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## **Transportation advocates enthused about Secretary Lahood's high-speed rail announcement in Detroit**

Detroit – Transportation advocates responded enthusiastically to news that U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray Lahood will be making an announcement that Michigan has been awarded a \$200 million high-speed rail grant today in Detroit.

“This is great news for Michigan,” said CeCe Grant, Michigan organizer for Transportation for America. “The Michigan Department of Transportation worked hard to make sure that our application was competitive with the rest of the country. Today, we have shown that we have what it takes to compete and build a 21<sup>st</sup> century transportation system.

The grant is expected to provide money to purchase tracks, upgrade rail infrastructure, and improve congestion points by separating passenger and freight trains. The result would be a Detroit-to-Chicago trip in about 4 hours, shaving about an hour off existing travel times. A multimodal station will also be built connecting trains and buses in Ann Arbor.

“Policy and transportation planners have ranked the Detroit-to-Chicago corridor as one of the most viable routes in the nation,” said Megan Owens, executive director of Transportation Riders United. “Because of Michigan’s existing infrastructure, we can do high-speed rail faster and more cost-effectively than most other states. It just makes sense.”

For months, Governor Rick Snyder has been mum on this issue, quietly meeting with advocates and federal officials on the issue of expanded rail service. At a recent event, he stated that he had spoke to Secretary Lahood on two occasions to discuss the cost-benefit analysis of expanded passenger and freight rail.

“Here in Michigan, we have been fortunate enough to have strong bi-partisan support for high-speed rail,” said Dan Gilmartin, CEO and executive director, Michigan Municipal League. “Our political leaders on both sides of the aisle fully understand how important this money is to creating jobs, increasing affordable transportation options and jumpstarting our economy.”

Michigan's passenger rail services are currently experiencing all time record levels for both ridership and revenue. MDOT is seeking more than \$200 million for four individual projects to improve railroad tracks between Kalamazoo and Dearborn and virtually double train speeds in the corridor from 60 mph to 110 mph. The state is also expected to receive a portion of a \$268.2 million grant to purchase 48 next-generation, high-performance passenger rail [cars](#) and locomotives.

The money will be funded from the \$2.4 billion rejected by Florida earlier this year and reallocated by the Federal Railroad Administration. Once the full network is constructed,

Michigan workers and residents would enjoy some of the best access to high-speed rail of any state. Fully 69 percent of Michigan residents and 71 percent of employers would be within 15 miles of a station, including Pontiac, Detroit, Dearborn, Ann Arbor, Jackson, Albion, Kalamazoo and Battle Creek.

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Following is a breakdown of the grant allocations in the Midwest:

- \$196.5 million to Michigan to rehabilitate track and signal systems between Kalamazoo and Dearborn, bringing train speeds up to 110 mph along a 235-mile section of track.
- \$186.3 million to Illinois to construct track along the Chicago-St. Louis corridor between Dwight and Joliet to accommodate 110 mph trains.
- \$13.5 million to Missouri to advance design work to replace the Merchant's Bridge over the Mississippi River along the Chicago-St. Louis corridor.
- \$5 million to Minnesota to complete engineering and environmental work to establish the Northern Lights Express, which would connect Minneapolis and Duluth with 110 mph trains.
- \$2.8 million to Michigan to conduct an engineering and environmental analysis to construct a new station in Ann Arbor.