Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph C. Szabo Prepared Remarks 2013 National Train Day Celebration Washington Union Station May 11, 2013

Good morning, everyone. On behalf of President Obama and Secretary LaHood, it is great to join you at Washington Union Station on National Train Day.

Let me thank Amtrak for organizing today's event — and for this opportunity to talk about why trains matter.

In the 19th century, trains were the spark for the strongest, most-connected economy the world has ever seen.

Here in Union Station today – and at more than 200 similar events from coast to coast – National Train Day allows us to honor this rich history.

But it also allows us to celebrate a bright future: as passenger rail — once again — emerges as the mode of opportunity.

Last year, Amtrak carried 31.2 million passengers, setting its 9th annual ridership record in 10 years.

Ridership is up in every segment of the system — from the Northeast Corridor to state services to long-distance trains. And with close-to 50 percent ridership growth over the past decade, Amtrak's ridership is now growing faster than all other major travel modes.

Clogged highways and long lines at airports have Americans searching for alternatives. And in that search, trains are being rediscovered as the most energy-efficient, the most convenient, and the most fun way to travel.

Over the past four years, record federal investments have been made in train service that is safer, faster, more frequent, more reliable, and more efficient.

Today, 6,000 corridor miles are being improved; hundreds of new American-made passenger rail cars and locomotives are being procured; and 40 train stations are being upgraded, including Washington Union Station.

Federal investments have successfully renovated Columbus Plaza, improving station access.

It is part of our vision to continue transforming Washington Union Station into a modern transportation hub to provide world-class passenger rail service to the millions of travelers who pass through these halls every year.

We have invested more than \$3 billion since 2009 to strengthen Northeast Corridor rail service. And by launching a comprehensive Northeast Corridor planning effort, NEC FUTURE, we're also working hard with states and stakeholders to develop a long-term corridor investment plan to guide our development efforts.

Trains matter because they provide so much more than transportation.

Stations are gateways to cities and downtowns – and they're strong anchors for renewal.

Across the country, from Denver, CO, to Normal, IL, to Brunswick, Maine, to here in our nation's capital, we've seen station development efforts spur private investors to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in new development.

Trains connect communities.

They connect people.

And they connect economies as portals to jobs and new opportunities.

This is why trains matter – and why they matter to this Administration.

Happy National Train Day, everyone!