

United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-1304

January 9, 2017

Randall S. Blankenhorn  
Secretary  
Illinois Department of Transportation  
Hanley Building  
2300 S. Dirksen Parkway  
Springfield, IL 62764

Dear Secretary Blankenhorn:

I encourage you to work directly with community leaders and area residents as planning continues for increased Amtrak service on the Hiawatha line between Chicago, IL, and Milwaukee, WI. I appreciate the recent extension of the proposal's public comment period to allow additional time for the consideration of surrounding communities' concerns. Reducing any negative local impact of the proposed changes must remain a top priority as this project moves forward, and I encourage you to continue your dialogue with the affected communities with the hope that all concerns related to the potential impact of track improvements and expanded passenger rail operations will be appropriately addressed.

I remain committed to improving and increasing passenger rail service in Chicago and throughout Illinois. Achieving this goal will improve the daily commute of thousands of the region's residents, help bring thousands of people into Chicago, and generate millions in economic activity for the city and the region.

However, the Illinois Department of Transportation must work together with community leaders to ensure that the impacts this project may have on the property values and quality of life of residents are clearly identified and addressed. The States of Illinois and Wisconsin have a unique opportunity to manage increased demands for service and make critical infrastructure improvements that will provide benefits to local commerce and communities around the region.

I look forward to working with you to improve passenger rail service in Illinois and continuing our dialogue with community leaders, Amtrak, Metra, freight railroads, and federal and state governments to make increased service along the Hiawatha corridor a reality while reducing any harmful local impact.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin  
U.S. Senator