



Midwestern Governors Association

June 4, 2009

The Honorable Ray LaHood
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

On behalf of the Midwest Governors Association (MGA), we are writing to express our support for giving priority to Midwest projects for funding under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act passenger rail provisions.

The MGA recently published its recommendations for the upcoming reauthorization of the transportation bill, which includes encouraging Congress to support the goals of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI) and Ohio Hub. These recommendations also include continuing congressional support for long-distance routes, such as Amtrak's Empire Builder, and supporting ways to increase accessibility in states where passenger service is lacking.

Concepts and planning for the MWRRI have been in the works since 1996. The result is a plan for a system that will connect rural, small urban and major metropolitan areas and allow for multi-modal connections. This will improve and enhance the system and provide transportation access through the new high-speed passenger rail system and an expanded intercity passenger rail system. The network will further improve reliability, improve on-time performance, decrease travel times and enhance passenger service.

This new system will also create jobs and stimulate the region's economy. An economic analysis of the MWRRI found that the system would generate a benefit to cost ratio of 1.7, allowing the ability to minimize or eliminate subsidies by the states after the system is fully operational. The system would serve nearly 60 million people, yield a projected growth of annual ridership from current 2.6 million passengers to 13.6 million, develop communities with new stations and station-area developments, and provide 2,000 permanent jobs and 8,000 construction jobs.

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Investment into a Midwestern high-speed passenger rail system will create a strong regional system to help spur rail growth in states where current service is lacking or in underserved areas. Additionally, increased rail traffic in the region on these new MWRRI routes will help to spur additional movements on other lines that currently serve our region, such as Amtrak's Empire Builder route.

As Chicago continues to be a strong contender for the 2016 Olympics, efforts that the MGA has supported, a strong, modern and integrated high-speed rail system would be greatly beneficial in supporting these efforts to host the international games.

All of the states participating in the MWRRI project work together to promote, coordinate and support regional passenger rail improvements under the auspices of an interstate compact, the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC).

We look forward to working with you and the department directly, as well as via the MIPRC, to provide any additional information that may be of assistance in your rail funding determinations under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. We look forward to realizing the goals of the MWRRI and appreciate all the assistance that you, the department and the administration can provide in meeting our vision.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Granholm
Governor of Michigan and
Chair,
Midwestern Governors Association



M. Michael Rounds
Governor of South Dakota and
Immediate Past Chair,
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