



## **Jackson Citizens for Economic Growth supports Jackson's full participation in the Midwest High Speed Rail Network**

Several organizations, including the Midwest High Speed Rail Association and the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, are advocating the development of fast, frequent and dependable passenger trains linking the entire Midwest. The network they envision would use existing Amtrak service as a foundation and connect over 200 cities and airports.

Billions of dollars in government funding are available to set this high speed rail network in motion:

- \$8 billion in federal stimulus funds for infrastructure improvements
- \$1.5 billion from the Federal Railroad Safety Act
- \$25-\$65 billion in tax-ready bonds

According to the Midwest High Speed Rail Association, a high speed network functions much like interstate highways. Commuter trains run on conventional tracks, which act like local and arterial roads. High-speed trains – which generally travel at speeds greater than 110 miles per hour - use commuter and freight lines as feeders to reach city centers.

A strong network of fast trains has a variety of advantages for the Midwest:

- Attracts businesses
- Improves quality of life
- Slows the growth of auto congestion
- Effectively uses existing assets, such as the Amtrak network
- Costs substantially less than constructing highways
- Adds transportation capacity by carrying 3-5 times more people than highways
- Uses 10% less land than interstate highways
- Produces less air pollution
- More energy efficient than flying

The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative's plan calls for a high-speed rail line to connect Detroit and Chicago, with commuter service running from that line through Lansing to Port Huron.

### **Ridership**

Amtrak ridership in Michigan has been increasing dramatically. According to an article in the Detroit News on February 23, 2007, Michigan ridership has grown 47% since 2002, compared to 12% nationwide. In 2007, Amtrak hit a record high of almost 665,000 passengers in the state. Jackson accounted for 27,000 of those passengers. Additionally, during recent holiday periods, Amtrak has had to add as many as five cars to every train between Chicago and Detroit to accommodate ridership.

Rick Harnish, executive director of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association indicated that there are a number of medium-sized markets between Chicago and Detroit, such as Kalamazoo, Battle Creek and Jackson, where people would flock to an improved Amtrak service.

### **Economic Benefit**

The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative estimates that the Midwest High Speed Rail Network would yield \$23.1 billion in economic benefits to users and communities over the 40-year life of the project. For every \$1 invested, they project \$1.80 in benefits. Jackson's historically automobile industry-dependent economy is in dire need of the benefits inherent in being linked to the high-speed rail network. Inclusion would enable Jackson to diversify its economy by marketing itself to high-tech companies as a community with a desirable, modern transportation system.

### **Advantages of including Jackson in the Midwest High Speed Rail Network**

There are two major advantages to including Jackson in the Midwest High Speed Rail Network:

- **Existing station** – There is an existing Amtrak station in downtown Jackson which is currently in operation.
- **Existing repair yard** – Jackson has an existing rail repair yard that could be up and running in a short period of time at a cost as low as \$250,000 if existing buildings are used. The estimated cost to build a new rail repair yard is \$8.5 million.

### **Negative impact of excluding Jackson in the Midwest High Speed Rail Network**

Excluding Jackson from the Midwest High Speed Rail Network would be detrimental to Jackson's efforts to diversify and bolster its depressed economy. As Jackson competes with cities across the nation and the world to attract and retain 21<sup>st</sup> century companies, a modern transportation system is essential. Mass transit is a vital quality of life component critical to attracting the businesses and workers that will sustain Jackson's economy into the foreseeable future.