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Illinois hailed as the only Midwestern state with a 220-mph high speed rail plan

Midwest High Speed Rail Association recognizes Governor Quinn as push for 220 mph intensifies

CHICAGO – Illinois Governor Pat Quinn was recognized by the Midwest High Speed Rail Association (MHSRA) today for leading Illinois to be the only Midwestern state actively seeking funds to study a 220-mph high speed rail project.

Under Governor Quinn’s leadership, the State of Illinois has requested \$5 million in planning funds from the federal government for a Chicago-St. Louis line. The State of Illinois has pledged to match those dollars. The funds would be used to determine the best way to link Chicago and St. Louis via 220-mph service, which could cut the trip between the two cities to under two hours but for which no route has yet been selected.

“Bringing high speed rail to Illinois benefits the entire Midwest by strengthening our economy, creating new jobs, and developing more efficient transportation,” Governor Quinn said. “We are determined to take full advantage of federal recovery funds to jump-start this process.”

The Chicago-St. Louis route would be the first of a planned Midwestern network that would put 25 million people living in Midwestern metro areas within 3 hours of Chicago. The 220-mph Midwestern high speed rail network would be in addition to the necessary upgrades of existing lines up to 110-mph under the stimulus plan.

The MHSRA is forming an advisory board to spearhead the drive for 220-mph high speed rail, which will be headed by Chicago attorney and philanthropist Lew Manilow.

“Daniel Burnham taught us to make no little plans and we must be bold if we are to catch up with Europe and Asia, who began implementing world-class high speed rail nearly 30 years ago,” said Manilow. “HSR 220 is the game-changer America needs. We are delighted Governor Quinn has the vision to support those plans.”

Governor Quinn today was recognized with the MHSRA’s “High Speed Rail Champion Award.” Illinois Senator Martin Sandoval and Illinois Representative

Elaine Nekritz also were recognized for their contributions to high speed rail development.

“Governor Quinn has shown the most leadership on high speed rail of any governor in Illinois history,” said Rick Harnish, MHSRA executive director. “He helped pass the capital bill and move on 110-mph projects, and his support for aggressively studying the technology and funding for 220-mph demonstrates he also knows the future of transportation and our economy includes ultra-fast trains.”

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MHSRA – page 2 of 2

The proposed network would put Cincinnati, Detroit and St. Louis within two hours of Chicago, and the Twin Cities, Cleveland and Pittsburgh within three.

An engineering study commissioned by the Midwest High Speed Rail Association put the overall cost of a Chicago-St. Louis line at \$12 billion. The estimated cost for the entire Midwestern network is less than \$70 billion.

Spain, a country comparable to the Midwest, is spending \$120 billion to link its major cities with high speed rail. China is building 35 new lines.

“The return on investment for taxpayers is tremendous, whether it’s from a financial, environmental or social standpoint,” said Harnish. “Entire regions in Asia and Europe have been revitalized through high speed rail.”

In a proposal submitted to the U.S. Department of Transportation, SNCF, the operator for the French high speed rail network estimated the Midwestern network would create 677,000 jobs, in addition to 316,000 construction jobs.

According to the same research, by 2030 the network would reduce highway travel by 4.3 billion vehicle miles each year, saving 127.4 million gallons of gasoline, or 3 million barrels each year. 220-mph high speed rail would generate 24% of the emissions compared to the same trips made by auto or by air.

About the Midwest High Speed Rail Association

The Midwest High Speed Rail Association is a membership-based non-profit organization advocating the development of fast, frequent and dependable passenger trains linking the entire Midwest. We believe that a strong network of fast trains will make the Midwest a more attractive place to live and do business while slowing the growth of auto congestion and its related energy and pollution impacts.