



## **Jackson Citizens for Economic Growth supports Jackson's full participation in Ann Arbor – Detroit Regional Rail Project**

Jackson is a railway town. Since 1872, the city has been a regional railway hub. Jackson's rail station, which was included in the National Register of Historic places in 2002, is the oldest operating Amtrak depot in the United States.

Currently, Jackson has plans to develop its historic train station into the centerpiece of an intermodal transportation system. The system, which will include trains, buses and taxis, will more fully serve the transportation needs of the community.

Inclusion in the Ann Arbor – Detroit Regional Rail Project currently under study by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Michigan Department of Transportation and a variety of local, state and federal officials, is vital to Jackson's economic development. The ability to offer commuter rail service – at speeds up to 110 miles per hour - would greatly enhance the county's ability to attract and retain high-tech companies and the caliber of employees needed to make these businesses profitable.

### **History of Michigan's Commuter Rail Project**

In 2004, following a 1999 study, SEMCOG and MDOT again began researching the feasibility of a commuter rail system in the state as part of Michigan's collective vision for a 21<sup>st</sup> century transportation system. The study has been analyzing the possibility of using existing rail corridors to provide commuter rail service with stops in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Detroit Metropolitan Airport, Dearborn and Detroit. A Jackson stop was originally part of the study but was dropped due to flawed ridership data. The initial study was concerned with point to point ridership from Detroit to Lansing, not between point destinations such as Lansing to Jackson or Ann Arbor to Jackson and vice versa.

### **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 Michigan's proposed commuter 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 a stop on the commuter 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 Ann Arbor – Detroit Regional Rail Project**

There are two major advantages to including Jackson as a stop on Michigan's commuter 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 from the Ann Arbor – Detroit Regional Rail Project**

Excluding Jackson as a stop on Michigan's commuter 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.