



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

## HIGH SPEED RAIL ON TRACK IN NEW YORK STATE Senate President Malcolm A. Smith And Governor David A. Paterson Announce New Planning Board To Help Develop Master Plan

MALCOLM A. SMITH November 8, 2010

| ISSUE: **FEDERAL PROGRAMS**

*(Niagara, NY)*- Senate President Malcolm A. Smith, Governor David A. Paterson along with other local elected officials announced the formation of the High Speed Rail Planning Board charged with developing a blueprint for financing and operating the express passenger train in New York State.

Senate President Malcolm A. Smith said that key challenges for the temporary New York High Speed Rail Planning Board will be helping the State Department of Transportation develop an organizational structure, environmental impact study and secure financing for the system.

Senator Smith said: “This represents a great opportunity for us to create jobs and promote economic development in our state now and well into the future. Reducing dependence on foreign oil and the impact of car travel on our environment is a concern for all Americans, especially New Yorkers. When you factor in the positive economic impact, the convenience of travel, and the environmental benefits, a High Speed Rail System in New York State makes good sense.”

State Senate Transportation Committee Chair Martin Malavé Dilan said: “The High Speed Rail Planning Board will prove to be the key to the success of high speed rail in New York. By bringing together experts, stakeholders, agencies as well as state and local leaders, this board will provide a much-needed forum for those implementing a sustainable high speed passenger rail network. It will also ensure that any plan moving forward is a viable, realistic approach that incorporates the best of the public and private sectors.” The Obama administration has identified the National High Speed Rail Passenger System as one of its priorities. National Transportation experts have said that developing a High Speed Rail system connecting the Northeast corridor of Boston, Washington and New York would also help alleviate crowded airways. Current estimates indicate that traveling on a High Speed Rail passenger train from New York City to Albany could take as little as 45 minutes. The current trip is about three hours by car. The 11-member High Speed Rail Planning Board will take effect immediately and include five members appointed by the governor, including the Commissioner of Department of Transportation and the President of the Metro North Railroad. Additionally, two recommendations would come from the Temporary President of the

Senate and from the Speaker of the Assembly, as well as one recommendation each from the minority leaders of the Senate and Assembly.

The board would be required to meet publicly at least quarterly with the Governor designating an executive director to assist the board. The bipartisan New York High Speed Rail Planning Board will convene for three years.

The board is also required to report to the Governor and the Legislature within two years with a fully developed and consensus plan for financing a high speed and the organizational entity that would oversee the State's high speed rail system.

The Board's powers and duties will include:

Evaluating all available high speed rail systems and making recommendations on an appropriate system for the State;

Advising DOT on funding sources for the development and operation of a high speed rail system;

Providing DOT with input on environmental impact studies necessary for planning for a high speed rail system and development of a rail transportation investment program;

Soliciting and receiving stakeholder and public opinions, including a requirement to hold at least six public hearings in regionally diverse areas of the State;

Researching options with respect to agreements with private entities necessary to permit high speed trains and providing DOT with recommendations on the form such agreements should take.

Senator William T. Stachowski said: "High speed rails have the potential to revolutionize the entire State. The environmental, economic and transportation benefits will be tremendous. In addition, this endeavor would create approximately 250,000 immediate jobs during the construction phase and another 1.7 million jobs upon completion – many of them right here in Western New York. The establishment of this planning board is key to putting us one step closer to creating a State of the art and successful high speed rail system in New York State and I am very pleased that we have begun this process today."

Assemblyman David Gantt said: "By establishing the High Speed Rail Planning Board, we are taking the next step to creating a modern, efficient passenger rail system that is vital to the future growth and economic viability of upstate and Western New York. This bipartisan panel will help bring together the experts, stakeholders and the public to address the issues necessary to design, finance, build, operate and maintain a high speed rail system."

Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes said: "The State's commitment to High Speed Rail is monumental in the continuous growth of the Buffalo-Niagara region. I am optimistic that this will solidify this region as a major player in the growth of business and as a hub of transportation that connects the Empire State to our neighbors to the west and the south. Dually important is that this message resonates on the Federal level to continue updating our cities to be environmentally friendly and globally competitive in transportation methods."

Acting Commissioner of the New York State Department of Transportation Stanley Gee said: "I am proud to represent the Department of Transportation which is a permanent member of the new High Speed Rail Planning Board through which I am confident that we will be able to find ways to finance, design, build, operate and maintain a high speed passenger rail system that meets the needs of New York State now and in the future. This step taken today, coupled with the Governor's commitment to developing a High-Speed Rail Inspection and Maintenance Facility in Niagara Falls, and the continued support we are getting from the federal government, is good for the Empire Corridor and for rail service in general. I commend Governor Paterson for his commitment to high-speed rail and for his dedication to putting our State on the right track toward a better future."

Senator Smith added: "I want to commend the Governor and my colleagues in the State Legislature for stepping up to the plate and making the planning board a reality. I especially want to thank our Senate Transportation Committee Chair Martin Malavé Dilan for his leadership. I am very optimistic that the

New York High Speed Rail Planning Board will play a crucial role in putting our state on the fast track to creating jobs and a high speed rail passenger system.”

The creation of the new state high speed rail planning board comes just as a historic national transportation conference is scheduled to convene in New York City from November 14 to 16. The three-day conference will bring together the world's leading experts to discuss how high speed rail has revolutionized transportation internationally and the status of its development in the United States. To date, \$8 billion has been awarded to launch the national High Speed Rail initiative under the leadership of Secretary LaHood. Senator Smith, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell, Former Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta, and Rep. Louise McIntosh Slaughter are among those confirmed to appear.

###

Additional Senate news available at <http://nysenate.gov>  
New York State Senate | [SenatePresident.News@senate.state.ny.us](mailto:SenatePresident.News@senate.state.ny.us)