Dear Conferees to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act,

We are writing to ask that you maintain maximum levels of funding for intercity passenger rail within the conference negotiations to reconcile differences between the Senate and House versions of HR 3, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

In particular, we ask that, at a minimum, you maintain components of both the Senate- and House-passed versions:

- $2 billion for high-speed rail (as contained in the Senate-passed version)
- $300 million for intercity passenger rail grants (House-passed version)
- $850 million for Amtrak (Senate-passed version)

We also support the $5.5 billion currently designated for surface transportation discretionary grants, as contained in the Senate version, as long as passenger rail projects are eligible to apply. Alternately, we would ask that the funding for high-speed rail and intercity passenger rail grants be increased by $5.5 billion.

**Investing in passenger rail projects will have a particularly stimulatory effect on our states, as there is pent-up demand for new and expanded service for intercity passenger rail throughout the country.** Passenger rail ridership – especially on shorter, corridor service – has increased dramatically. The Midwest has two, complementary multi-state projects – the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI) and Ohio Hub plans. Funding for our states to plan, design and construct these interconnected passenger rail systems would bring tangible benefits to the Midwest, not only creating short- and long-term jobs, but building a new, efficient passenger rail system across the region.

Railroad jobs, whether with Amtrak, the host freight railroads or railroad suppliers are typically good-paying full-time jobs with benefits that pay more than the nation’s median income. Also, passenger rail is the most energy-efficient means to move people over medium distances (100–600 miles).

**State projects that can be quickly obligated for improved intercity rail total far more than $5 billion across the nation,** not to mention the medium-term planning that is necessary to develop new routes. In the Midwest, the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) submitted to congressional leaders a list of more than $815 million in projects that could move forward within 120 days. The preliminary environmental work on the entire MWRRI and Ohio Hub systems could be completed for about $150 million.

Thank you for your assistance in ensuring maximum levels of funding for passenger rail in the reconciled version of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The funding will be well-used by the states – creating short- and long-term jobs, significantly improving our transportation infrastructure, and constructing a more energy-efficient transportation system.

Sincerely,

Rep. Charlie Schlottach, Missouri
MIPRC Chair

Rep. Linda Slocum, Minnesota
MIPRC Vice Chair

Sen. Daryl Beall, Iowa
MIPRC Financial Officer