



OFFICE OF GOVERNOR PAT QUINN

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Thursday, November 15, 2012

CONTACT: Brooke Anderson (o. 312-814-3158; c. 312-590-0195)
Josh Kauffman (IDOT) (o. 217-558-0517; c. 217-836-7870)

Illinois Approves Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Chicago-St. Louis High-Speed Rail Corridor

Tier 1 EIS Decision Expected in December on Historic Transportation Project

SPRINGFIELD –November 15, 2012. Governor Pat Quinn today announced that the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) have signed and issued the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the full build-out of the Chicago-St. Louis high-speed rail corridor. The EIS advances the identification of preferred alternatives, including the Rock Island Corridor as the recommended route between Joliet and Chicago and a Tier 2 project-level evaluation for the Springfield Rail Improvement Project, which recommended a consolidated train route along 10th Street through Springfield. The document will now be available to the public and a potential Record of Decision could be issued at the end of December.

“This historic achievement advances the crucial Chicago-St. Louis high-speed rail project while signifying that all environmental impacts and route alternatives have been analyzed to determine the best option,” Governor Quinn said. “Today’s issuance of the EIS demonstrates Illinois’ steadfast diligence and partnership with the federal government, Senator Dick Durbin, communities along the route, private rail partners and other key supporters to move this project forward as quickly as possible.”

The Tier 1 EIS includes IDOT’s preferred Chicago-Joliet route—the Rock Island Corridor (RIC) instead of the existing route—the Heritage Corridor. The \$1 billion estimated cost for upgrading the RIC is \$500 million less than for the Heritage, mainly because fewer grade separations would be needed. The EIS also represents significant progress on the next stage of high-speed rail after upgrades to the Dwight-Alton portion of the corridor (expected as early as 2015) and the Dwight-Joliet section (anticipated to be complete in 2017) are finished.

“We are one step closer to the Tenth Street corridor in Springfield,” U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) said. “Our community-wide efforts and the Springfield meeting we arranged with federal, state and local officials last year put us on the ‘right track’: Tenth Street.”

“I was thrilled to sign this historic document, which represents thousands of hours spent by our staff and contractors researching and using environmental, scientific and engineering evidence along with public input to determine the most logical and effective routes for Chicago-St. Louis high-speed rail passenger service,” Illinois Transportation Secretary Ann L. Schneider said. “Today marks a major milestone in our pursuit to advance the project, and we hope it results with a Record of Decision from the federal government in the next couple of months.”

-MORE-



The Tier 1 EIS focuses on double-tracking the entire line, while the Tier 2 EIS pinpoints two alternatives along the existing 10th Street rail corridor as finalists to carry the high-speed trains through Springfield. A series of statewide public hearings were held by IDOT and the FRA this year to seek comments on the Draft EIS. To view a copy of the EIS online, please visit idothsr.org.

“The approval from IDOT represents a major step forward for the project and indicates we will receive a favorable Record of Decision in December,” Springfield Mayor Mike Houston said.

EIS approval is a process required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for federal projects that might significantly impact the environment. The EIS is required to complete the full build-out of the project, including double-tracking and route improvements between Joliet and Chicago and through the city of Springfield.

“This is welcome news that IDOT and the FRA have approved the final Tier I EIS, which reflects the selection of 10th Street Corridor for high-speed rail through Springfield,” Sangamon County Board Chairman Andy Van Meter said. “We are excited about the opportunities this will bring to our community and wish to thank Senator Durbin, Governor Quinn and Secretary Schneider for their vision and continued support in moving this forward as rapidly as they have. We look forward to the Record of Decision in December when, with IDOT’s help, we can start the design phase of the project.”

Under the leadership of Governor Quinn, Illinois has received more than \$1.4 billion in federal funding to develop high-speed service between Chicago and St. Louis, which is expected to significantly reduce travel times between the two cities and create about 6,200 direct and indirect jobs. The Governor’s *Illinois Jobs Now!* capital program has contributed \$42 million toward construction. The first trains traveling at 110 mph made their successful debut between Dwight and Pontiac during a demonstration run in October.

###