



May 3, 2021

To the Illinois Congressional Delegation:

We write to urge you to support bold investment in America's passenger rail system, especially the Chicago-hubbed Midwest higher speed rail network. We need to ensure our system is improved and able to connect Americans nationwide but ensure that investments are as focused in the Midwest as they are in the Northeast Corridor. Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Illinois and our neighboring Midwest states made investments to increase capacity, improve on-time performance, and increase speeds to 110-mph. That led to significant increases in ridership and public benefits. We must build upon this work as President Biden's "American Jobs Plan" and other federal efforts underway, such as the Surface Transportation Reauthorization legislation, offer the necessary investment in our infrastructure. For too long, we have taken patchwork approaches to building and maintaining our transportation systems.

As a coalition of business, labor, and environmental leaders in the Midwest, we are excited about President Biden's proposal to modernize infrastructure by making the necessary financial commitments to bringing our infrastructure into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by investing smartly in transit, high speed rail, and other environmentally friendly transportation modes across the United States. This proposal will also bring tremendous benefits to our state and the region. We must leverage this moment to continue building out the national passenger rail system, especially the Midwest, which is the hub for nationwide passenger rail service.

The President's proposed funding would support Amtrak's aggressive plans to expand service in the Midwest. In Illinois, we must seize the opportunities to:

- Improve the 110-mph service in the busy Chicago to St. Louis corridor with the Joliet, Bloomington/Normal and Springfield stops in-between.
- Increase speeds, decrease travel times, improve frequencies and reliability of the Chicago to Champaign route, which links the Chicago region to the state's flagship University of Illinois campus.
- Improve service on the heavily used Chicago to Detroit and Chicago to Milwaukee corridors.
- Complete work on Chicago to the Quad Cities and to Iowa.
- Expand service from Chicago to Rockford.
- Explore better intercity and commuter connections to O'Hare airport, opening-up the potential to truly integrate rail and aviation in the Midwest.

Amtrak's plans building upon this Chicago service should include additional benefits including new and improved rail service connections to Madison, Cleveland and Columbus, Duluth, and Iowa City, which would provide expanded transportation options for those living in Illinois to travel in an economical and environmentally friendly manner. They include increased frequency and modern railcars and locomotives on most Midwest rail corridors. When paired with ongoing efforts in Illinois and Michigan to increase train speeds to 110 mph and the Federal Railroad Administration's ongoing studies of higher-speed rail in the Midwest, a bold vision of modern, fast, comfortable and convenient passenger rail service for the Midwest emerges.

Transportation is now the leading sector of U.S. greenhouse gas pollution. Investing in modern passenger rail will help provide low-carbon travel opportunities while creating quality and high paying jobs and connecting communities. Given the detrimental financial impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused in so many sectors of Illinois and the United States, an investment in expanding our intercity passenger rail infrastructure will benefit so many who have been left behind or who are looking for work. We know that investments in our transportation infrastructure system results in job creation. For every \$1 billion in federal investment in transportation infrastructure, an estimated 27,800 to 34,800 jobs are created ([U.S. Department of Transportation](#)).

Prior analysis has shown that to build out the system and purchase equipment would require billions of dollars for this effort. While those forecasts will need to be updated, we believe the federal government and Amtrak must lead these efforts.

We must invest in these systems to reduce travel time, improve access to all users, connect rural communities to job centers and downtown businesses, medical centers and universities, and ensure that the United States has a robust national passenger rail system that can be relied upon for decades to come. In the Midwest and across the country, investments in regional rail networks that support/complement long distance service can play a critical role in reducing climate pollution.

We support the President's plan to invest \$80 billion in Amtrak and ask that the Illinois and the Midwest Region be prioritized to increase ridership, ensure on time performance, and enhance existing surface. Investments in Illinois and the Midwest will benefit the national passenger rail network as a whole.

Sincerely,



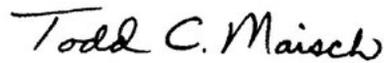
Howard Learner  
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Todd Maisch  
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Kelly Welsh  
President  
Civic Committee of the Commercial Club  
Of Chicago



Bob Reiter  
President  
Chicago Federation of Labor

Cc: Chairmen DeFazio, Carper, Cantwell, Peters  
Ranking Members Graves, Capito, Wicker, and Fischer