanding to work together in extensive information-sharing covering the various technical, finance and management aspects of planning, building and operating high-speed rail systems.

“I am very happy to be alongside APTA at a time I consider historic for the development of passenger rail in North America,” said UIC General Director Jean-Pierre Loubinoux. “The attendance at the three practica demonstrates that the time is right for drastic rail improvement both in the incremental improvements and in combination with very high-speed links. “

“These workshops were the equivalent of a graduate level course in high-speed rail,” said APTA President William Millar. “The first high speed rail line was launched in Japan over 40 years ago, and there are 12 countries that operate high-speed rail systems today. The experience of UIC and the international high-speed rail experts is invaluable to the United States as we implement and adapt high-speed rail to our operating environment.”

Emphasizing the importance of having intermodal connections to high-speed rail, Loubinoux said, “Experience in the world has taught us the benefit of complementary intermodal connections. The point of having stations in major airports and developing a complementary rather than competitive approach with other modes of transport could form new partnerships between airlines and rail operators in the future, as seen in Europe and Asia.”
“In addition to giving Americans more travel options, high-speed rail is a new industry that will create tens of thousands of good, ‘green’ American jobs,” said Millar. “High-speed rail also helps our country meet our national goals of carbon emission reduction and energy independence.”

“High-speed rail is good for mobility, sustainability, the environment and for the people as it creates employment and business through infrastructure and new services,” concluded Loubinoux. “UIC is proud to bring all its experience to help the American transportation leaders make the right choices as soon as possible, so that America can join the international high-speed rail community.

Millar concurred, “We look forward to a productive and continuing working relationship with our friends at UIC as we turn President Obama’s high-speed rail vision into reality.”

APTA and UIC developed three regional seminars to provide U.S. decision makers with the information necessary to implement high-speed rail. The seminars, titled “International Practicum on Implementing High-Speed Rail in the United States,” were held on February 8-9 in Washington, DC; February 9-11 in Chicago, IL; and February 11-13 in Los Angeles, CA. The programs gave decision-makers a comprehensive overview of what it will take to build and operate high and higher-speed rail systems in the United States and the planning and operational models that exist around the world.

APTA is the leading voice for bus and rail transportation in North America. It is also the legacy organization of the former High Speed Ground Transportation Association, which, in 2007 integrated its members and assets into the APTA structure and now functions through the constituent high-speed and intercity rail committee.

UIC is the international organization of the railway sector and has members across all five continents. Its missions are to promote rail transport across the world in order to cope with current challenges of mobility and sustainable development, by enhancing international cooperation between its members and building a consistent railway system.

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