

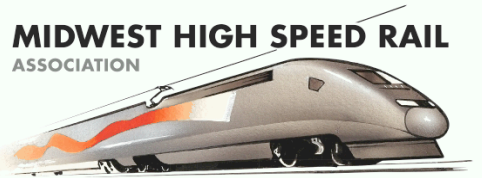
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Illinois elected officials call on U.S. Senate to fully fund  
high speed rail**

*Urge senators to match \$4 billion appropriation by U.S. House*

CHICAGO, Ill. – Illinois elected officials today joined the Midwest High Speed Rail Association (MHSRA) and Illinois PIRG to call on the U.S. Senate to match the House’s \$4 billion commitment to high speed rail for 2010. The groups are working as part of the fourbillion.com coalition. Voters can visit the Website of the same name to send a message to Congress.

The funds would help ensure the nation makes a lasting investment in the technology to follow through on what President Obama called an \$8 billion “down payment” under the stimulus.

“There is tremendous demand across Illinois and the country for high speed rail, and we hope the U.S. Senate answers the call,” said Illinois **Senator Martin Sandoval (Chicago)**, chair of the transportation committee. “High speed rail will upgrade our transportation infrastructure and create thousands of good jobs in Illinois.”

Under Governor Pat Quinn’s leadership, Illinois has applied for more than \$4 billion in stimulus money – more than half the total funds available for all 50 states. That application is for improving speeds up to 110 miles per hour on the Chicago-St. Louis line via Bloomington-Normal and Springfield, and for passenger rail upgrades along the Chicago-Quad Cities route.

“Illinois’ needs do not stop there,” said **Rockford Mayor Lawrence Morrissey**. “We need fast, reliable and convenient train service that links all of Illinois major towns and cities.”

The state’s stimulus request accounts for more than half the federal funds currently available, and is not the only rail project in the state in need of funding.

"The Illinois General Assembly did its part by passing a capital bill with \$400 million for high speed rail and \$450 million for other rail improvement, but that also is only a start," said Illinois **Representative Paul Froehlich (Schaumburg)**, vice-chair of the rail committee. "An effort of this scope cannot be accomplished without significant support from Congress."

Elected officials emphasized that high speed rail would help strengthen economic development, education and research in Illinois.

"High speed rail will tie our universities into our business centers of Chicago and St. Louis. That's crucial to develop new companies," said Illinois **Senator Michael Frerichs (Champaign)**.

U.S. Senator Dick Durbin has been instrumental in Illinois' efforts to secure stimulus funds to improve Illinois' rail infrastructure and service.

"Senator Durbin has been a champion for improved rail service in Illinois and across the nation," said Illinois **Representative Elaine Nekritz (Northbrook)**, chair of rail committee. "We hope the Senate follows his leadership and matches the House's commitment to high speed rail."

The strong need for significantly higher congressional appropriations is illustrated by the fact the Federal Rail Administration received applications from 24 states totaling \$50 billion this year, while just \$8 billion was made available under the stimulus.

"The discrepancy between the funding and the true demand is even greater than numbers show, because many states like Illinois only included select projects in their application," said **Brian IMUS, director of Illinois PIRG**. "High speed rail will deliver the best results if we have an interconnected network, not a patchwork of isolated lines."

History holds a cautionary tale. In 1965, President Johnson and Congress created the fastest passenger train in the world, but Congress did not follow through with funding for high speed track. The U.S. now lags much of the world in high speed rail.

"With jammed roads, decline in air service to secondary markets, growing harmful emissions and a lack of construction and manufacturing jobs, America simply cannot afford another false start on high speed rail," said

**Rick Harnish, executive director of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association and co-chair of the fourbillion.com coalition.**

***About the Midwest High Speed Rail Association***

*We primarily advocate for world-class 220-mph high-speed trains linking major Midwestern cities. We support fast, frequent and dependable trains on other routes that connect with 220-mph corridors to form a true modern regional and national rail network. 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.*