



104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

HB4279

Introduced 1/14/2026, by Rep. Rita Mayfield and Kam Buckner

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act

Creates the Passenger Rail Planning Act. Sets forth intercity passenger rail routes serving or originating in the State. Requires the Department of Transportation to incorporate the aspirational frequencies into the Illinois State Rail Plan and the Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan. Authorizes the Department to nominate corridors for inclusion in the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification and Development Program and enter into memoranda of understanding or other cooperative agreements for each identified interstate corridor to provide for shared data, joint investment prioritization, and aligned performance measures and planning schedules. Requires the Department to include a recurring section titled Progress Toward High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail within each update to the Illinois State Rail Plan and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. Requires each Metropolitan Planning Organization in the State to: (1) recognize the target intercity and long-distance passenger rail frequencies; (2) identify relevant rail corridors within or adjacent to the Metropolitan Planning Organization planning area; and (3) include a narrative discussion of how regional transportation investments can support achievement of those frequency targets. Requires the Department and each Metropolitan Planning Organization to consider progress toward the target passenger rail frequencies when developing project prioritization criteria for multimodal investments. Contains other provisions. Effective immediately.

LRB104 16936 LNS 30350 b

1 AN ACT concerning transportation.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the
5 Passenger Rail Planning Act.

6 Section 5. Findings. The General Assembly finds that:

7 (1) Illinois is the historic and operational hub of
8 the nation's passenger rail network, serving as the
9 national terminal for multiple passenger rail routes
10 providing vital interstate and regional connections.

11 (2) The Federal Railroad Administration's Midwest
12 Regional Rail Plan (2021) identifies Illinois as the
13 center of a high-frequency intercity rail system
14 connecting major Midwestern cities and states. The Plan
15 identifies service levels on 4 routes radiating from
16 Chicago with 16 hourly to 25 hourly, plus half-hourly
17 peaks, daily departures in each direction per day.

18 (3) The Midwest Regional Rail Plan also identifies
19 other routes radiating from Chicago without specifying
20 service levels.

21 (4) Increasing passenger rail service frequencies
22 across all corridors and long-distance routes will
23 strengthen Illinois' economy, reduce congestion, improve

1 sustainability, and enhance access to federal and private
2 investment.

3 (5) It is, therefore, the policy of the State to
4 define and pursue an integrated high-speed and intercity
5 passenger rail network as part of the Illinois State Rail
6 Plan and to ensure that these criteria are incorporated
7 into all metropolitan, regional, and statewide
8 transportation planning processes in a manner consistent
9 with federal law and planning cycles.

10 Section 10. Establishment of target rail frequencies.

11 (a) The following criteria are established for intercity
12 passenger rail routes serving or originating in the State.
13 This outline shall serve as official benchmarks for statewide
14 rail planning, investment prioritization, and coordination
15 with neighboring states, Amtrak, and other railroads.

16 (b) The following corridors shall be designated as:

17 (1) Hourly service routes, with trains operating on
18 pulse schedules at least once per hour, in each direction,
19 throughout the day (5 a.m. to 10 p.m.):

20 (A) Chicago to Milwaukee.

21 (B) Chicago to Madison to St. Paul.

22 (C) Chicago to Rockford.

23 (D) Chicago to East St. Louis to St. Louis to
24 Kansas City.

25 (E) Chicago to Detroit to Toronto.

1 (F) Chicago to Cleveland.

2 (G) Chicago to Fort Wayne to Columbus.

3 (H) Chicago to Indianapolis to Cincinnati.

4 (I) Chicago to Indianapolis to Louisville to
5 Nashville to Atlanta.

6 (J) Chicago to Champaign.

7 (K) Chicago to the Northeast Corridor (Acela).

8 (2) Every-2-hour service routes, with trains operating
9 at least once per every 2 hours, in each direction,
10 throughout the day (5 a.m. to 10 p.m.):

11 (A) Chicago to Moline.

12 (B) Chicago to Peoria.

13 (C) Milwaukee to Green Bay (by extension of
14 Chicago to Milwaukee).

15 (3) Every-4-hour service routes, with trains operating
16 at least once per every 4 hours, in each direction,
17 throughout the day (5 a.m. to 10 p.m.):

18 (A) Champaign to Carbondale to Memphis (by
19 extension of Chicago to Champaign).

20 (B) Rockford to East Dubuque (by extension of
21 Chicago to Rockford).

22 (C) Quad Cities to Des Moines to Omaha to Denver
23 (by extension of Chicago to Moline).

24 (D) Chicago to Galesburg to Quincy to Hannibal.

25 (c) The Department of Transportation shall incorporate
26 these aspirational service frequencies into the Illinois State

1 Rail Plan prepared under 49 U.S.C. 22705 and into the
2 Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan required under 23
3 U.S.C. 135.

4 (d) For each interstate corridor identified in subsection
5 (b), the Department of Transportation is authorized and
6 encouraged to:

7 (1) nominate such corridors for inclusion in the
8 Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification
9 and Development Program under 49 U.S.C. 25101; and

10 (2) enter into memoranda of understanding or other
11 cooperative agreements with neighboring states under 23
12 U.S.C. 135(b)(1) and 135(c), and consistent with 23 U.S.C.
13 135(e)(3), to provide for shared data, joint investment
14 prioritization, and aligned performance measures and
15 planning schedules.

16 (e) The Department of Transportation shall evaluate
17 opportunities to designate and advance one or more of the
18 corridors identified in subsection (b) as components of the
19 National Multimodal Freight Network under 49 U.S.C. 70103,
20 consistent with the national multimodal freight policy under
21 49 U.S.C. 70101, where such designations would enhance
22 eligibility for federal discretionary or formula funding.

23 (f) The Department of Transportation shall include a
24 recurring section titled "Progress Toward High-Speed and
25 Intercity Passenger Rail" within each update of the Illinois
26 State Rail Plan and Statewide Transportation Improvement

1 Program. That section shall summarize:

2 (1) the current level of service frequency in each
3 corridor;

4 (2) the gap between existing and aspirational service
5 levels;

6 (3) investments, capital improvements, or service
7 agreements made toward achieving the target frequencies;
8 and

9 (4) coordination with neighboring states, Amtrak, and
10 federal agencies to advance these targets.

11 (g) The Department of Transportation shall transmit each
12 updated Progress Toward High-Speed and Intercity Passenger
13 Rail section to the Governor and the General Assembly
14 concurrently with the Illinois State Rail Plan submission to
15 the Federal Railroad Administration.

16 (h) The Department of Transportation shall align
17 submissions and project proposals with applicable federal
18 selection preferences in intercity passenger rail and
19 multimodal grant programs, including 49 U.S.C. 24911
20 (Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail),
21 where consistency with the Corridor Identification and
22 Development Program (49 U.S.C. 25101) is favored.

23 Section 15. Metropolitan Planning Organization
24 coordination.

25 (a) Each Metropolitan Planning Organization established

1 under 23 U.S.C. 134 within this State shall, during each
2 federally required update of its metropolitan long-range
3 transportation plan or Transportation Improvement Program:

4 (1) recognize the target intercity and long-distance
5 passenger rail frequencies established in Section 10;

6 (2) identify relevant rail corridors within or
7 adjacent to the Metropolitan Planning Organization
8 planning area; and

9 (3) include a narrative discussion of how regional
10 transportation investments can support achievement of
11 those frequency targets.

12 (b) The Department of Transportation shall provide
13 technical assistance, data, modeling tools, and mapping
14 resources to Metropolitan Planning Organizations and regional
15 councils to facilitate integration of passenger rail
16 frequencies into multimodal planning. The Department of
17 Transportation may enter into memoranda of understanding with
18 Amtrak, neighboring state departments of transportation, or
19 regional rail authorities to share data and coordinate
20 planning consistent with this Act.

21 (c) The Department of Transportation shall, at least once
22 every 4 years and consistent with the federal planning update
23 cycle, convene consultations with each Metropolitan Planning
24 Organization to review passenger rail investments, identify
25 opportunities to advance frequency targets, and coordinate
26 applications for federal or multistate funding that support

1 those goals.

2 Section 20. Investment prioritization. The Department of
3 Transportation and each Metropolitan Planning Organization
4 shall, to the maximum extent practicable, consider progress
5 toward the target passenger rail frequencies established in
6 Section 10 when developing project prioritization criteria for
7 multimodal investments, particularly those affecting rail
8 capacity, terminal access, or multimodal connectivity.

9 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon
10 becoming law.