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RTA APPLAUDS GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR PASSING CAPITAL PLAN \$2.7 BILLION IN STATE FUNDS FOR MASS TRANSIT IN NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS WILL HELP REPAIR AND MAINTAIN THE SYSTEM

CHICAGO – The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) today applauded the Illinois General Assembly for approving a capital plan that will address the most pressing maintenance needs of the regional transit system. With only one major state capital plan approved in the past 20 years (Illinois FIRST, 1999), the region's system has confronted numerous challenges, including outdated vehicles and equipment, deteriorating rail ties and tracks, and aging stations, resulting in slow zones and service reliability issues.

"This is a significant step forward in addressing the most pressing maintenance needs of the system," said Jim Reilly, RTA Board Chairman. "We look forward to continuing to work with the General Assembly and members of the Illinois congressional delegation to identify additional funds that will be required to enhance and expand the system across northeastern Illinois."

The legislative approval this week of a capital bill that has \$1.8 billion for mass transit in northeastern Illinois is in addition to the "jump start" capital bill approved in April, which provided \$900 million, for a total in new state funding of \$2.7 billion.

"We appreciate the successful efforts of President Cullerton, Speaker Madigan, Leader Radogno and Leader Cross, and all of the members of the Illinois General Assembly who worked cooperatively to adopt a desperately needed capital bill, and we look forward to Governor Quinn signing the bill", said Steve Schlickman, Executive Director of the RTA.

"We applaud Senator Martin Sandoval (D-Chicago), Chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee, and Representative Julie Hamos (D-Evanston), Chairman of the House Mass Transit Committee, who continue to make transit a priority in Illinois," Schlickman continued. "Their leadership and commitment to a healthy regional transit system extends to the millions of riders and transit partners who have also advocated for improvements to the nation's second largest mass transit system."

The new state funds are coupled with the \$414 million in federal stimulus funding that was allocated earlier this year to the RTA system. All new funds will be devoted to maintaining the system and helping to bring it closer to a state of good repair after years of deferred maintenance.

In preparation for the injection of new state transit funding, the RTA, in partnership with the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra and Pace, has already identified and prioritized the most pressing maintenance needs of the system, including replacing outdated buses and rail cars and repairing track to avoid slow zones.

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RTA-GENERAL ASSEMBLY CAPITAL BILL/2

However, the transit agencies will need to continue to pursue additional funds required to enhance and expand the system. The RTA's Moving Beyond Congestion strategic plan identified a need for \$10 billion in new state capital funds over the next five years to maintain, enhance and expand the regional system. The RTA will also lead ongoing efforts to identify new resources for a long-term, consistent funding stream for transit.

"We still have many important projects to expand the regional transit system, including new rail lines and rail extensions and Bus Rapid Transit," said Schlickman. "In order to promote economic development and job creation, alleviate congestion on our roadways, and cut pollution, we need to maintain the existing system and bring it to a state of good repair, and also enhance and expand the system in accordance with the strategic plan for the region."

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Moving Beyond Congestion is a joint strategic plan including the RTA and its Service Boards: the CTA bus and train, Metra commuter rail and Pace suburban bus and paratransit service. The goal is to improve and expand transit in northeastern Illinois. For more information, visit www.MovingBeyondCongestion.org.

