



Speech by Rip Rapson:

Rapson Describes Key Role of Mass Transit in Area Revitalization Efforts

In Detroit, U.S. Department of Transportation officials announce support for M-1 Rail.

August 4, 2010

Thank you, Secretary Raymond LaHood and Administrator Peter Rogoff, for coming to Detroit today to make this path-breaking announcement of the federal government's support to the [Woodward Light-Rail](#) project.

It is profoundly gratifying to hear the two top officials of the U.S. Department of Transportation speak so passionately about the Obama administration's commitment to Detroit's future. By making it unambiguously clear that you will do everything you can to help us overcome historic inertias and launch a regional transit system, you are creating a powerful new imperative that will shape this region's future economic, social and physical landscape.

Light-rail transit on Woodward Avenue has been a goal of Detroiters for more than 40 years – a goal that has been maddeningly elusive. Many doubted that it would ever happen. But with today's announcement, you help move beyond that doubt to a certainty that we are on a different trajectory.

It is hard to overstate the importance of light rail to this community. Nurses living downtown will be connected to their places of work. The young, creative employees of Quicken Loans will be able to hop the train to the African American Museum of Art or a lecture at Wayne State University. People attending a ball game will be able to dine up and down the avenue without having to pull in and out of parking lots. City residents will increasingly be able to connect to the job centers in Troy and Birmingham and to other forms of regional opportunity. Land use around the stops will change in ways that we can only imagine – just as they have in city after city in America where transit has taken root.

The "reverse T" of the Detroit River and the Woodward Corridor is the central nervous system of our city. Its history defines Detroit and the region, and it contains the critical building blocks for our future – everything a great city needs to thrive:

- World-class arts institutions offering residents and visitors a full range of artistic experience – classical music, jazz and hip-hop; painting, sculpture, mosaics and murals; theater and dance; the rich history of Detroit and its people.
- Nationally renowned hospital systems that improve our health while strengthening our economy.
- Productive businesses and employers that are committed to Detroit.
- Innovative educational institutions that contribute immeasurably to the vibrancy of the city.
- Unique walkable residential neighborhoods and retail districts.
- Extensive sports and entertainment venues; beautiful eclectic architecture, pocket parks and open spaces; the RiverWalk, greenways and bike paths.

Landing the first leg of light rail in the Woodward Corridor is absolutely the right move. Very soon, the Woodward Light-Rail project will begin to show results – stimulating residential and commercial development in the heart of Detroit and introducing our residents to a whole new level of mobility that creates linkages to our neighbors throughout the Midwest and beyond.

The [city of Detroit](#) has stepped up powerfully – and we all need to tip our hats to the tireless work of Norm White across three mayoral administrations in bringing us to this point. Working together, the city and the private investors behind M-1 Rail have created a partnership unprecedented in modern transportation history. The Kresge Foundation is honored to be part of that partnership. But, to fully form, the effort needed our federal partners. And that is what we celebrate today.

Mr. Secretary and Administrator Rogoff, your investment of TIGER dollars – the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery Discretionary Grants Program of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act – and your commitment to being a full partner in our efforts brings our community a step closer to reinventing, retooling and reimagining Detroit. We commit to working closely with you to make this shared vision a reality. You have our deepest thanks.