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EDWARD G. RENDELL, Governor

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PENNSYLVANIA IDENTIFIES POTENTIAL HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECTS FOR \$8 BILLION IN RECOVERY FUNDING

GOVERNOR RENDELL LAUDS RAIL FOCUS ON STATE, NATIONAL LEVELS

HARRISBURG – Pennsylvania has submitted to the federal government a list of projects to be considered as candidates for portions of the \$8 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act high-speed rail funding, Governor Edward G. Rendell announced today.

“Investments in high-speed rail help to meet rising consumer demand for expanded transportation options while easing stresses on our highway and bridge infrastructure,” Governor Rendell said. “The candidate rail projects we’re outlining would not only jump-start local economies, but also will help spur our progress toward a more efficient transportation system.”

The initial project list was developed based on the projects’ alignment with federal guidance, provided through the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), which required that projects’ feasibility be supported by rigorous financial and environmental planning. The initiative is part of President Obama’s proposal to invest in efficient, high-speed passenger rail in addressing the nation’s transportation challenges.

The pre-application was discussed today by Pennsylvania’s Stimulus Oversight Commission.

PennDOT submitted the following as candidate projects for potential formal application later:

- Keystone East Corridor Harrisburg to Philadelphia — funding would include track, signal, power and catenary upgrades, grade crossing removal and station improvements or replacements.
- Scranton to New York Rail Passenger Rail Service Program Phase 1 — funding for part of a proposed restored 133-mile passenger rail corridor between Northeastern Pennsylvania and Hoboken, N.J., with connections to Penn Station in Manhattan.

- Pittsburgh High-Speed Magnetic Levitation Project Phase 1 — funding to design and construct the first segment (Pittsburgh International Airport to Downtown Pittsburgh) of a Maglev, or magnetic levitation, line between the airport and Monroeville/Greensburg.
- Keystone West Harrisburg to Pittsburgh High-Speed Rail Feasibility and Business Plan Study — funding for a feasibility study of enhanced intercity passenger rail service between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh. One Amtrak train a day in each direction now serves this corridor.

The candidate project list is part of a pre-application process, which will initiate dialogue between the FRA and the state on the projects' feasibility and eligibility according to the established criteria. The FRA will offer guidance on criteria under which the final candidate project list should be formally submitted.

Following discussions with the FRA, PennDOT will submit its final candidate projects under their appropriate categories, or tracks. Track 1 addresses recovery through final design or construction of projects with completed environmental clearances and preliminary engineering, and also through completion of project clearances or preliminary engineering. Track 2 aims to substantially upgrade existing services or develop new high-speed rail corridor or intercity passenger rail services. Track 3 candidates would help establish a pipeline of future high-speed/intercity passenger rail projects and early-stage service development planning. The deadline for project applications under Tracks 1 and 3 is Aug. 24, while the Track 2 deadline is Oct. 2.

“We’ve been working to wisely invest the state’s \$1.5 billion in transportation-related recovery funding, and I would be pleased to receive additional support to help modernize our passenger rail system,” Governor Rendell said. “A high-speed rail investment would complement the state’s nearly \$1.2 billion base transit investment, paying dividends for the public and local economies.”

In addition to the state’s annual transit investment, PennDOT is developing a state Passenger and Freight Rail Plan, which will serve as the basis for Pennsylvania’s strategic investments utilizing federal and state dollars. The plan will contain an inventory of the statewide rail system and how it connects to other transportation modes, as well as analyze and identify future passenger and commodity flow trends. The plan is expected to be completed this fall.

“Our steady investment in public transportation and the planning already completed or under way makes Pennsylvania fertile ground for investment of these recovery funds,” Governor Rendell said. “I commend President Obama for his focus on this important transportation mode and, should we receive the financial backing, these projects will have grassroots and administrative support.”

The FRA is expected to award the first round of grants for selected projects by mid-September. For more information on the candidate projects or submitted application, visit www.recovery.pa.gov.

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The Rendell administration is committed to creating a first-rate public education system, protecting our most vulnerable citizens and continuing economic investment to support our communities and businesses. To find out more about Governor Rendell's initiatives and to sign up for his newsletter, visit: www.governor.state.pa.us.