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I think, importantly, that we at the Federal Transit Administration are extraordinarily enthusiastic about this program, but also this grant. We put billions of Federal taxpayer dollars every year, largely into equipment and facilities: into buses, into rail cars, into stations, into streetcars. And what we don't do near enough is invest in our people. And today's 7 million dollar grant program is all about investing in our people because without those trained people, we're not going to have a future of public transportation in the United States.

I'm very pleased and it is especially appropriate that Secretary LaHood is able to join us here today. I can tell you after serving with him for almost four years, Ray LaHood first and foremost is a people person. Not a day goes by when we bring a policy issue to the Secretary for his guidance and the first question is, "What is the impact on the people?" So I really thank him for not only coming and participating in this event today, but also for reminding every DOT employee on a daily basis that we do this for the citizens--not for the equipment, not for a system--but for the taxpayers and citizens of the country.

Rich [Sarles] made a very important point, as did the mayor, even during the worst of the recession--the worst recession that this country has had since the great depression--we had technical jobs in transit agencies across the country that went wanting. We had vacancies, not just in Washington Metro, but in transit agencies across the country, especially in technical fields like bus mechanics. And as Rich Sarles pointed out, being a bus mechanic today is a lot more than just turning a wrench. Buses that roll off the assembly line, like the cars we buy today, many components more resemble a computer than something mechanical. And we need trained skilled workers for tomorrow to fill these very high quality, family-wage jobs, and we need them right here at Washington Metro.

So this particular grant, we are very enthusiastic about for a number of reasons. One: it's going to provide a direct pipeline from a training program in the public school system right into Rich's own training program at WMATA. So we know when folks enter that training program, unlike some other programs we have out there, there is a very high likelihood of employment at the other end. That's very exciting. Similarly, like Booker T. Washington Charter School serves both high school kids and adults, this grant will go for not only training high school students, but also a great many returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan looking for employment through adult programs in the District. And we're all very excited because we all know the employment challenges our veterans face and we all know that we have a special obligation to them, to get them back on their feet and fully employed in ways that help the rest of the country, which is what they do when they enter fields in public transportation.

This grant was a result of a very brutal competition [for] \$7 million across the entire country; and the District of Columbia through WMATA is going to get almost \$800,000 of that amount. It

was a very strong proposal, and we're very glad to respond with a very strong increment of funding.

You know, I say this in many places where I go about public transportation; there is an inevitability about expansion of public transportation. We have these policy fights over who should pay for it and how, but the reality is across the nation we're going to grow as a country by 100 million people by 2050. A lot of that population growth is going to happen in specific urban areas, including this one. And there isn't an economist out there that's going to tell you we're entering a period of low gas prices that are going to stay stable for years to come. Transit is going to grow. And it won't be enough just to buy buses and buy rail cars. We need these folks to help serve us through technical skills. We need programs like Booker T. Washington to train the transit employment base of tomorrow. Without them, we can't meet the need.

So congratulations to Booker T; congratulations to the city. Thank you again, Mr. Secretary and everyone for your participation. We love this program.