

# The Washington Post

[Back to previous page](#)

## Obama taps Charlotte mayor to lead Transportation Department, official says

By [Juliet Eilperin](#), Published: April 28

President Obama plans to nominate Charlotte Mayor Anthony Foxx to serve as transportation secretary, a White House official said Sunday.

Foxx, who would succeed Ray LaHood, would be the first African American nominated to serve in the president's second-term Cabinet. Obama, who has had several Latino, African American and female Cabinet members step down in recent months, has come under fire for not doing enough to ensure [diversity](#) among his top advisers.

The White House official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the announcement had not been made, said, "As mayor of one of America's most vibrant cities, Anthony Foxx knows firsthand that investing in world-class infrastructure is vital to creating good jobs and ensuring American businesses can grow and compete in the global economy."

Foxx, whose city hosted the Democratic National Convention last year, has pushed to expand public transit options for Charlotte while serving as mayor. The city has started building the Charlotte Streetcar Project, one of several electric trolley systems underway in the country, and is expanding the LYNX light-rail system so it can reach the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Christopher Leinberger, a professor at the George Washington University School of Business, said Foxx and his team worked closely with Charlotte business leaders to develop economic hubs around the city's light-rail system.

"He understands that rail transit, public transit, drives economic development," Leinberger, who directs GW's Center for Real Estate and Urban Analysis, said in an interview. "The goal of any transportation system, especially rail transit, is not to move people. That is not the goal. The goal is economic development at the stations. The means is by moving people."

Building America's Future President Marcia Hale, whose group consists of state and local elected officials



### Premier Rewards Gold Card from American Express

\$0 Introductory Annual Fee for the First Year

25,000 Membership Rewards® Points

[Apply Now](#)

Terms and Limitations apply.

focused on improving the nation's infrastructure, said that while Foxx will have "very big shoes to fill" in replacing LaHood, he "brings some creativity" to the post.

Hale attended a meeting a week ago with Foxx in which he outlined his long-term transportation vision for Charlotte, one of the nation's fastest-growing cities.

"They are 10 to 20 years ahead of the growth pattern, and that's not something every city does," she said. "You can get around Charlotte without problem, and that's partly because of the plans he's put in place."

Mayors in cities such as Charlotte, Los Angeles, Portland, Chicago and Baltimore, Hale added, are the ones demonstrating innovation when it comes to transit. "Everything that's happening is happening outside of Washington," she said.

The LYNX system extends from downtown and over the city's freeway into its southern suburbs. "The stations south of the freeway are experiencing an unprecedented boom," Leinberger said.

Under Foxx, the city has developed a facility connecting freight from Charlotte to global ports, along with a third parallel runway at Charlotte/Douglas International Airport.

The White House official described these transportation initiatives as "important pieces of a comprehensive plan to meet Charlotte's transportation needs and maintain its position as a leader in high-tech industry and 21st century job creation."

Foxx, a lawyer by training, was elected mayor in 2009 and reelected in 2011. He served as a member of the Charlotte City Council from 2005 to 2009 while practicing at the law firm Hunton & Williams LLP.

The nomination is expected to please civil rights organizations and the [Congressional Black Caucus](#), which have criticized the president's second-term Cabinet for a lack of diversity. Two of the Cabinet's four African Americans and both of its Hispanic members have left or have announced that they are leaving. Only one of the two Asian Americans who served during the first Obama term remains.

The president has nominated Thomas E. Perez, a first-generation Dominican American and assistant U.S. attorney general for civil rights, to serve as labor secretary. Obama has also nominated multiple women to his Cabinet, including Interior Secretary Sally Jewell and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy. She and Perez are awaiting confirmation.

© The Washington Post Company