

Durbin, Duckworth, Newman, Quigley Urge FRA To Consider Illinois For Location Of Future University Rail Research And Development Center Of Excellence

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), and U.S. Representatives Marie Newman (D-IL-3) and

Mike Quigley (D-IL-5) today sent a letter to Federal Railroad Administrator (FRA) Amit Bose urging him to consider Illinois as a home for the future University Rail Research and Development Center of Excellence. The Members authored language in the historic bipartisan *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* requiring FRA to establish the rail research center, which aims to advance railway technology and improve national transportation infrastructure.

“We write to highlight a provision that we authored establishing a University Rail Research and Development Center of Excellence, which would advance research and development to improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of passenger and freight rail transportation. As the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) carries out the implementation of this provision of the IIJA, we strongly urge you to consider the State of Illinois as a home for this Center of Excellence,” the lawmakers wrote.

In their letter, the lawmakers noted that the University of Illinois’s reputation as an advanced research hub and its location in the heart of the Midwest suggests that the university would be a strong partner for the FRA and its research center.

“As the nation’s rail hub, Illinois is well-positioned to support this Center of Excellence. Illinois has the largest concentration of rail suppliers in the nation. Chicago not only serves as the hub of Amtrak’s Midwest passenger rail network but is home to Metra, one of the largest commuter railroads in the nation. Moreover, the University of Illinois System’s expertise in rail engineering and urban transportation is unparalleled. The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has the largest rail infrastructure research laboratory in the nation, and the University of Illinois Chicago’s Urban Transportation Center specializes in planning, policy, operations, finance, and management,” the lawmakers continued.

The lawmakers also touted the University of Illinois’ robust relationships with regional partners, particularly in rail transportation and local governments.

“The University of Illinois System has strong partnerships with major private and public sector railroads, state and regional agencies, railway suppliers, and state and local governments. As a result, railroads and suppliers already develop and deploy innovative new products in Illinois while providing high-quality employment opportunities for rail transportation professionals,” wrote the lawmakers.

“We believe our state brings much to the table that would benefit the new University Rail Research and Development Center of Excellence, and we urge you to give full and fair consideration to the benefits of collaborating with the University of Illinois System,” they concluded.

A copy of the letter can be found [here](#).