

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 2, 2009

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Secretary LaHood:

We write to offer our strong support for the State of Ohio's application for high speed rail grant funds made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. We believe that this quick start project can play a critical role in the ongoing economic recovery in Ohio and is essential for the long-term viability of our nation's rail system.

Despite being one of the nation's most populous states, Ohio currently lacks functional passenger rail service. The state's proposal would link our state's four largest metropolitan areas—Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, and Cincinnati—and allow riders to access the Chicago Hub and the eastern seaboard. At least 6 million people live within 15 miles of the proposed 250 mile route—this is the densest corridor in the country without passenger rail service. There is clearly pent up demand for passenger rail in Ohio. A recent Amtrak study of the corridor projects ridership of nearly 500,000 within the first year with strong growth in the following years.

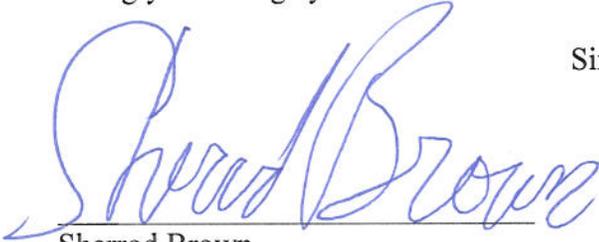
We have been heartened by the collaborative spirit and outreach efforts undertaken by the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Ohio Rail Development Commission. By engaging major stakeholders, these agencies have garnered the support of the freight railroads, the congressional delegation, the public, the General Assembly, the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, and communities along the route. These partnerships are exactly why passenger rail will succeed in Ohio.

As one of the states hit hardest by the economic downturn, passenger rail represents a real opportunity to create jobs, spur economic growth, and provide a new transit choice for Ohioans. With an unemployment rate of nearly 11%, this quick start project would put Ohioans back work sooner rather than later. According to data from the Department of Commerce, it is anticipated that this project would create over 10,000 jobs. Using history as a guide, it is also reasonable to expect considerable economic development around the rail stations and increased investment in the livability of these communities.

Making an investment in Ohio passenger rail now will serve to increase the long-term success of our nation's passenger rail network. Our state is located within 600 miles of 60% of the U.S. population and is crucial to linking Chicago with New York City, Washington, DC and other eastern cities. In fact our state is already pursuing the development of high speed rail with the Ohio Hub Plan and between Cleveland, Toledo, and Chicago.

In the current economic climate we must focus our resources on projects that produce significant, concrete results. Ohio's quick start application meets the standards set by the Federal Railroad Administration and the likelihood that this service could start by 2011 would spur the very economic recovery our state so desperately needs. Mr. Secretary, in a recent visit to Columbus you said, "Rail is coming to Ohio. Get on the train." We couldn't agree more with you and strongly encourage your selection of our state's quick start passenger rail application.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



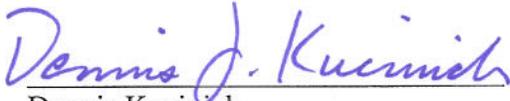
George V. Voinovich
United States Senator



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



Steve LaTourette
Member of Congress



Dennis Kucinich
Member of Congress



Tim Ryan
Member of Congress



Michael Turner
Member of Congress



Zack Space
Member of Congress



Betty Sutton
Member of Congress



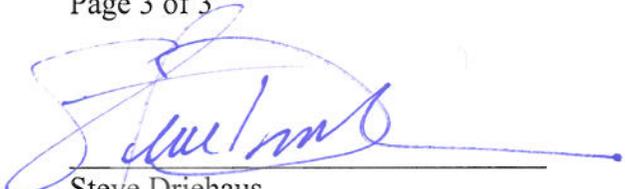
Charlie Wilson
Member of Congress



Marcia Fudge
Member of Congress



John Boccieri
Member of Congress



Steve Driehaus
Member of Congress



Mary Jo Kilroy
Member of Congress

