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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 5, 2009

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GOVERNOR CULVER ANNOUNCES FIRST STEP TOWARD IOWA INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL

Iowa, Illinois DOTs apply for federal high-speed rail funding

DES MOINES –Governor Chet Culver announced today that the Iowa and Illinois departments of transportation submitted grant applications for funding from the federal High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) discretionary grant program for new and enhanced passenger rail services from Chicago to Iowa City via the Quad Cities and from Chicago to Dubuque.

“These projects will create jobs, improve Iowa’s transportation infrastructure and help create a modern, 21st century rail system in our state,” said Governor Chet Culver. “I am committed to bringing passenger rail service between Iowa City and Chicago, and between Dubuque and Chicago, in order to give Iowans more freedom to travel, and to help grow this segment of our economy. I look forward to working with our federal partners, and to working with Governor Quinn of Illinois to make this vision a reality.”

According to the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT), the grant funding would be used to support continued environmental impact analyses, track infrastructure construction and improvements, layover facility construction, equipment acquisition, and station improvements to implement service.

These HSIPR grant funds were made available as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and would be the majority of the overall financing package for these two projects. The funds would be combined with Iowa and Illinois state funds to help ensure that these projects move forward in a timely manner.

According to the grant application, these two projects would provide Iowa the opportunity to move forward with its passenger rail vision as documented in the State Rail Plan, State Transportation Plan and previous Midwest Regional Rail Initiative planning documents. The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative is a consortium of nine states that have been jointly pursuing the development of new and enhanced passenger rail services through a Midwest passenger rail network with Chicago as its hub.

Preliminary engineering has been completed for both routes. A public information meeting was held Sept. 29 in the Quad Cities to discuss the draft environmental assessment documents for the Chicago to Iowa City passenger rail route. A public information meeting will be held Oct. 6 in Rockford, Ill., to discuss the draft environmental assessment documents for the Chicago to Dubuque passenger rail route.

“Over the last few months I have visited many Iowa communities on the Iowa Unlimited train tour to showcase the benefits of passenger rail and to gauge and encourage citizen support for increased passenger rail service in Iowa,” said Governor Culver. “From these conversations with Iowans, it is clear to me that there is tremendous interest in and support of increased passenger rail between Chicago and Iowa’s communities.”

To view the applications and supporting documents, visit <http://www.iowadot.gov/recovery/index.htm>.

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