



**MIDWEST  
HIGH SPEED RAIL  
ASSOCIATION**

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### **CN Railway Plays Brinkmanship With New Illinois Trains**

Just a short week ago, residents and elected officials throughout Illinois celebrated the upcoming launch of new service on three routes in Illinois. Now, with just one week left before launch, the Canadian National Railway is refusing to operate the new trains on two of the routes.

The CN has said that there is insufficient track capacity to operate the new trains without impacting its freight customers. The new Chicago – Champaign – Carbondale Saluki will operate between Chicago and Carbondale almost exclusively on CN-owned track. The new Chicago – Springfield – St. Louis Lincoln Service trains will operate over CN-owned track for 37 miles between Chicago and Joliet.

“It is shocking that the CN would wait until the eleventh hour to raise these issues,” said Richard Harnish, Executive Director of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association. “We have been promoting these new trains for almost three years. The General Assembly approved the funding in April. No concern was ever raised about track capacity.”

“The CN had the opportunity to testify at several hearings before the General Assembly. The CN, through its membership in the Illinois Railroad Association, was also invited to participate in press conferences related to the new trains,” said Harnish. “If track capacity was an issue, they had plenty of opportunity to say so.”

The BNSF Railway raised similar concerns while negotiating for the operation of the Chicago – Galesburg – Quincy Carl Sandburg train, which operates exclusively on the BNSF. Amtrak, BNSF and the Illinois Department of Transportation agreed that the train could operate for up to two years as new sidings were designed and installed. Harnish stated that “The MHSRA will work to ensure that the General Assembly provides funding for those sidings.” Harnish emphasized that the railroads should receive fair compensation for operating on-time passenger trains.”

The Midwest High Speed Rail Association is advocating for a statewide railroad investment program that would add capacity for both expanded freight service and for fast, frequent and dependable passenger trains. That program would include the BNSF sidings, new sidings on the Saluki/Illini route and four new flyovers on CN’s Chicago – Joliet trackage. Such a program would require a strong partnership between the railroads and the State.

“Healthy and growing railroads are absolutely essential to the Illinois economy,” said Harnish. “I hope that the CN, Amtrak and the Illinois Department of Transportation can resolve this misunderstanding quickly.” Sales on the new trains have been very strong, even though they have started running yet.

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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.