



onboardmidwest.com

For Immediate Release:

January 28, 2010

Contact:

Mike Zipko 651-269-8756

mikez@goffhoward.com

Mississippi River High-Speed Corridor Receives Federal Funding

High-speed rail line from Chicago to Saint Paul receives \$823 million from the Obama Administration

SAINT PAUL, Minn. – The Obama Administration announced today that planning work related to high-speed rail upgrades to the Mississippi River Route will receive federal funding in the first round of investments from the America's Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The White House approved a total \$823 million for the high-speed rail line from Chicago to Saint Paul, including a \$1 million grant to help transportation officials in Minnesota and Wisconsin study the feasibility of extending a high-speed rail line between Madison and Saint Paul.

"Obama's decision to include the River Route in the first round of funding is a significant milestone for this project and high-speed rail in our region," said Ramsey County Commissioner Jim McDonough, chair of the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority. "This money will help transform the River Route into a vibrant connection that will benefit everyone from Saint Paul to Winona. The hard work and leadership of city and county officials along the route has helped us all turn this idea into a reality."

In December, the Minnesota Department of Transportation released a comprehensive statewide rail plan that listed the Mississippi River Route as a Tier 1 project that was ready to be implemented. The project includes high-speed rail upgrades to the Mississippi River Route, from Saint Paul through Hastings, Red Wing, and Winona and east through Wisconsin to Chicago. State and regional officials have been developing this plan for years, and it is the most cost-effective route to connect Saint Paul and Chicago via high-speed rail.

"The decision by the Obama Administration shows the true power of the partnership between the public and private sectors," said Susan Kimberly, interim director of the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce. "Both the business community and the government understand the impact high-speed rail would have on our region to create jobs, inspire new investment, and strengthen our connection to other cities. The success of this project has inspired us to continue to work together on future transportation projects that will benefit our region."

Of the \$8 billion being allocated, the Midwest region received approximately \$2.6 billion in federal grants, second only to the West region. Nine projects in the Midwest were selected, including a planning study to explore the extension of high-speed rail service to the Twin Cities from Chicago. The grants included projects in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Michigan.

The decision by the Federal government to fund projects in the region follows years of work by planners to identify key routes and projects across the entire region. The first round of projects will help create stronger connections between key cities in the Midwest while also creating new incentives for leaders to continue to work on projects that could be part of the next round of funding.

"A robust transportation system that includes high-speed rail is vital to creating job growth and strengthening the economy in the region. The Obama Administration's decision to allocate Recovery Act dollars to the project illustrates how important it is for Saint Paul and our entire region to have an effective partner in Washington," said Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman. "Today is a great day for the future of our region."

"Our challenge now is to work even harder with elected officials at the local, state, and federal level to build on this momentum, said Susan Kratz, an attorney at Moore, Costello & Hart and chairperson of the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce board of directors. "It is more important than ever that we get behind the MnDOT plan and support one route and implement the overall vision. Transit has the ability to create jobs, new investment in so many communities. It is our challenge to make the most of this opportunity."

About On Board Midwest

On Board Midwest is a coalition of businesses, elected officials, organizations, and individuals who support the proposed high-speed rail line project connecting Saint Paul and Chicago. For more information please, visit www.onboardmidwest.com.

###