
(June 11, 2008) Lipinski Helps Pass Bill to Put Passenger Rail Back on Track

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Historic Legislation Stands to Benefit Chicagoland Commuters and Amtrak

[WASHINGTON, D.C.] Today Representative Dan Lipinski (D-IL), a member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, helped pass H.R. 6003, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008. This historic legislation authorizes \$14.9 billion for Amtrak over the next five years and provides significant resources to maintain and improve Chicago's current passenger rail service to cities such as Quincy, Carbondale, Milwaukee, St. Louis, and Detroit. It will also help commuters near Summit, Willow Springs, and all of Metra's Heritage Corridor Line by easing congestion. This bill will also aid the establishment of new passenger rail service in Illinois to places such as Rockford, the Quad Cities, and Peoria.

"With record gas prices all across the country, more and more people are looking for affordable transportation options," explained Lipinski. "A modern passenger and commuter rail system can fill that need for Americans. But for far too long, the federal government simply has not made the necessary investments in our rail system. The unfortunate result is that we now have a 21st century economy running on a 19th century rail network. For Amtrak passengers across the country and most Metra commuters in Chicagoland, this has directly translated into frequent delays and limited service. In Illinois, problems are especially severe as Amtrak and Metra generally share already over-congested infrastructure with the freight railroads. Americans deserve better. Illinois residents deserve better. Today's landmark legislation is a huge step in the right direction and has the potential to bring our rail system on par with the modern passenger and commuter rail systems around the world."

H.R. 6003 would provide \$1.34 billion per year to Amtrak for capital grants and an average of \$606 million per year for operating grants. In addition, this legislation would promote the development of State Passenger Corridors by providing a record \$500 million per year in grants to states to pay for the capital costs of facilities and equipment needed to provide new or improved intercity passenger rail. Metra's Heritage Corridor Line, which shares tracks with Amtrak's Chicago-St. Louis route, may especially benefit as the bill contains a provision that could provide funding to reduce congestion on the Chicago-Joliet segment of that Amtrak route.

"H.R. 6003 gives us a vision for the future, but most importantly, it will provide the necessary investments to help make our rail system the best in the world," explained Lipinski. "Better passenger and commuter rail service means less congestion on highways like I-55 and I-90/94. It means a cleaner environment. It means economic development. In Illinois, this could mean newer trains and better service along the existing routes, fewer delays and more options on the Heritage Corridor Line, and less congestion on the most popular intercity routes. I am proud to have helped pass this legislation and urge its speedy consideration in the Senate."