



**MIDWEST
HIGH SPEED RAIL
ASSOCIATION**

P.O. Box 805877 Chicago, IL 60680
773-334-6758

For Immediate Release

June 24, 2008

Contact: Rick Harnish
Executive Director
Midwest High Speed Rail Association

Office: 773-334-6758
Cell: 312-339-0116
www.midwesthsr.org

Railroad Passengers Decry Governor's Budget Proposal

Governor threatens to eliminate Amtrak Illinois service

Earlier today, Governor Blagojevich released his proposed list of line item vetoes to the Illinois FY2009 operating budget. The vetoes are intended to balance a deficit budget passed by the General Assembly on May 30, 2008. He has given the House of Representatives until July 9, 2008 to identify increased revenues or he will make the cuts.

The proposed vetoes include eliminating the Amtrak operating grant of \$28 million.

"Amtrak is on the cut list to make the most people mad," said Rick Harnish, Executive Director of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association. "The service links the entire state, effecting most every district. If the goal is to pressure the General Assembly, cutting Amtrak makes perfect sense."

Amtrak ridership has been skyrocketing since the state doubled service in November of 2006. Year-to-date ridership is up 20% over last year. Trains are sold out every week. It is time to add more trains, both on existing routes and new routes to Rockford and Rock Island.

"Train and bus ridership is setting records as gas prices climb. The State should be expanding the system rapidly," continued Harnish. "It is time to stop playing political games with this crucial service."

Go to http://www.midwesthsr.org/il_fastTrack.htm for more information on passenger train proposals in Illinois.

The Midwest High Speed Rail Association is a member-supported non-profit educational organization promoting the development of fast, frequent and dependable train service connecting the entire Midwest. Our members include business leaders, mayors and individuals that want the option of traveling by train.