



**ENVIRONMENTAL LAW & POLICY CENTER**

# **Vision to Reality**

**Building a Midwest High-Speed Rail Network &  
Transforming Our Region's Transportation System**

# VISION



A modern, fast, comfortable and convenient passenger rail system in the Midwest would give 60 million people in eight states a good new alternative to planes and cars – increasing mobility, reducing pollution, creating jobs and spurring economic development.

# REALITY

In 2009, the President and Congress made an unprecedented commitment to the development of high-speed rail in the United States. This investment in our nation's passenger railways results, in part, from years of ELPC's leadership and the support of many allies. ELPC briefed and worked with key public officials and business, labor and civic leaders at the national, regional and local levels. We made the policy-economic-environmental case, and we engaged the public and media.

ELPC has the right strategies, people and partners to advance the long-delayed vision of a Chicago-hubbed Midwest High-Speed Rail Network and transform this vision into a reality for all Midwesterners. The impacts: better mobility, less pollution, more jobs created and more economic growth from this structural transformation of the region's transportation system.

*“My high-speed rail proposal will lead to innovations that change the way we travel in America. We must start developing clean, energy-efficient transportation that will define our regions for centuries to come.”*

President Barack Obama



## REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

ELPC has more than a decade of experience working to make the environmental, economic development and policy case for a Midwest High-Speed Rail Network. Our strong and steady commitment has led to consistent support for high-speed rail.

**In 1995 and 1996**, ELPC released studies demonstrating that high-speed rail is financially feasible and will create thousands of jobs throughout the Midwest. These studies were key to winning support from business leaders, labor unions and civic institutions.

**Before and after 1998**, when the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative released its comprehensive multi-state plan for a regional high-speed rail network, ELPC helped create the political climate necessary for that plan to eventually succeed. We secured support from the Chicago Federation of Labor, Illinois AFL-CIO, and others, as well as 300 local government officials.

**In 2009**, eight Governors and Chicago Mayor Daley committed to work together to secure federal funding and implement both short-term priorities as well as longer-term goals to ensure the network is robust. ELPC worked with civic leaders, departments of transportation and Governors' offices throughout the Midwest to bring together diverse parties' interests.

**Going forward**, ELPC is the only independent, non-governmental member of the Midwest Multi-State Steering Group working to shepherd the coordinated regional high-speed rail plan through implementation.

*“The Midwest Corridor is a one-of-a-kind partnership that will create jobs for Michigan workers, enhance transportation options for citizens, and provide significant economic development opportunities for communities.”*

Michigan Governor  
Jennifer Granholm



## EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

ELPC has been working closely with businesses, civic leaders, labor unions, public officials, and transportation and environmental agencies at the federal, regional and state levels to advance policy solutions and achieve unprecedented federal and state investments.

**In 1999**, ELPC successfully led the charge for \$250 million of rail investment in Illinois through the Illinois FIRST Infrastructure plan.

**In 2003**, ELPC led the drive for state funding to enable more frequent trips on three primary Illinois rail lines: Chicago to Springfield and St. Louis, Chicago to Champaign and Carbondale, and Chicago to Quincy. These investments resulted in doubled ridership.

**Between 2003 and 2009**, ELPC briefed many public officials – including then-Senator Barack Obama and then-Congressman Rahm Emanuel – as we steadily built coalition support for the development of the Midwest High-Speed Rail Network.

**In 2009**, ELPC successfully advocated to include high-speed rail funding in the Illinois capital budget. The \$850 million to modernize and expand passenger rail will also include untangling freight rail in Chicago. This will reduce pollution and pave the way for faster rail travel throughout the region.

**In 2009**, ELPC successfully garnered support for high-speed rail investments in Iowa and Ohio. Our grassroots advocates sent thousands of letters to state officials to build support for the Iowa's first-ever capital investment in high-speed rail. In Ohio, ELPC's testimony before the state legislature helped build support for the Governor's efforts to gain state appropriations that can leverage federal high-speed rail funds.

*“By working together in Congress, we can increase our chances of bringing a modern passenger rail system to the Midwest. Achieving this goal will make us competitive in the global economy and bring billions of dollars worth of new economic activity to the heartland of the nation.”*

U.S. Senator Dick Durbin



From left to right: Ohio Governor Ted Strickland, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn (at podium), Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle, and U.S. Senator Dick Durbin

## BROAD OUTREACH

ELPC has gained support from a broad network of leading businesses and chambers of commerce; labor unions; federal, state and local officials; universities; and environmental and civic leaders. ELPC has created a steady drumbeat of media coverage and a rising wave of public support for high-speed rail.

**Business:** More than 30 Illinois chambers of commerce supported our call for expanded rail service in Illinois, and ELPC partnered with the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce to create a coalition of Midwest businesses in support of high-speed rail.

**Civic:** ELPC has organized civic leaders and citizen support at public hearings across the Midwest to demonstrate the strong support for high-speed rail. These organizing efforts were key to several victories – securing state funding in Illinois, Iowa and Ohio to leverage federal funding, demonstrating the desire for a Chicago-Milwaukee-Madison route, and protecting potential high-speed rail tracks in Michigan.

**Labor Unions:** ELPC has partnered with the United Transportation Union and Illinois AFL-CIO to expand passenger rail service in Illinois and to protect it in Michigan. We worked closely with labor leaders over the last three years to ensure that rail investments were part of any capital investment program passed in Illinois.

**Media:** ELPC has organized high-profile media and advertising campaigns in Midwest markets, and we regularly advise national and local media on the strength of the Midwest's high-speed rail plan. In 2009, ELPC placed op-eds or was quoted in *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, *Kansas City Star*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, and other publications, as well as on public radio and television in Chicago, Milwaukee, Des Moines and Madison.





## A Note from ELPC Executive Director Howard A. Learner

**The world has changed.** Just a few years ago, many people thought that high-speed rail development in the Midwest was just an idealistic dream. Now, it's moving to reality.

President Obama has made high-speed rail development his #1 transportation priority and is leading the drive for serious federal funding. The Midwest is now poised to seize this opportunity and win federal investment dollars to get high-speed trains moving across our region.

This structural transformation of our transportation system will improve mobility with a new modern, fast, comfortable and convenient train option. It will create jobs and spur economic growth by pulling

together the regional economy. It will protect our environment by reducing pollution and congestion, and it will counteract sprawl by pulling jobs, people and businesses downtown into our central cities.

Working together, we can create a win-win-win for our region: good for jobs and our economy, good for the environment, and good for people and our communities. Let's get on board together and advance the smart Midwest high-speed rail development on a fast track.

Please join us. This is a team effort.



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ENVIRONMENTAL LAW & POLICY CENTER  
[www.ELPC.org](http://www.ELPC.org)

The **Environmental Law & Policy Center** is the Midwest's leading public interest environmental legal advocacy and eco-business innovation organization. We develop and lead strategic advocacy campaigns to protect our natural resources and improve environmental quality.

We are public interest entrepreneurs who engage in creative business deal-making with diverse interests to put into practice

our belief that environmental progress and economic development can be achieved together. The Midwest High-Speed Rail Network puts this sustainable development policy into practice.

Our multi-disciplinary staff brings together a strong and effective combination of skills to solve environmental problems and improve the quality of life in our Midwestern communities.

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