



104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

SB3285

Introduced 2/3/2026, by Sen. Ram Villivalam

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 17224 LNS 30645 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 (6) The General Assembly recognizes that many existing
11 intercity and long-distance passenger rail services within
12 the State operate over infrastructure that is privately
13 owned and controlled by railroads. These railroads operate
14 complex, capital-intensive networks with operating
15 practices designed to meet the needs of their customers,
16 including the efficient movement of long trains whose
17 schedules may be less time-sensitive than frequent
18 passenger rail service. High-frequency, time-sensitive
19 passenger rail operations may be operationally
20 inconsistent with certain railroad business models,
21 particularly where network capacity is constrained or
22 dispatching priorities differ.

23 (7) The General Assembly further recognizes that train
24 paths, operating slots, dispatching priority, and network
25 capacity on privately owned railroad infrastructure are
26 valuable commercial assets. Sustainable and scalable

1 passenger rail service requires fair, transparent, and
2 mutually beneficial compensation arrangements that reflect
3 the value of these assets, the opportunity costs of their
4 use, and the capital and operating impacts borne by
5 railroads.

6 (8) The aspirational passenger rail frequencies
7 established in this Act are intended to guide long-term
8 planning and investment prioritization and shall not be
9 construed to require that future passenger rail services
10 operate on the same rail lines, alignments, or
11 infrastructure currently in use. In planning to achieve
12 these frequencies, the Department of Transportation and
13 Metropolitan Planning Organizations shall consider all
14 reasonable infrastructure and operational options,
15 including capacity expansions, grade separations, advanced
16 dispatching systems, shared-use agreements, and the
17 construction of new or improved publicly owned rail
18 infrastructure where appropriate.

19 (9) The General Assembly affirms the essential role of
20 railroads in supporting the State's economy, supply
21 chains, and industrial competitiveness. Railroads
22 operating within the State have distinct network
23 configurations, customer mixes, investment strategies, and
24 long-term growth plans. Passenger rail planning under this
25 Act shall consider these differences and seek solutions
26 that respect railroad operational needs while advancing

1 statewide passenger mobility goals.

2 (10) The General Assembly further finds that intercity
3 passenger rail planning is closely linked to airport
4 planning and aviation system performance. Planning under
5 this Act shall consider how expanded passenger rail
6 service can improve access to commercial service airports,
7 reduce roadway congestion, and expand nonautomobile travel
8 options for passengers, employees, and visitors traveling
9 to and from airports.

10 (11) Passenger rail planning shall also consider
11 airside capacity constraints at airports, including gate
12 utilization, runway capacity, and airline slot usage, and
13 how improved rail connectivity may allow certain
14 short-haul air markets to be supplemented or replaced by
15 passenger rail service where appropriate. Such planning
16 may identify opportunities to reallocate limited aviation
17 capacity toward longer-distance or higher-value air
18 service when comparable rail alternatives exist.

19 Section 10. Establishment of target rail frequencies.

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

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

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

4 (A) Chicago to Milwaukee.

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

6 (C) Chicago to Rockford.

7 (D) Chicago to East St. Louis to St. Louis to
8 Kansas City.

9 (E) Chicago to Detroit to Toronto.

10 (F) Chicago to Cleveland.

11 (G) Chicago to Fort Wayne to Columbus.

12 (H) Chicago to Indianapolis to Cincinnati.

13 (I) Chicago to Indianapolis to Louisville to
14 Nashville to Atlanta.

15 (J) Chicago to Champaign.

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

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

20 (A) Chicago to Moline.

21 (B) Chicago to Peoria.

22 (C) Milwaukee to Green Bay (by extension of
23 Chicago to Milwaukee).

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

1 (A) Champaign to Carbondale to Memphis (by
2 extension of Chicago to Champaign).

3 (B) Rockford to East Dubuque (by extension of
4 Chicago to Rockford).

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

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

8 (c) The Department of Transportation shall incorporate
9 these aspirational service frequencies into the Illinois State
10 Rail Plan prepared under 49 U.S.C. 22705 and into the
11 Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan required under 23
12 U.S.C. 135.

13 (d) For each interstate corridor identified in subsection
14 (b), the Department of Transportation is authorized and
15 encouraged to:

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

19 (2) enter into memoranda of understanding or other
20 cooperative agreements with neighboring states under 23
21 U.S.C. 135(b)(1) and 135(c), and consistent with 23 U.S.C.
22 135(e)(3), to provide for shared data, joint investment
23 prioritization, and aligned performance measures and
24 planning schedules.

25 (e) The Department of Transportation shall evaluate
26 opportunities to designate and advance one or more of the

1 corridors identified in subsection (b) as components of the
2 National Multimodal Freight Network under 49 U.S.C. 70103,
3 consistent with the national multimodal freight policy under
4 49 U.S.C. 70101, where such designations would enhance
5 eligibility for federal discretionary or formula funding.

6 (f) The Department of Transportation shall include a
7 recurring section titled "Progress Toward High-Speed and
8 Intercity Passenger Rail" within each update of the Illinois
9 State Rail Plan and Statewide Transportation Improvement
10 Program. That section shall summarize:

11 (1) the current level of service frequency in each
12 corridor;

13 (2) the gap between existing and aspirational service
14 levels;

15 (3) investments, capital improvements, or service
16 agreements made toward achieving the target frequencies;
17 and

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

20 (g) The Department of Transportation shall transmit each
21 updated Progress Toward High-Speed and Intercity Passenger
22 Rail section to the Governor and the General Assembly
23 concurrently with the Illinois State Rail Plan submission to
24 the Federal Railroad Administration.

25 (h) The Department of Transportation shall align
26 submissions and project proposals with applicable federal

1 selection preferences in intercity passenger rail and
2 multimodal grant programs, including 49 U.S.C. 24911
3 (Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail),
4 where consistency with the Corridor Identification and
5 Development Program (49 U.S.C. 25101) is favored.

6 (i) In carrying out the requirements of this Act, the
7 Department of Transportation shall coordinate passenger rail
8 planning with airport sponsors, aviation authorities, and
9 relevant planning agencies. Such coordination shall address
10 both landside access to airports, including passenger rail
11 connections, and airside capacity considerations, including
12 potential implications for gate usage, airline scheduling, and
13 regional aviation demand where passenger rail alternatives are
14 planned or proposed.

15 (j) To the extent a State rail plan or related statewide
16 rail planning document is in effect or subsequently adopted,
17 the Department of Transportation shall ensure reciprocal
18 integration between passenger rail planning under this Act and
19 other statewide rail planning efforts. Such integration shall
20 include consideration of railroad capacity needs and expansion
21 plans in passenger rail planning, and consideration of
22 aspirational passenger rail service levels when evaluating
23 infrastructure investments, including new or replacement
24 bridges, grade separations, terminal improvements, and
25 dispatching protocols intended to reduce operational
26 conflicts.

1 Section 15. Metropolitan Planning Organization
2 coordination.

3 (a) Each Metropolitan Planning Organization established
4 under 23 U.S.C. 134 within this State shall, during each
5 federally required update of its metropolitan long-range
6 transportation plan or Transportation Improvement Program:

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

9 (2) identify relevant rail corridors within or
10 adjacent to the Metropolitan Planning Organization
11 planning area; and

12 (3) include a narrative discussion of how regional
13 transportation investments can support achievement of
14 those frequency targets.

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

24 (c) The Department of Transportation shall, at least once
25 every 4 years and consistent with the federal planning update

1 cycle, convene consultations with each Metropolitan Planning
2 Organization to review passenger rail investments, identify
3 opportunities to advance frequency targets, and coordinate
4 applications for federal or multistate funding that support
5 those goals.

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

13 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon
14 becoming law.