

# **Durbin, Duckworth Join Colleagues In Calling On Senate Appropriators To Fight For Rail Funding In FY24 Spending Negotiations**

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) today joined U.S. Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) and 12 Senate colleagues in urging Senate Appropriations leadership to support funding for the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger

Rail (IPR) grant program in the Fiscal Year 2024 spending legislation. While the committee-passed U.S. Senate Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill included \$100 million for this account, House Republicans have proposed zeroing it out, which would dramatically hinder ongoing work to improve rail infrastructure in the Northeast and across the country. The FRA recently [awarded \\$93.6 million](#) through this program to Amtrak's Chicago Hub Improvement Project to revitalize Chicago Union Station.

“While the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA) provided five years of guaranteed funding for the Federal-State Partnership grant program, this funding was always intended to be supplemental to annually appropriated dollars. The IIJA also authorized up to \$1.5 billion for IPR grants in fiscal year 2024. The IIJA investment alone is not sufficient to fully address the nation's rail state-of-good-repair (SOGR) backlog nor to fully improve and expand intercity passenger rail in a way that America deserves,” the Senators wrote.

The Senators highlighted the importance of funding projects across the nation, including Amtrak's National Network, which includes Illinois and service outside of the Northeast Corridor: “In 2021, Amtrak released a \$75 billion, 15-year vision to bring more trains to more people across the nation. This vision was meant to start an important conversation about the need for robust federal investment in passenger rail, especially in underserved and unserved communities. Congress responded by authorizing the FRA Corridor Identification and Development Program and the IIJA provided \$12 billion via the Federal-State Partnership grant program as in initial down payment on non-NEC rail expansion. While this IIJA funding is a critical first step, to fully realize the type of passenger rail network that the country deserves, the Federal-State Partnership grant program will require robust additional funding in FY24 and beyond.”

The Senators concluded: “On behalf of our millions of constituents who depend on a safe and reliable passenger rail network and also those who deserve access to passenger rail but do not have it as a meaningful option today, we urge the Subcommittee to vigorously defend the \$100 million appropriation for FY 2024 for the Federal-State Partnership for IPR program.”

The letter included a list of the types of development and related projects that federal investment could advance, assuming support from relevant states and communities and approval by the FRA, including the following Illinois projects:

- Chicago Access Program projects in Illinois to reduce trip times and improve capacity for existing and future Midwest routes and connections to the south and east;

- More frequencies on the Hiawatha Corridor in Wisconsin and Illinois and extension to Madison, Green Bay, and Eau Claire, Wisconsin, as well as St. Paul, Minnesota; and,
- Upgrades to the rail corridor between Chicago, Indianapolis and Cincinnati, potentially including new service to Louisville.

U.S. Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Chris Coons (D-DE), John Fetterman (D-PA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Angus King (I-ME), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Peter Welch (D-VT), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) also signed the letter.

Full text of the letter is available [here](#).