News Release

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) calls on members of Congress to expand our nation’s passenger rail system

June 24, 2008

Contact: Laura Kliewer, Director
Midwest interstate Passenger Rail Commission
(630)925-1922

Lombard, IL - Delegates of the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission met with members of Congress on June 18 to express support of substantive passenger rail legislation passed by both chambers and to encourage policies and funding to increase passenger rail service. The MIPRC – an interstate compact commission of Midwestern state legislators, governors and their designees – believes that preservation and expansion of our existing passenger rail system is essential.

Both H.R. 6003 and S. 294 would reauthorize Amtrak and provide for the first multi-year federal program to provide funding for passenger rail improvements and equipment investments.

- The MIPRC calls for support of the H.R. 6003/S. 294 conference committee report when it is finalized, as long as it still contains authorization of substantive funding for state capital grants at an 80/20 federal/state match.

- Additionally, within the FY 2009 transportation appropriations legislation, the MIPRC calls on Congress to:
  1. support full funding of Amtrak at $1.6 billion;
  2. support inclusion of at least $100 million for capital assistance to states for intercity passenger rail projects; and
  3. provide $114 million for Amtrak labor settlements, as recommended by Presidential Emergency Board 242.

- The MIPRC calls for additional federal funds dedicated to overhauling more passenger rail cars and purchasing new equipment. As gas prices continue to rise, states are planning to develop their passenger rail corridors and increase train frequencies on existing corridors. However, there is a desperate shortage of passenger cars needed for additional corridor service. Amtrak’s capital plan includes refurbishing 12 stored cars in FY 2009; there are approximately 65 Amfleet I cars that, if restored, could be returned to service.

Increasing America’s energy independence and security, as well as providing solutions to our increasingly congested transportation system, are overriding national concerns. We can no longer afford to overlook the development of frequent, more efficient passenger rail service as an important solution to the future of passenger transportation.

The Commission strongly supports increased passenger rail service for the region, through development of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative and Ohio Hub Regional Rail plans. Improving this aspect of our transportation infrastructure will make us more competitive economically, stimulate the economy and create jobs, while easing congestion and improving air quality.

We welcome the opportunity to work with members of Congress to develop the strong federal-state partnership necessary to advance passenger rail improvements in our region and nation.

#

The MIPRC is a 10-state compact of Midwestern states working together to preserve and improve passenger rail service in the region. The member states are Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin.