



OFFICE OF GOVERNOR PAT QUINN

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Governor Quinn Praises Federal Approval That Clears the Way for High-Speed Rail

Federal Railroad Administration Issues Decision to Allow Full Build-out of Chicago-St. Louis High Speed Rail; Includes 10th Street Corridor in Springfield

CHICAGO – December 18, 2012. Governor Pat Quinn today praised action by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) that clears the way for the full build-out of the Chicago-St. Louis high-speed rail corridor, including a consolidated route along 10th Street in Springfield. The FRA today issued a Record of Decision that provides final environmental approval and positions the project for future federal funding that will create thousands of jobs and lead to improved passenger rail speeds, frequencies and reliability.

"Today's historic decision means Illinois will continue to lead the Midwest in the implementation of high-speed rail and 21st century transportation infrastructure," Governor Quinn said. "The decision shows that Illinois is a national model for how states and local municipalities can collaborate with the federal government and private rail partners to upgrade our transportation network, protect our environment and lay the groundwork for long-term job creation and economic prosperity. This achievement would not have been possible without the close cooperation and leadership of Senator Dick Durbin and U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood."

"Three years ago, we arranged a meeting with federal, state and local officials in Springfield to identify a path forward on rail consolidation. Today's decision is the culmination of that effort," said U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL). "Tenth Street is right decision for Springfield residents and Illinois travelers. I will continue working with Mayor Houston, Chairman Van Meter, Governor Quinn and the Department of Transportation to make certain our effort progresses."

In addition to selecting the consolidated route along 10th Street in Springfield, the FRA selected the Rock Island Corridor as the most efficient route between Joliet and Chicago. The decision will lead to new trains and improved frequencies, which will help improve on-time performance and will ultimately reduce travel time between Chicago and St. Louis to less than four hours. The decision concurs with the recommendations included in the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that was submitted to FRA in November.

Through the leadership of Senator Durbin and 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 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 on a stretch between Dwight and Pontiac during a demonstration run in October, and beginning Thanksgiving week for daily passengers. The project will deliver 110 mile per hour rail service between Dwight and Alton by 2015, and between Dwight and Joliet by 2017.

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The FRA's Record of Decision is the final step that permits future high-speed rail design and construction work to begin once funding is available. The full build-out is estimated to carry a price tag of approximately \$5 billion.

"IDOT is thrilled with this decision which marks a major milestone in our efforts to create a more modern and efficient transportation system for Illinois," Illinois Transportation Secretary Ann L. Schneider said. "This achievement would not have been possible without close cooperation involving state and local governments, along with our federal and private rail partners."

"We have persevered through many long meetings, discussions and studies and have successfully convinced the federal government that the 10th street approach is clearly the best approach with the least detrimental impact on the city. It is the best solution we could have hoped for with the new high-speed rail system," Springfield Mayor Mike Houston said. "I am proud to have championed this effort which saves the city from a Third Street solution that will have torn the city apart. Springfield is now positioned to lobby for hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure money from the federal government and Springfield residents, local businesses and Springfield's workforce will be major beneficiaries of those funds."

"This is an incredibly significant day, as we move closer to the long held community goal of rail consolidation," Sangamon County Board Chairman Andy Van Meter said. "I want to thank our state and federal officials, including Senator Dick Durbin, Governor Pat Quinn and IDOT Secretary Ann Schneider, for making this study a top priority, and for diligently working in the best interests of the public safety and economic development of our community. With the recommendation of the 10th Street corridor now official, I look forward to continuing to work with state and federal officials so that we can secure the funding to make this recommendation a reality."

The issuance of environmental approval through a Record of Decision is required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for federal projects that might significantly affect 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, through the city of Springfield and from Alton to St. Louis.

The Record of Decision focuses on double-tracking the entire line, as well as 10th Street as the choice for carrying high-speed trains through Springfield. The decision also confirms that the preferred corridor for the Chicago-Joliet route is the Rock Island Corridor instead of the existing Heritage Corridor. The estimated \$1 billion cost for upgrading the RIC is \$500 million less than for the Heritage, mainly because fewer grade separations would be needed.

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