



Legislative Director. I also served as Mayor of Riverdale and was active for many years in civic causes focusing on transportation planning in the Chicago region.

These varied experiences have all proven helpful in my new responsibilities as Federal Railroad Administrator as the Federal Railroad Administration grows and takes on

new and exciting roles. Historically, FRA has been a safety agency, whose role was enhanced by the advent of Positive Train Control (PTC). With the advent of the Obama Administration and the President's focus on High Speed Rail (HSR), we have found our agency's role greatly expanded as we administer the selection process for the grant awards for the \$8 billion appropriated for HSR.

Whether the application is for 110 or 79 mile per hour services, the expansion of passenger rail, especially in areas of population concentrations, is critical to the success of our country. With the proposed railroad services, we know the routes and are a long way toward developing the costs. In short, it is a delight to share my remarks with you, because I know the significant transportation issues in Illinois and the Chicago Hub Network quite well from personal experience as a railroad employee, civic leader and legislative director.

My question to everyone is this: "Why should you care about rail?" Most people understand the importance and economic impact of O'Hare International Airport. It's one of the busiest airports, not just in the U.S., but also the world. But rail's significance in Chicago and the Midwest – both passenger and freight – is a story not often told.

We know that Chicago has been the hub of our nation's rail system for more than a hundred years. While this passenger rail hub may have lost some of its old glory – as a regional hub – its economic impact can again be significant. I'll come back to this point.

What is the impact of the freight rail industry in Illinois today? Some 44 freight railroads operate in the state, employing nearly 12,500 residents. This equates to some \$1.25 billion of salary and benefits.

Chicago is the heart of the rail industry, with one-third of the nation's rail cargo moving through the region. In fiscal year 2008, 4.4 million Amtrak passengers started or ended their trips in Illinois. Chicago is the world's 3rd busiest intermodal hub, surpassed only by Hong Kong and Singapore. The new intermodal hubs being developed in Joliet, McCook and elsewhere allow us to take advantage of the progress under CREATE in order to move freight more efficiently through the Chicago area.

These partnerships, like CREATE and the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI), create real efficiencies and further the Obama Administration's larger transportation goals: they create jobs; are



▲ An important service of the Illinois-funded trains is connecting "downstate" communities with Chicago and the rest of the world. A time-honored group of passengers has been university students, faculty and administrators. The *Saluki* and *Illini* trains connect the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, Eastern Illinois University at Charleston and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Trains to St. Louis and Quincy connect a number of colleges and universities as well. Amtrak B32-8WH number 508 is on the rear end of train number 391, the southbound *Saluki* at Homewood in May 2009. —Paul Burgess photo

▼ The value of the combined network of Amtrak and Metra trains serving Chicago cannot be underestimated in terms of economic and environmental benefits. As passenger trains become more a part of daily life in our society, there will be a greater understanding of the role of trains, freight and passenger, in the economic infrastructure of the United States. An outbound Metra train is passing an inbound Hiawatha Service train at Canal Street, Chicago, in the summer of 2005. —Mark Llanuza photo



about energy and environmentally-friendly modes of transportation; reduce rail and street congestion; and make communities more livable.

While at first-blush it might be hard to think of freight rail as making communities more livable, think of the impact of not having freight rail. A single train can take 280 trucks off of the highways. The relationship between our high-speed and freight rail initiatives must dovetail into the Administration's strategic goals for the national transportation system.

We're fostering this movement in several ways, including the development of our nation's first National Rail Plan, which will be a multi-modal effort.

We must ensure that rail – both passenger and freight – are part of a balanced transportation network which allows people and goods to use the transportation mode which is most efficient for a particular part of a journey.

At FRA, we released a study a few months ago, which noted that rail offers a huge comparative advantage over trucks when it comes to moving goods.

Rail fuel efficiency is much higher than truck fuel efficiency in terms of ton-miles per gallon. Specifically, trains are nearly 2 to 5.5 times more fuel efficient than trucks.

The benefits of rail are not at all confined to Chicago. Rail connects downstate Illinois to the world. This includes the shipping of goods to Chicago and then to ports and numerous overseas markets. MWRRRI – which will include seamless connections to airports – can also serve to connect downstate and out-of-state passengers to any number of domestic and international destinations through Chicago. As the center of rail activity in this country, Chicago and the State of Illinois have been innovators of new programs that alleviate transportation congestion.

When it comes to passenger rail development, Illinois has done a tremendous amount of work and currently has the second largest state-sponsored program in the nation. MWRRRI serves as a great example of cooperation among the elected officials and state departments of transportation (DOT) from nine states. Focusing on the Chicago hub, the plan calls for an integrated system of trains, with high frequency of service, traveling at speeds up to 110 miles-an-hour. When fully implemented, trip times would be dramatically reduced and become competitive with air or auto.



▲ Restoration of service in the Midwest states is a hallmark of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative. Service to Dubuque, the Quad Cities and Iowa City and to Madison and ultimately Green Bay in Wisconsin are among the plans being considered. Circa 1975, a trio of Budd Rail Diesel Cars is protecting the Black Hawk's schedule as it races into the setting sun. Perhaps someone can recognize this location. —Mark Llanuza photo

▼ The area surrounding Joliet is now named the Port of Illinois. The BNSF intermodal terminal on the former Joliet Arsenal property has been operating for a number of years. Union Pacific is constructing an intermodal facility just south of Joliet on the former Gulf Mobile & Ohio. Even with the size of these facilities, the intermodal terminals, the BNSF intermodal terminals at Clyde, Corwith and Willow Springs and the UP facilities at Wood Street, Proviso, and Rochelle will remain in service. In terms of total cargo handled, Chicago is the fifth largest shipping terminal in the world and the third largest intermodal terminal in the world. This is an astounding fact for an area that is hundreds of miles from the nearest ocean. BNSF 4936 is leading a double-stack train out of Clyde Yard through the Highlands station in Hinsdale, Illinois in March 2008. —Paul Burgess photo



For example, city center to city center times may be:

|                     |      |
|---------------------|------|
| Chicago – St. Louis | 3:49 |
| Chicago – Milwaukee | 1:04 |
| Chicago – Detroit   | 3:46 |

The economic benefits generated are expected to be enormous. It is estimated that the region's businesses will see \$16.9 billion in increased output while the system is being constructed. Once up and running, the estimated joint development potential for Illinois communities is more than \$2.2 billion, including more than 24,000 permanent Illinois jobs and \$480 million of new Illinois household income. These benefits will be multiplied across the Midwest. As Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood and I have been saying for months, it is state partnerships like MWRRI that will allow high-speed rail to become a reality.

The President's vision for High Speed Rail represents America's first nationwide initiative to promote the growth of passenger rail. Over time, the goal is for a number of regional routes to link cities and eventually regions together, creating a seamless network that offers an alternative to air and auto. But like the development of the interstate highway system, it will take time and money.

Our vision for passenger rail is comprehensive, ranging from dedicated right-of-ways with speeds of 150 to 200 MPH; to improvements to existing freight railroads with speeds of 110 to 125 MPH; to significant improvements to traditional 79 MPH service.

In any given corridor, there is a sweet spot of investment that produces maximal ridership and public benefits, at minimal public cost.

To a great extent, it depends on the specific city-pair markets that are served; the door-to-door travel times that rail must achieve to attract ridership from other modes; the investments required to produce those trip time savings; and the demand levels, revenues, and expenses that the technology would generate. In short, it is about developing services that are competitive with, or superior to, air and auto travel in a given market.

Beyond these immediate opportunities, we view our high-speed rail initiative as a long-term venture, much like the Interstate Highway System, which took more than four decades to complete. When President Eisenhower proposed the Interstate Highway System, no one knew the routes or the cost. Now, our highway network is the envy of the world...as is our freight rail system. I think the will of the

Administration, Congress and the nation will continue to push this effort forward, but look for the development of high-speed corridors to develop in line with the mega-regions in the US.

It should come as no surprise that the proposed corridors generally overlay the U.S. mega-regions, confirming our belief that the high-speed corridors work best in densely populated areas, while the intercity Amtrak service provides connectivity to these corridors.

The impact of the high-speed and intercity passenger rail program extends beyond operational improvements to broader issues like job creation, developing livable communities, energy efficiency, environmental friendliness, and enhanced regional mobility. The administration has made a long-term commitment to high-speed rail, and we are very excited about this development. And with diligent effort, Illinois has the opportunity for tremendous economic benefits.

I hope that I have impressed upon you the importance of rail. Public support for rail is crucial, if we are to continue to make long-term investments. Rail-oriented publications such as *First & Fastest* help educate people, but we need to reach the population of the United States as a whole. Please spread the word.



▲ The bicycle path bridge on the former Chicago North Shore & Milwaukee Mundelein branch over the former Milwaukee Road at Rondout is a very good place to watch the passage of Hiawatha Service trains. Trains 336 and 335, running "left-handed" are passing each other around 1:50 p.m. on January 16, 2006. Patronage on these trains continues to have long-term growth. In 2010, all trains are now running with six cars. —Stefan Loeb photo

For more information regarding Amtrak, see pages 90-93 of the Wire Report in this issue. For Metra, see pages 85-87.