

Area mayors and members of Congress have warned that federal transit dollars for important projects, including the STAR Line, will be left on the table if the state doesn't come up with a capital program that includes adequate funding for transit. As the Crain's story below points out, Illinois stands to lose \$4.1 billion for the STAR Line and other projects if the state does not come up with \$2.7 billion in matching funds. These are dollars that will be allocated to other areas of the country. Moreover, if there is no state match, Illinois will be at a competitive disadvantage for critical mass transit projects in the future.

This is a very important year for the STAR Line Business Alliance and we need your support.

Visit <http://capwiz.com/metraconnect/home/> to send a letter to your elected officials today and urge them to pass a capital program that guarantees state funds for the STAR Line.

Governor's budget endangers federal transit funds: pols

By Lorene Yue
Feb. 21, 2008

(Crain's) — Illinois' mass-transit agencies could lose up to more than \$4 billion in federal money for capital improvements and service-expansion programs could be doomed if Gov. Rod Blagojevich fails to put more state dollars toward public transportation, two lawmakers warned Thursday.

U.S. Reps. Melissa Bean, D-Barrington, and Mark Kirk, R-Highland Park, sounded their alarm after hearing preliminary details of Gov. Blagojevich's 2009 budget proposal. The governor outlined the plan during his State of the State speech the day before.

Among the shortcomings, Ms. Bean said, was a plan to spend \$1 billion over the next three years on improvement programs at the Chicago Transit Authority, Metra and Pace. "That is \$1.7 billion short," she said at a press conference with Rep. Kirk, Metra Executive Director Phil Pagano, Mayor Al Larson of Schaumburg and Mayor Bill McLeod of Hoffman Estates.

Illinois public transportation projects qualify for a total of \$4.1 billion in federal funds for capital improvements, she said, but only if the state ponies up a total of \$2.7 billion. The state has to provide 40% of the funding for each project in order to get the federal funds for the project.

"If we can't find the additional dollars, we are going to leave the federal dollars on the table," she said. "The money is there, but the money will be gone." Without the federal funds, projects such as the Suburban Transit Access Route to connect O'Hare International Airport with Joliet would be in jeopardy. Ms. Bean, however, did not offer any funding alternatives.

"This is Springfield's budget," she said. "They have to work it out."

Representatives from Gov. Blagojevich's office, Metra, the CTA and the Regional Transportation Authority were unavailable for comment.

CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR TODAY

Contact your legislator today and urge them to:

- Pass mass transit funding legislation
- Pass a capital bill that will invest in the STAR Line and attract billions in federal matching dollars

The STAR Line is important because it will:

- Provide a safe, reliable transportation option to nearly 1.6 million residents who live in an area of high congestion
- Give close to 1.2 million employees an alternative to driving
- Link to major economic business centers, universities and hospitals
- Attract new businesses eager to take advantage of access to a Metra line
- Initially connect nearly 100 communities, filling a critical void for inter-suburban rail service and providing new service in areas currently without direct access to passenger rail service.