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Dear CREATE Program:

Fast, reliable Amtrak service is critical to the residents and businesses of our community and the students attending Southern Illinois University. Shorter and more reliable Amtrak trips provide improved access to our community for students, businesspeople, and other visitors as well as an important transportation option for our residents traveling to Chicago and other cities along the corridor. This was clearly evident by the addition of a third daily train, *the Saluki*, in 2006, which operates between Chicago and Carbondale. The ridership numbers immediately jumped as a result of this.

The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) will improve freight and passenger rail flow through the rail hub of the nation. Thirteen of the CREATE projects will improve Amtrak service in Illinois as it enters the congested Chicago region. If the project P4 (Grand Crossing) to install a new connection between the Canadian National and Norfolk Southern railroads is completed, it will provide a new route for Amtrak trains into and out of Chicago Union Station, eliminating 10 to 15 minutes from Amtrak train schedules on the Illini Corridor. Additionally, because the rail system functions as a network, CREATE improvements to freight flows benefit passenger trains by reducing the potential for blocked crossings and delays on tracks shared by freight and passenger trains.

From July 2007 to June 2008, more than 108,000 Amtrak riders got on or off the train in Carbondale, an increase of 19 percent over the previous year. The CREATE improvements to passenger and freight rail will be very beneficial to Amtrak service to southern Illinois and to our community. The City of Carbondale strongly supports the CREATE program and recognizes the value of the passenger rail improvements CREATE would provide to communities throughout the state.

Sincerely,

Kevin Baity

Kevin Baity
Assistant City Manager for Economic Development

Home of Southern Illinois University