

(January 28, 2009) Crain's: Ill. may get \$105M for transit in stimulus bill

By Paul Merrion

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(Crain's) - The House of Representatives added \$3 billion in rail and bus system spending to the \$825-billion stimulus package Wednesday.

In response to criticism that the bill was relatively light on mass-transportation improvements, an amendment raising transit spending to \$12 billion from \$9 billion passed easily by a voice vote.

Half of the new money will be distributed to states using existing criteria in the law, which should mean at least \$105 million more for Illinois, including at least \$76 million more for the Chicago area, according to Rep. Dan Lipinski, D-Chicago, one of the original co-sponsors of the measure.

"My amendment is a victory for Chicagoland residents," Mr. Lipinski said in a statement. "As Chicagoland's only member on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and a life-long transit rider, I know and understand that transit is the lifeblood for our region."

The remaining \$1.5-billion increase will fund new transit projects, which Chicago and other cities will compete to win.

Mr. Lipinski said he is confident that "CTA, Metra and Pace can move ahead with long-delayed transit projects that mean real jobs for real people in our region and across this country."