

*Transit funds in addition to \$28 million announced for airports yesterday*

PHOENIX - U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood joined U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell today to announce \$36 million in federal stimulus funding for the Central Phoenix/East Valley Light Rail Project. Valley mayors and Metro Light Rail officials were on hand for the announcement.

"These funds will be a boon to the economy here in the Valley," Mitchell said. "By investing in projects like light rail we'll not only get a short term economic jolt, but also see a multiplier effect because these projects spur private investment which in turn leads to future growth. I'm happy I was able to help move this funding forward through my support for the Stimulus."

Today's stimulus funds serve as an advance payment for the federal government's 2010 share of the project and will help reduce ongoing financing costs - thus freeing up resources for other local transit projects.

Valley Metro began operating the 20 mile light rail system in December 2008. By January, ridership had exceeded expectations. According to Valley Metro, the final local economic development impact of the project is expected to be up to \$7 billion.

Yesterday, LaHood announced \$28 million in federal stimulus funds for rehabilitation and improvements at Arizona airports.

Earlier this month, Mitchell was named South West Transit Association's 2009 Legislator of the Year. The annual award recognizes a member of the U.S. House or Senate who has significantly advanced the interest of public transportation in the previous year.