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*Bringing Together
State Leaders from
Across the Region
to Advocate
for Passenger Rail
Improvements*

News Release

MIPRC Commissioners Advocate for Federal Support of Passenger Rail

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The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) calls on Members of Congress to preserve and expand our nation's passenger rail system.

LOMBARD, IL — Commissioners of the MIPRC met with members of Congress in Washington, D.C. on June 5th to encourage the passage of legislation that strengthens the nation's passenger rail system. A current bill under consideration in the U.S. Senate, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (S. 294), would provide Amtrak with the financial stability to plan for new and better services, as well as provide states with matching funds for rail development and improvement.

The MIPRC – an interstate compact commission of Midwestern state legislators, governors and their appointees – believes that preservation and expansion of our existing passenger rail system is essential. There is also a critical need for the development of faster, more frequent passenger rail service in our region.

Meeting these needs also carries significant benefits, not only to the mobility of our people and businesses, but to our regional and national need to conserve energy, improve air quality, reduce congestion and enhance economic vitality. It is also clear that improved rail service is a necessity for our national security and emergency preparedness.

Where the option is available, our Midwestern citizens are taking the train in record numbers, even though our current passenger rail system remains under-funded. That lack of investment leaves the system strained, and unable to reach even greater numbers of the region's residents.

The Midwestern states have developed two aggressive, innovative plans to bring better, more frequent passenger rail service to the region. Advancing those plans requires the same strong federal partnership that has historically benefited other modes of transportation such as highways and aviation. The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative and Ohio Hub plans would bring significant economic returns from these investments if a strong federal-state partnership can be achieved.

Therefore, the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission requests that Congress:

- **Establish and fund a first-ever mechanism for passenger rail development and improvement from which states can draw upon matching funds.**
The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (S. 294) establishes such a mechanism.
- **Reauthorize Amtrak.** Amtrak's authorization expired in September of 2002. S. 294 would also reauthorize Amtrak for five years, providing it with the financial stability necessary to plan for new and better services.

The commission also expects similar legislation to be introduced in the U.S. House following hearings on passenger rail being held this month by the rail subcommittee of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee. 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 Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission, created by an interstate compact in 2000, brings together the region's leaders to advocate for expansion of and improvements to the Midwest's passenger rail system. The commission seeks to provide a unified voice for the region in calling for federal support of passenger rail development as a key component of a strong, multimodal transportation system for the future.