

(June 17, 2008) Lipinski Brings Transportation Committee Chairman to Assess Local Infrastructure

Lipinski Brings Transportation Committee Chairman to Assess Local Infrastructure

Upcoming Transportation Reauthorization Could Provide Historic Funding for Local Projects

[CHICAGO, IL] Today, Congressman Dan Lipinski (IL-3) brought House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Jim Oberstar (MN) to the area for a number of site visits and meetings with local officials to assess the transportation system. The Congressmen viewed the progress being made towards modernizing and improving local infrastructure with resources allocated in 2005 under the last federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU. This historic legislation provided \$286.5 billion in transportation funding over five years, including an annual \$1.2 billion for highways and \$420 million for transit in Illinois. Next year, Congress is expected to reauthorize SAFETEA-LU, potentially resulting in more federal funds for Illinois transportation projects.

"I am pleased to welcome Chairman Oberstar to America's transportation hub," said Rep. Lipinski. "As the crossroads of our country's freight rail lines, the intersecting point of several major highways, and the busiest aviation market in America, Chicagoland's transportation issues are America's transportation issues. And with the Chairman's strong support, our infrastructure has undergone significant upgrades in recent years. I look forward to continuing to work with him in considering the best way to move forward in light of the upcoming federal transportation bill, which could provide as much as half a trillion dollars in funding for surface transportation programs over the next five years."

Congressman Lipinski, who is the only member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure from northeastern Illinois, secured \$100 million in SAFETEA-LU for the CREATE program, a \$1.5 billion public-private partnership aimed at reducing congestion and emissions in Chicagoland while also improving grade crossing safety and stimulating the regional economy. As one of only 25 congressionally designated projects of "National and Regional Significance," CREATE includes numerous improvements to both the local railroad infrastructure and the highway system, benefiting national and regional freight traffic, commuter traffic, intercity rail passengers, and local road traffic.

"Congress recognized the importance of CREATE by allocating the program one of the single highest dollar amounts in SAFETEA-LU," explained Lipinski. "The upcoming reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU presents an opportunity for Congress to build on the progress we have already made. I am pleased that Chairman Oberstar could have an inside look at Chicagoland's infrastructure situation. The Chairman is the leading voice in setting the nation's transportation policy and I am grateful for his leadership, consideration, and support."

Today's site visits allowed Lipinski and Oberstar to view several CREATE projects and transit facilities in the Chicago area, as well as discuss regional projects of importance like the planned Central Avenue bypass. The Congressmen made stops at Brighton Park, the Clearing Yard, the La Grange Metra Station, and also toured the CTA Orange and Blue Lines. Informational meetings were held with Metra and Pace Bus at the La Grange Village Hall and with CTA at O'Hare International Airport.