



**MIDWEST
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ASSOCIATION**

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STATEMENT ON LAUNCH OF AMTRAK ILLINOS SERVICE

Earlier today, Governor Rod Blagojevich announced that tickets have gone on sale for the new Amtrak Illinois “Lincoln Service” trains on the Chicago – Springfield – St. Louis corridor. Similar announcements have been made for new service on the Carbondale and Quincy lines.

The Midwest High Speed Rail Association would like to applaud the Governor and the General Assembly for making these new trains possible.

Five trains a day to Springfield, St. Louis

The state’s busiest intercity rail corridor, the 284-mile Chicago-St. Louis Lincoln/Heritage corridor, will get two new state-supported round trips. Because the state already supports one round trip in that corridor and Amtrak supports two, the Chicago-St. Louis corridor will be able to offer travelers a choice of five daily round trips.

“For the first time there will be an early-morning train from Chicago that will get travelers to Springfield at 10:15 a.m.,” Harnish said. “State employees will now find trains a highly efficient way to shuttle between Chicago and Springfield. They can work and have breakfast en route. So can private business people who need to meet with state officials at the Capitol.

“That train also will be popular with tourists,” Harnish said. “It should be a boon to the new Abraham Lincoln Library, which is only a short walk from the Springfield station.”

New a.m. departures make trips to Downstate more convenient

Also getting an additional frequency each will be the Chicago-Quincy and Chicago-Carbondale corridors. The 258-mile Quincy line already has one daily train leaving Chicago at dinner time. A second frequency leaving in the morning will enable Chicagoans to make day trips to Western Illinois by train.

The 310-mile Chicago-Carbondale line already has two frequencies, one a state-supported local train that terminates at Carbondale, the other an Amtrak long-distance train that goes on to Memphis and New Orleans. Both leave late in the day. The state’s new frequency will leave in the early morning, enabling Chicagoans to make day trips to Champaign, Mattoon, Effingham and Centralia as well as Carbondale.

“The new morning departure to Quincy is particularly exciting because between Chicago and Galesburg it shares a route with two of Amtrak’s long-distance trains that leave Chicago in the afternoon,” Harnish said. “When added to the two Quincy frequencies, those two trains mean Galesburg will have four daily trains to Chicago—a real resource for business travelers in a market that is not well served by air and otherwise requires a tiring 160-mile highway trip.”

Coalition of advocates made new trains a reality

While the number of train frequencies in Illinois will more than double overnight, the decision to move the state to a more ambitious passenger-train program took a good deal longer and required the cooperation of a broad range of advocacy groups, Harnish said.

“The universities, local chambers of commerce and economic-development authorities, several hundred mayors and elected officials statewide, and individual business leaders stepped forward to urge the General Assembly and the administration to take this step,” Harnish said.

He singled out the United Transportation Union and the Environmental Law & Policy Center as the Association’s “partners” in a two-year advocacy campaign.

“Classic citizen activism at work”

“We also would like to thank all of those people who wrote letters, sent e-mails and made phone calls asking their legislators to fund these trains,” Harnish said. “Their effort was classic citizen activism at work. And special thanks go to our members, whose membership dues and generous extra donations made it possible for me to make numerous trips Downstate to tell leaders about the importance of passenger trains to the state’s economic growth.”

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.