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ILLINOIS STATE SENATOR
MARTIN A. SANDOVAL
12TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

November 4, 2009

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senator
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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Dear Senator Durbin,

It was only a few months ago that the General Assembly had been criticized by the Illinois Congressional delegation on its failure to pass a state capital plan that would allow for the capture of federal funding for Illinois infrastructure projects.

With new leadership and spirit of cooperation, the Illinois General Assembly and Governor Pat Quinn have delivered on a multi-billion dollar capital program that takes full advantage of federal funding for transportation infrastructure. In addition, I am particularly proud that Illinois has fully committed to President Barack Obama's vision for high speed rail as a major asset of our state's infrastructure.

Illinois leads the nation on railroad infrastructure investment with \$850 million in our capital plan.

The \$300 million for the CREATE program is more than the federal government has appropriated.

The General Assembly appropriated \$150 million for Amtrak improvements, \$400 million for high speed rail and \$300 million for the CREATE program far exceeding Congress' appropriation.

In the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, the Illinois General Assembly and Governor Pat Quinn delivered on a capital program to put people back to work. Now that Illinois has fully answered President Barack Obama's call to invest in high speed rail, it is time for the United States Senate to do the same. The current Senate budget for next fiscal year only includes \$1.2 billion for high speed rail. This is unacceptable.

To put the federal budget debate in context, a proposal for a 220 mph high speed rail line connecting O'Hare, Union Station, McCormick Place, Champaign, Springfield and St. Louis is projected to cost \$12 billion. More than 23 states recently submitted proposals to the Federal Railroad Administration for high speed rail projects totaling more than \$57 billion.


The Senate must match the House budget of \$4 billion for the first annual budget since the stimulus in lieu of the current \$1.2 billion that the Senate budget includes.

If this nation is serious about high speed rail, the federal government should invest \$10 billion every year. The stimulus funding of \$8 billion is the right start and I applaud President Obama for his vision in making a robust and appropriately large one-time investment in high speed rail. Now Congress must do the same.

Keep in mind, high speed rail is a national, not a state, project. This is an investment that primarily falls in the jurisdiction of the federal government. Just like the Interstate Highway system under President Eisenhower, or the Transcontinental Railroad under President Lincoln, a high speed rail network under President Obama is a federal project that must be funded primarily by the federal government.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Martin A. Sandoval
Chairman, Illinois Senate Transportation Committee

cc: President Barack Obama
Illinois Congressional delegation
Governor Pat Quinn
Senate President John Cullerton
Speaker Michael J. Madigan
Secretary Gary Hannig

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