

THE MERIDIAN STAR



[Sports](#) | [Homepage](#) | [News](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Forums](#) | [Employment](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Monster Jobs](#) | [Wheels](#) | [Real E](#)

Published: October 11, 2008 01:24 am



Industry leaders gather in Meridian for rail summit

By Ida Brown

ibrown@themeridianstar.com

National and state leaders convened at downtown Meridian's Union Station Friday to plot a strategy for high-speed rail.

A first for the Southern High-Speed Rail Commission, the summit's intent was to look at and talk about proposals for bringing passenger rail to Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi.

"Several lines are being proposed, but the most important thing is to get all the states' governors and senators and the leaders of the city to really appreciate that investing in rail that would connect the cities will create a lot of jobs, stimulate reinvestment in all the cities where the train stops, and it will give people an affordable way to travel," said Shelley Poticha of Reconnecting America, a national non-profit organization working to integrate transportation systems and the communities they serve.

Attendance included 97 people from the three states - representing their departments of transportation, elected officials, city planners, chambers of commerce and tourism officials - and the rail commissioners.

"Those assembled heard from the best minds in the nation on rail policy, rail development and transit-oriented development, which Union Station is an example of that," said Meridian Mayor John Robert Smith.

Although planned for several months, Smith said the timing for the summit was ideal, referring to last week's passage of the Amtrak Reauthorization and Rail Safety Bill by Congress. The bill more than doubled the funding authorization for Amtrak, authorizing more than \$13 billion for passenger rail development.

To be eligible for funding, states must have a rail plan crafted by their federal, state and local officials.

"My purpose in recommending that the commission hold this summit was so that we in the South can be ready for those rail improvement dollars that will flow from the next Congress in the next administration," Smith said.

Resources



[Print this story](#)



[E-mail this story](#)



[Discuss this story](#)

More from the Archives section

[Ads by Google](#)

[Meridian Mississippi](#)

[Prime Meridian](#)

[Meridian MS](#)

[Meridian Holiday](#)