

# Promoting Rail Transit in America

John Robert Smith  
President and CEO  
Reconnecting America

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Economic Development, Transportation and Cultural Affairs Committee  
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At Reconnecting America, we help transform promising ideas into thriving communities – where transportation choices make it easy to get from place to place, where businesses flourish, and where people from all walks of life can afford to live, work and visit.

# Our Partners:



Creating a national marketplace for TOD, working with cities, transit agencies, developers, investors + communities

Improving practice through technical assistance, research + policy reform

On-line Clearinghouse of TOD + Transit Best Practices



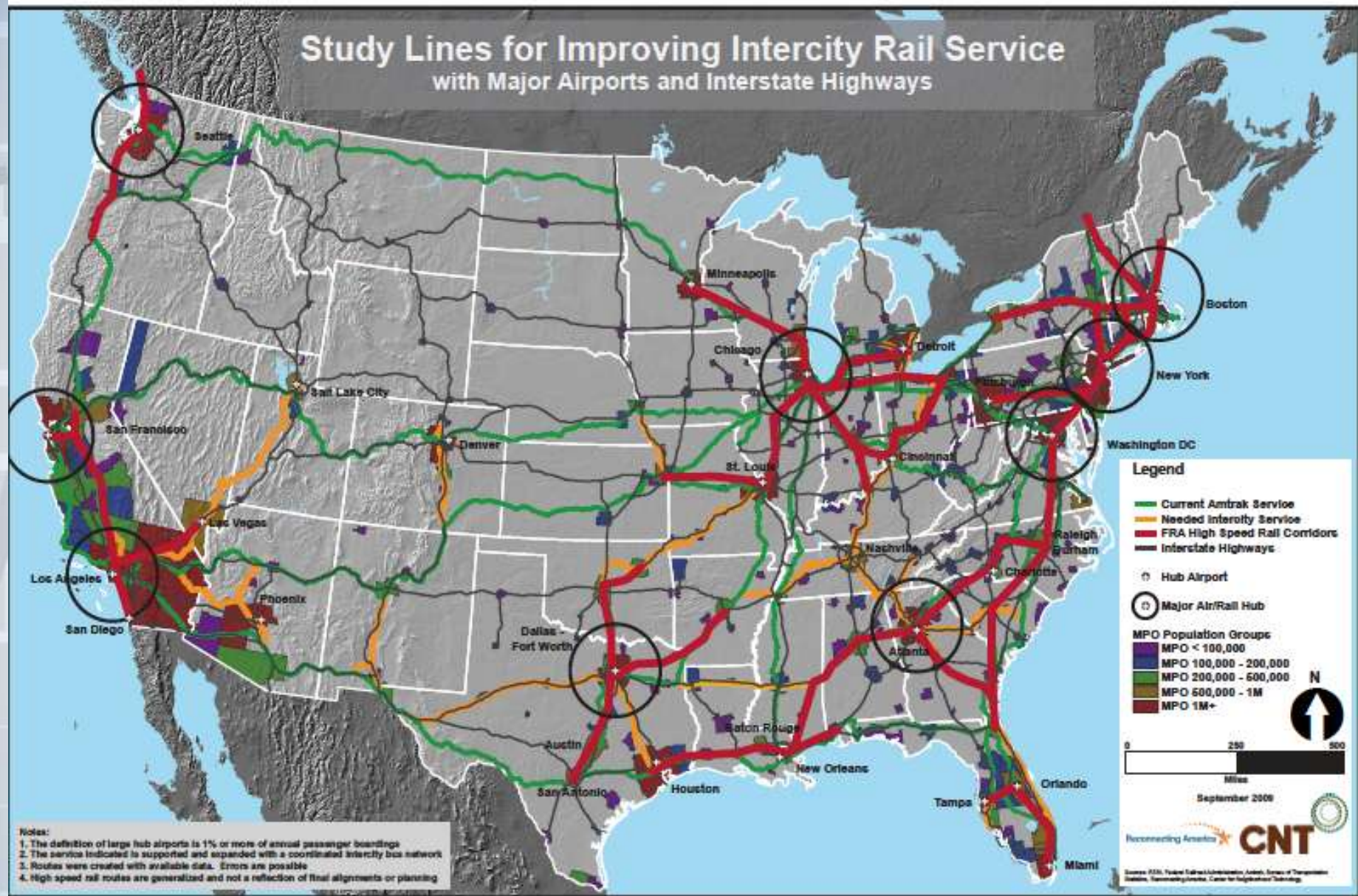
A coalition with over 500 members of business, housing, environment, development, labor, health, aging and transportation interests

Campaign Focus on the Next Federal Transportation Bill

Transportation investments that are economically sound, respond to markets and improve the lives of people



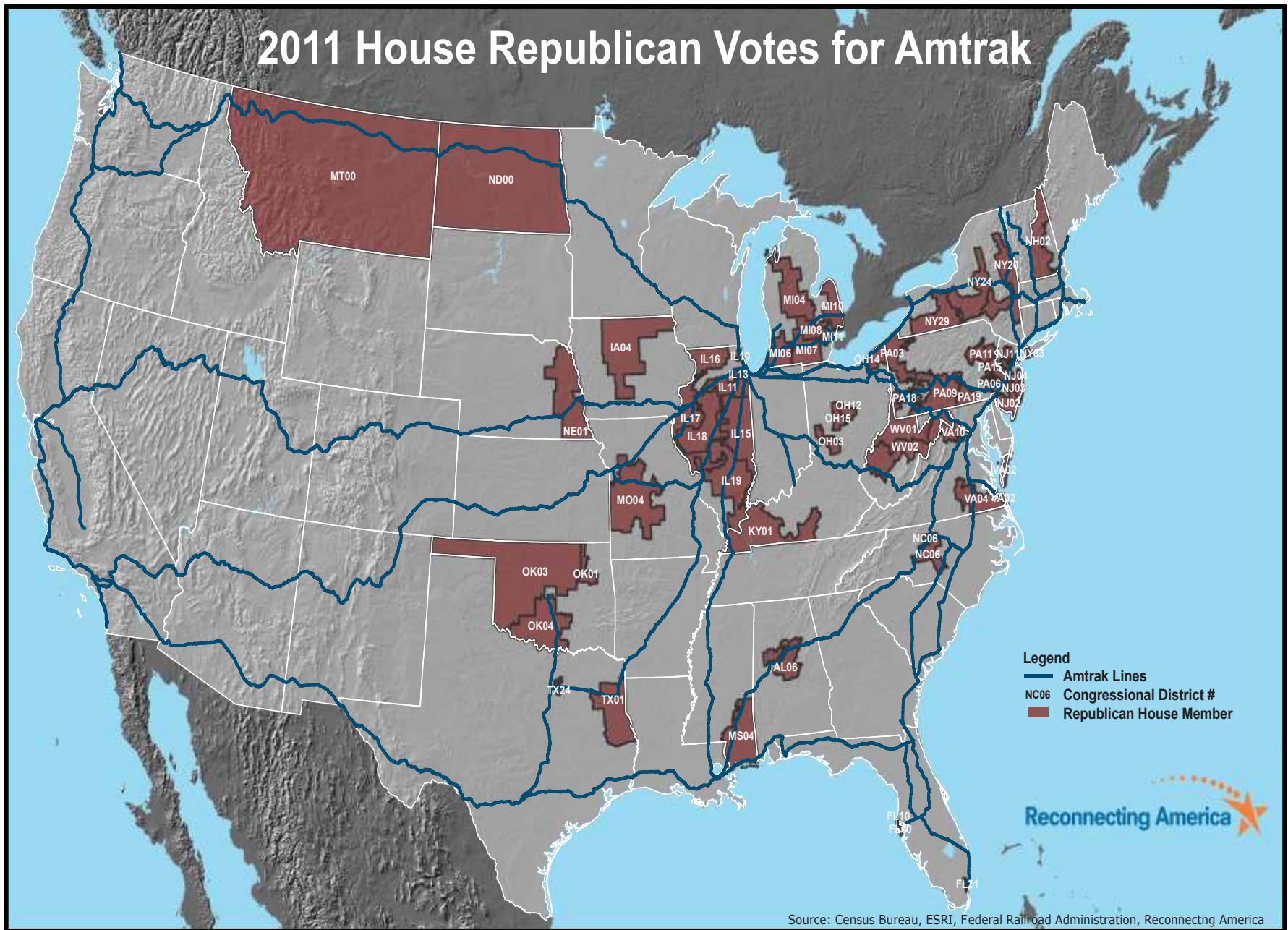
# Study Lines for Improving Intercity Rail Service with Major Airports and Interstate Highways



This map was developed by Reconnecting America and the Center for Neighborhood Technology in 2003 and updated in 2009. Recommendations for needed intercity rail lines were based on intercity travel demand from the American Travel Survey of 1995. High speed rail routes are generalized from the FRA's designated high speed rail corridors map.

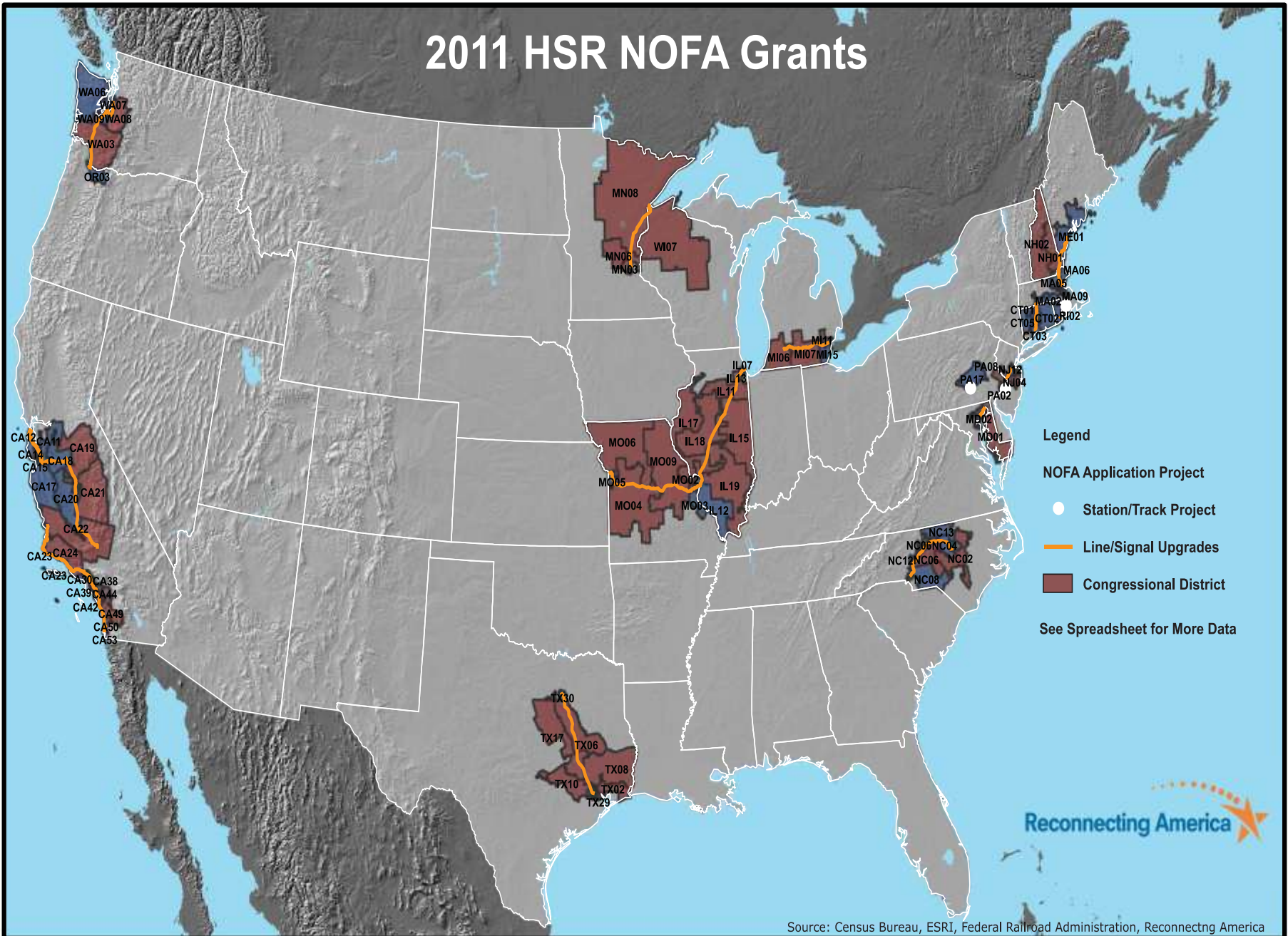


# 2011 House Republican Votes for Amtrak



Source: Census Bureau, ESRI, Federal Railroad Administration, Reconnecting America

# 2011 HSR NOFA Grants





# Job Losses From Cuts to HSIPR

Texas

7,394

North  
Carolina

1,516

Nationwide

583,578

# Transportation Opportunities for a Small Town/Rural Area

- Revitalize and promote existing rural towns
- Improve our roads and bridges
- Allow our local officials to participate in planning
- Shift movement of goods from highways to freight rail
- Provide rural connectivity through multi-modal solutions



# Small Towns and Rural Areas

## The Myths:

- Large cities and small towns have nothing in common.
- A city is only defined by its population.
- A rural population is totally self-sufficient. They lead a sole existence on their farms and ranches and are not reliant on city/county services.
- Due to their self-sufficiency, they have no need for transportation options.

## The Facts:

- People who live in large cities, small towns and rural areas all have the same concerns.
- A city is defined less by its population and more by the services it renders.
- No matter where people live, they depend on nearby cities for jobs, healthcare, education and services.
- Transportation options are needed for everyone – including veterans, students, the elderly, the economically-challenged.

# How Rail Access Transformed Meridian: A Case Study



Union Station, Meridian, Mississippi



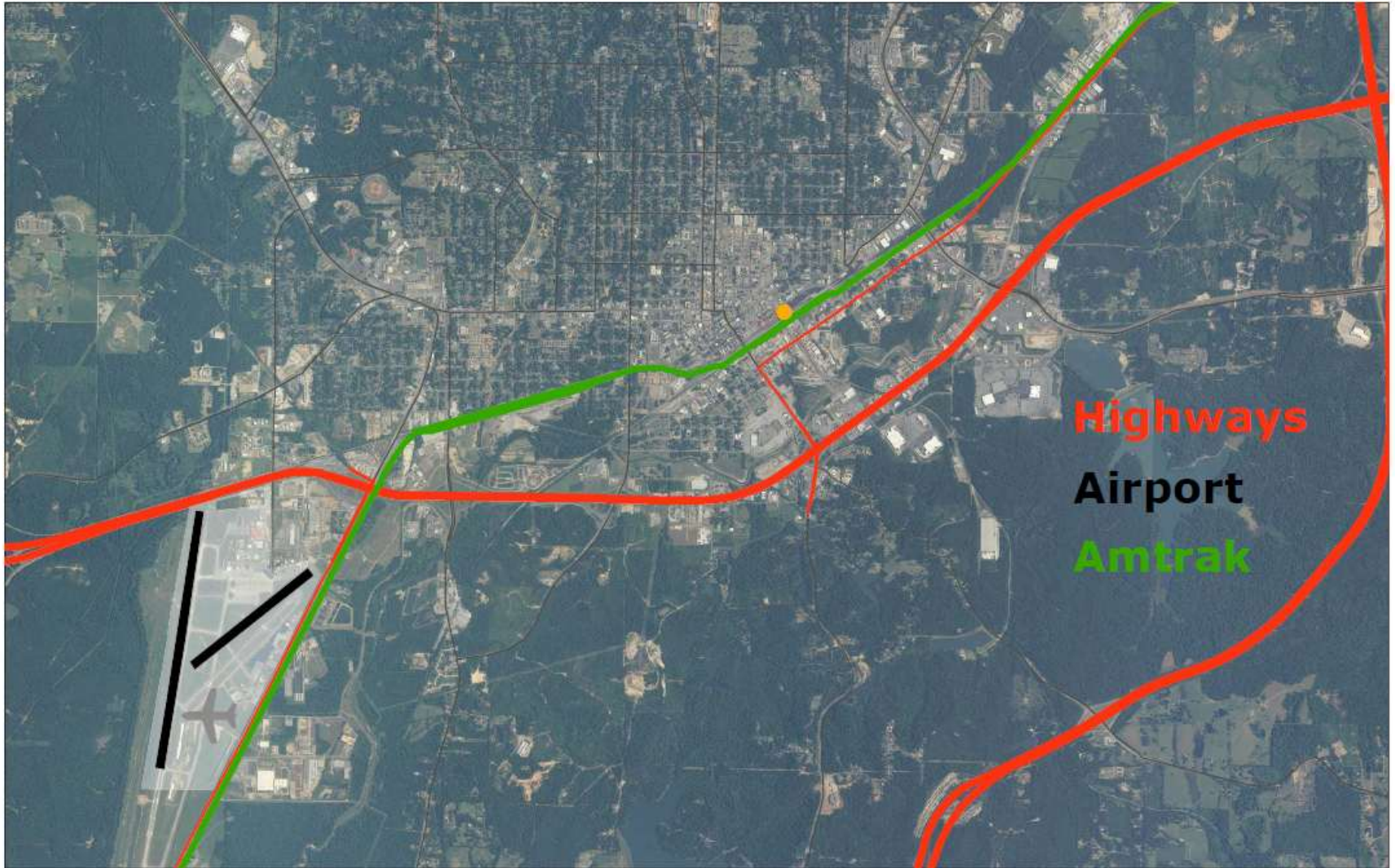
# It's All About Location...











# Your Identity is Key

In any public project you need to know:

Who You Were in the Past

“Meridian, with its depots, store-houses, arsenal, hospitals, offices, hotels, and cantonments no longer exists.”

General William Tecumseh Sherman  
February, 1864





# Who You Are Now



# Who You Aspire to Be





# Making the 'Impossible' POSSIBLE

## Restoring Public Confidence

Previous Meridian projects all faced challenges—both internally and externally

- Lack of confidence
- Lack of infrastructure
- Lack of creative financing
- Lack of partnerships
- Lack of design creativity

A “can't do” mentality  
won't succeed





# Restoring Public Confidence

Ancher Architecture, PLLC  
& Dale and Associates  
Transportation Center

## Union Station

NAME • LOCATION • OWNER • CLIENT  
UNION STATION  
Meridian, Mississippi

SIZE 40,000 S.F.  
new structure and renovation to existing structure

COST \$5,551,000

TIME 22 months

### DESIGN AWARDS

1999 American Institute of Architects,  
Mississippi Chapter Honor Award

1999 International Downtown Association (IDA)  
Honor Award for Economic Development



CONTACTS  
Wade Jones  
Executive Director/FM&DC  
601-682-1206

CITY OF MERIDIAN  
Don Finner  
Community Development Director  
601-685-1808

Ed Skipper  
Chief Financial Officer  
601-685-1846

IDENTITY  
A Multi-Modal Transportation Center occupying six city blocks encompassing the original site of the city's twentieth century railroad station. This facility contains offices, meeting rooms, waiting and queuing areas for Amtrak Greyhound, Meridian Transit Authority, Norfolk Southern Railroad Claims Agency, East Mississippi Business Development Center, Meridian Main Street, Railroad Museum, Visitor/Hospitality Center and support spaces. Completed 12/98



# To Build a Station Takes Partners





# Funding Union Station Development

## STATE/FEDERAL FUNDING

\$2,544,960  
(MDOT)

971,040  
(MDOT)

640,571

290,281

+ 700,000  
(MDOT)

**\$5,146,852**

ISTEA Enhancement Grant

Supplemental Grant

STIP Grant Transfer  
STP-93

Supplemental Grant

Federal/State Contribution

## + LOCAL FUNDING

**\$1,046,140**

## + PREPAID LEASES

**\$431,000**

## = TOTAL PROJECT COST

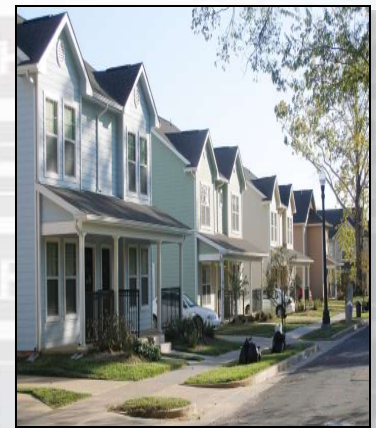
**\$6,623,992**





# Play to Your Strengths

- Viable city core...save it
- Existing transportation hub...grow it
- Historic structures in place...preserve them
- Diverse population...house them



# What Works Really Works

- Good community planning works on all levels
- Follow the guidance of the experts
- Smart design can tie everything together





# Union Station at Completion

- Annually, Union Station hosts 250 events and 300,000 people



# Union Station Development Resulted in:

- Private development of \$135 million in surrounding area
- “Facelifts” for historic structures





# Design of Union Station inspired:

Archer Architecture, p.l.l.c.  
City Hall

## City Hall



NAME • LOCATION • OWNER • CLIENT  
**MERIDIAN CITY HALL**  
City Hall Interior  
Meridian, Mississippi

SIZE 30,000 S.F.  
COST \$15,505,941  
TIME 18 Months



### CONTACTS

Ed Skipper  
Chief Financial  
Officer  
601-485-1945

### IDENTITY

**1915 Beaux Arts City Hall**  
Interior demolition was  
conducted in 2007.  
Exterior Restoration  
occurred in 2008-2009  
with Interior Restoration  
& Renovations occurring in  
2009-2011.

Archer Architecture, p.l.l.c.  
Fire Station

## City of Meridian Central Fire Station

NAME • LOCATION • OWNER • CLIENT  
**CENTRAL FIRE STATION**  
Meridian, Mississippi

SIZE 23,143 S.F.

COST \$2,680,000.00

TIME 20 Months



CONTACTS  
John Robert Smith  
Mayor  
601-481-1430

### IDENTITY

Five apparatus bays with three  
drive through, a hose drying  
tower, administrative offices,  
Firefighter bedrooms and  
support facilities.

# A new Union Station helped bring about:

MSU Riley Center, a state-of-the-art performing and conference facility





# Union Station also brought:

\$17.3 million in HUD HOPE VI grants for development of attractive low to middle income duplex and single-family housing







# Transportation Alternatives are Key



# Other examples of making local connections and maximizing local value, also known as “Great American Stations”



Denver's Union Station



Albuquerque Train Station

Pittsburgh's Pennsylvanian Union Train Station





# Three Key Points for Local Plan Implementation

- Partnerships are essential – put them in place initially
- Identify a key champion (“hero”) for the project – one who will be spokesperson, cheerleader, visionary – for the public and the media
- Put a plan in place and begin implementation quickly – do not let it stagnate

# Making Local Rail Connections Benefits All

- City wins
- Region wins
- Residents win
- Businesses win
- Travelers win

**Connectivity = Livability**

It's All About Providing Choices



# Thank you!

John Robert Smith  
President and CEO  
Reconnecting America

**EMAIL:** [jrsmith@reconnectingamerica.org](mailto:jrsmith@reconnectingamerica.org)

**PHONE:** 202.429.6990 ext.205

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