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## Senator Ram Villivalam

*Illinois State Senate  
8th Legislative District*

January 16, 2026

The Honorable David Fink, Administrator  
Federal Railroad Administration  
West Building  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590-9898

Dear Administrator Fink:

As State Senator representing the 8th State Senate District and the Chair of the Illinois Senate Transportation Committee, I write to express my support for the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) application to the Federal Railroad Administration's National Railroad Partnership (NRP) Grant Program. This grant will enable IDOT to construct the Elwood to Braidwood Track Improvement Project for the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail Corridor.

This project improves and replaces deteriorating or functionally obsolete track components, improves maintenance efficiency, and corrects existing track drainage problems. The proposed work includes the construction of a second mainline track adjacent to the existing mainline track, with a gravel maintenance access facility parallel to the track accessible only to railroad maintenance forces. Grade crossing warning devices for improved safety, train control signaling, and other infrastructure needs (bridges, culverts, fencing) are also included in the scope.

The Elwood to Braidwood Track Improvement Project directly aligns with NRP Grant Program objectives by significantly improving safety, efficiency, and reliability for both freight and passenger rail trains. These improvements make significant contributions to the region's economic competitiveness and development by reducing total freight train delays, minimizing blocked grade crossings in Braidwood, and enabling a minimum 9-minute travel time savings for IDOT's *Lincoln Service* and *Lincoln Service Missouri River Runner* routes.

In keeping within your existing rules and regulations, I urge you to give IDOT's application a full and fair consideration. If you have any questions or would like to discuss my recommendation further, please do not hesitate to reach out. I can be reached at 872-208-5188 and info@senatorram.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ram Villivalam". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ram Villivalam  
State Senator, 8th District  
Chair of Illinois Senate Transportation Committee