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### ***Jobs on Track with High-Speed Rail***

Working my way through college and law school, I drove a limousine up and down our tollway system in northern Illinois. As a student of urban economics, I've always hoped for the day when light rail and high-speed rail would be part of our overall transportation system.

On January 28<sup>th</sup>, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced that President Obama and Vice President Biden are jump-starting high-speed rail with \$8 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act High-Speed and Inter-city Passenger Rail grants.

In Illinois \$1.1 billion will be invested in high-speed rail between Chicago and St. Louis. Secretary LaHood described Chicago and St. Louis as "cities that are too close for efficient air travel" and "too far for productive road travel."

High-speed rail will reduce highway traffic, fuel consumption and vehicle emissions. It's good for the environment and for the pocketbook. Best of all, it produces jobs that are needed now and jobs for the future in Illinois.

Much of the money creates or expands rail manufacturing in the United States. This means jobs -- jobs in planning and design, laying rail, upgrading stations, operating equipment, and modernizing tunnels and bridges.

This is a real boost for travel and commerce across the country. It's about time we replaced 19th century infrastructure with 21st century technology. These grants will also improve our rail links with Detroit, Milwaukee and Madison making train service between these destinations faster and safer.

Senator Dick Durbin and the Illinois Congressional Delegation made the case to Secretary LaHood late last year for an integrated high-speed rail network. Chicago would be the hub for 3,000 miles of track, serving 90 percent of the 60.3 million people living in nine Midwest states.

Transportation in Illinois and the Midwest is moving forward. The people of Illinois are now finally moving ahead into a new era of transportation efficiency and economic prosperity. All aboard!

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