

(October 25, 2008) Lipinski Announces Grant to Start Weekend Service

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on Metra's SouthWest Service

Congressman Joined by Metra, RTA, and Local Mayors

[Chicago Ridge, IL] Today Congressman Dan Lipinski, Chicagoland's only member of the powerful House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, along with officials from Metra and the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) announced a \$680,000 grant to begin weekend service for the first time ever on Metra's SouthWest Service. The RTA and Metra have each agreed to pay half of the \$680,000 cost. The demonstration project will begin running in early Spring next year.

Lipinski was joined by Phil Pagano, Executive Director of Metra, Steve Schlickman, Executive Director of the RTA, Mayor Gene Siegel of Chicago Ridge, Mayor Ed Gudziol of Worth, and Mayor Bill Borgo of Manhattan. The SouthWest Service runs from Chicago to Manhattan with stops in communities such as Ashburn, Wrightwood, Oak Lawn, Chicago Ridge, Worth, Palos Heights, and Palos Park.

"Today is an important day for all those who live along the Metra Southwest Service, not only in Oak Lawn, Chicago Ridge, Worth, and Palos but all the way from Wrightwood to Manhattan," said Lipinski. "Soon we should have convenient weekend access from all of these communities into downtown Chicago and to all destinations along the line. Whether someone is going to work on the weekend or a family is going out for a day of fun, this will be very beneficial, especially in these tough economic times. It will also help communities along the line to bring people to destinations in their towns, like the Oak Lawn Children's Museum.

"The SouthWest Service serves a rapidly growing population, and I have heard from many people about their desire for weekend trains," stated Lipinski. "Many residents in my district have viewed weekend trains on this line as only a dream. In early Spring that dream should become a reality. Metra and the RTA should be commended for making this possible. And while I understand that Metra intends to run this as a demonstration project to test ridership, I have no doubt that if you run it, they will come."

Congressman Lipinski convened a high-level meeting on July 28, 2008 to bring together Metra and other stakeholders, including the freight railroads, to look for options and solutions to bring weekend trains to the SouthWest Service. On October 17, Metra released its preliminary 2009 budget which included plans to run three round trips on this line every Saturday. Earlier today, the RTA Board approved a \$340,000 grant for this service, which will be matched dollar for dollar by Metra. The weekend trains will start off as a demonstration project to test ridership levels. The Metra Board will vote on the budget next month.

"I am here to salute Congressman Lipinski's leadership on behalf of all of the residents of Worth," said Mayor Ed Guzdziol. "After hearing many others talk about getting weekend trains, Dan Lipinski went out and got it done. Congressman Lipinski continues to be a leader fighting and winning for our communities."

"Weekend service is going to be great for Chicago Ridge, and I want to thank Congressman Lipinski for all his work on this issue," said Mayor Gene Siegel of Chicago Ridge. "I am glad that we have a representative who listens to his constituents, understands their needs, and gets results for them."

Lipinski is the only Chicagoland congressman on the powerful House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which is tasked with rewriting a \$286.5 billion highway and transit funding bill next year. This legislation provides billions of dollars to Illinois and local transit agencies for road and transit funding.