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Dear Governor Pritzker and members of the Illinois General Assembly,

Please create and fund an Integrated Railway Program to re-connect our communities with fast, frequent, and affordable trains and buses.

With rolling prairies, world-class universities, and innovative companies dotting the state, there’s so much to experience in Illinois. But decades of infrastructure planning centered on cars has left people with few ways of getting to it.

The current economic uncertainty makes it urgent that the state make travel more affordable and more convenient.

It will require an aggressive Integrated Railway Program to build bridges, make grade crossings safer, and buy new high-performance trains. We need a long-term plan combined with high-impact next steps.

A statewide plan is crucial. It will give planning agencies and stakeholders at every level a tool to think about how each piece of the network fits into the big picture. And it will allow them to collaborate on segments that have a transformative impact.

The plan should include:

* Fast, frequent and reliable trains linking cities throughout the state to Chicago, Springfield and St. Louis, with the first arrival timed for a 9 a.m. business meeting
* Modernized Metra service
* Fast, easy access to O’Hare, the Midwest’s gateway to the world
* Expanded transit systems throughout the state
* Better bus links to smaller communities

When the individual parts are well-designed, they work in harmony, and they’re valued more because they’re used more.

For too long, our strategy has been to only build new roads and more lanes. We’ve seen the result.

It’s time for a fresh approach.

It’s time to put Illinois on the fast track!