

**Sens. Beall, Kibbie: Call on Congress and President Obama to increase funding for rail in stimulus plan**

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**STATE LAWMAKERS CALL ON CONGRESS AND PRESIDENT OBAMA TO INCREASE FUNDING FOR RAIL IN STIMULUS PLAN**

DES MOINES – Three members of the Iowa General Assembly joined colleagues throughout the Midwest today to urge federal lawmakers to invest significantly in intercity passenger rail in the economic stimulus plan working its way through the U.S. Congress.

State Senators Jack Kibbie and Daryl Beall and State Representative Paul Bell are Iowa's legislatively-appointed members to the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC), a 10-state coalition that advocates at the local, state and federal levels for passenger rail development. The MIPRC commissioners urged the public to contact their members of the U.S. House and Senate, urging support for an increase in funding for passenger rail.

"The economic stimulus plan currently being considered by Congress provides an incredible opportunity to build a modern regional passenger rail network that makes America and Iowa more energy-efficient, sustainable and prosperous, while at the same time putting more Iowans and Americans to work," said Sen. Beall (D-Ft. Dodge), who serves as MIPRC's financial officer.

Unfortunately, the first drafts of the federal stimulus plan miss the mark, the lawmakers said.

Wednesday night the U.S. House passed its stimulus plan, the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act. The bill allocates only \$1.1 billion to rail – \$800 million to Amtrak and \$300 million to state projects to improve intercity rail outside of Amtrak's capital needs.

While investing in state projects is the best way to build up the Midwest's intercity passenger rail network, \$300 million is not nearly enough to build up intercity rail.

A much better proposal came from the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which recommended a \$5 billion total investment in rail: \$3.4 billion for state passenger rail projects, \$1.5 billion for Amtrak and \$100 million for short line railroads.

"The best way to make sure our transportation investments meet our energy policy goals is to invest in intercity rail, said Senate President Jack Kibbie (D-Emmetsburg). "We cannot afford to miss this opportunity to create jobs that lead to long-term prosperity through better intercity rail that connects the Midwest."

Passenger rail is the most energy-efficient means to move people over medium distances (100–600 miles). Increased funding for 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.

(more)

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The way to build a regional network is by improving routes and lines in each state. State projects that can be quickly obligated for improved intercity rail total far more than \$5 billion throughout the nation, not to mention the medium-term planning that is necessary to develop new routes.

Midwestern states have been working together for more than 10 years on two multi-state plans to bring faster, more-frequent passenger rail service to the region. On behalf of the Midwestern states, the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) has submitted to congressional leaders a list of more than \$815 million in projects that could move forward within 120 days.

In Iowa, the federal stimulus could provide funding for track, signaling and other improvements to begin new service between the Quad Cities and Iowa City, and between Chicago and Dubuque. The preliminary environmental work on the entire Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI) and Ohio Hub systems could be completed for about \$150 million. A two-page listing of those projects follows.

"There is pent-up demand for new and expanded service for intercity passenger rail throughout the Midwest," said Rep. Bell (D-Newton). "Passenger rail ridership – especially on shorter, corridor service that would be implemented by the build-out of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative and Ohio Hub plans – has increased dramatically, but federal funding to help build these systems has not followed."

The lawmakers called on Congress and President Obama to increase funding to help complete pending rail projects, enhance and improve operations and create jobs in this struggling economy.

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