Rail Improvements on Chicago-St. Louis Leads to IDOT Planting Trees in Funks Grove

FUNKS GROVE – The Illinois Department of Transportation today participated in a dedication ceremony held by the Sugar Grove Nature Center to commemorate the planting of hundreds of trees as replacements for those removed during construction to improve Chicago-to-St. Louis passenger rail service.

"These new trees will be a reminder for years to come of IDOT's commitment to sustainability and sound environmental practices," said Transportation Secretary Randy Blankenhorn. "This planting is a win-win for the Sugar Grove Nature Center and our passenger rail customers as we seek to improve service for the hundreds of thousands of people who travel between Chicago and St. Louis each year."

The planting was done in partnership with the Federal Railroad Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Funks Grove Cemetery Association and Sugar Grove Nature Center to replace Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat habitat impacted by improvements to the tracks along the length of the corridor, such as the addition of new passing sidings.

More than 500 tree seedlings were planted on 1.2 acres near the nature center, while 1,300 were planted on 12 acres along Timber Creek. The nature center was selected as the mitigation site because of an existing bat habitat and a long-term goal of the facility to protect and restore the area.

The Indiana bat is an endangered species. The northern long-eared bat is a threatened species. Both roost beneath the bark or in cavities of trees during the summer. Many of the trees planted have exfoliating bark, which help in the protection of both bats.

For additional information, please visit idothsr.org and sugargrovenaturecenter.org.

# # #