

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2009

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

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We ask that you prioritize Intercity Passenger Rail Corridor development in your funding strategy and interim guidance for the \$8 billion appropriated for passenger rail in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (“ARRA”). We strongly believe that an expansive intercity passenger rail network is the necessary foundation to support a comprehensive national passenger rail system with successful high speed rail corridors.

Congress and President Obama supported the investment in passenger rail infrastructure because of its ability to stimulate economic growth and job creation across the country. For every \$1 billion invested in passenger rail infrastructure, an estimated 20,000 green jobs are created. The \$8 billion allocated for passenger rail in ARRA has the ability to transform our Nation’s transportation system as Americans’ demand for safe, affordable, and reliable passenger rail service is at an all time high. Nearly 29 million passengers used Amtrak in 2008, marking the sixth year of increased ridership. Much of this success is occurring in states like Illinois who have been leaders in increasing their state passenger rail investment. After increasing service in 2007, Illinois’ three downstate intercity routes experienced among the highest percentage ridership and revenue increases across the country.

One of the most promising additions to the Midwest’s Chicago Hub Network is the Chicago-Omaha Intercity Passenger Rail Corridor via the Quad Cities, Iowa City, and Des Moines. With a combined population of 2.2 million residents between these metropolitan areas, this is the most highly populated corridor in the Midwest without passenger rail service to Chicago. The first two sections of the corridor are shovel ready. According to a 2008 Amtrak feasibility study, the Chicago-Quad Cities section requires \$22.7 million to improve track conditions for 79 mph service. The Quad Cities-Iowa City section requires \$32.5 million to improve track conditions for 79 mph service. An important \$475,000 appropriation secured in the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act will allow the Illinois Department of Transportation to move forward with final plans for necessary track improvements on this corridor.

With ridership on the Chicago-Quad Cities-Iowa City route expected at 187,000 annually, the direct economic impact will bring jobs and progress to our Illinois and Iowa constituents. In the

Quad Cities alone, an estimated 550-825 jobs will be created, household income is expected to increase by \$11-16 million, and property values will increase between \$55-72 million. We continue to hear from constituents who look forward to the benefits of passenger rail for business, tourism, and commuter travel as well as the associated impact on regional commerce, environment, and quality of life.

We are pleased by your leadership at the U.S Department of Transportation and we look forward to working together with you to stimulate the economy and transform our nation's transportation infrastructure. We appreciate the early indications that you plan to strike a balance between funding intercity rail corridors and high speed rail corridors. ARRA funding for intercity passenger rail projects will be critical to the future Intercity Passenger Rail Corridor development, including the Chicago-Quad Cities-Iowa City corridor, and we urge you to consider this project when making allocations to shovel-ready projects that will create jobs, modernize our transportation infrastructure and strengthen our economy.

Sincerely,

Phil Hare
Member of Congress

Bruce Braley
Member of Congress