ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Illinois Department of Transportation

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

On August 6, 2021, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker signed legislation establishing the High-Speed Railway Commission Act (20 ILCS 4102). Under the legislation, a 21-person commission was appointed and charged with creating a statewide plan for a high-speed rail line and feeder network connecting St. Louis, MO and Chicago, IL that includes existing Amtrak and Metra services, connects the cities of Rockford, Moline, Peoria, and Decatur, and uses inter-city bus service to coordinate with the rail line. Through this legislation, the Commission is required to conduct a ridership study and make findings and recommendations concerning a governance structure, the frequency of service, and implementation of the plan. The Commission is to report to the General Assembly and the Governor on its progress no later than December 31st of each year.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Commissioners voted and approved the following Mission Statement on November 29, 2023.

To create a statewide high-speed railway network plan for Illinois through actionable, achievable recommendations engaging governments on the local, state, and federal levels. Our efforts will support connecting the state with high-speed trains integrated with other modes of transportation linking additional communities into the passenger rail system. Our plan will benefit the people of Illinois through enhancements to both passenger and freight rail mobility, positive environmental benefits, potential economic development, and positioning Illinois for future funding opportunities.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The Illinois Department of Transportation released Professional Transportation Bulletin 208 on May 4, 2023, which included a provision to retain a consultant to perform rail planning services and technical support to the High-Speed Rail Commission. The selection of Quandel Consultants, Inc. (Quandel) occurred on July 19, 2023. Quandel has participated in Commission meetings since this selection and received a fully executed contract from IDOT on July 22, 2024.

HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

The legislation included a list of 21 organizations to comprise the High-Speed Rail Commission membership. Under authority 20 ILCS 4102, 20 members were appointed to the High-Speed Rail Commission. The following table includes all Commissioners including those appointments made by Governor Pritzker.

Name	Appointed On	Appointed By	Position	Representing
Erin Aleman	05/31/2022	Governor	Commissioner	Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
vacant	00/00/0000	Statute	Commissioner	Mayor of the City of Chicago
Tim Butler	05/12/2023	Governor	Vice-Chairman	Illinois Railroad Association
James Derwinski	09/19/2022	Statute	Chairman	Chair of the Commuter Rail Board
Sen. Don DeWitte	11/23/2021	Minority Leader of the Senate	Commissioner	Minority Leader of the Senate
Michael Paul Dunn	06/10/2022	Governor	Commissioner	Region 1 Planning Council
Karl P. Gnadt	05/31/2022	Governor	Commissioner	Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District
Robert Guy, III	05/31/2022	Governor	Commissioner	Labor Organization Representing Rail Workers
Richard Harnish	06/10/2022	Governor	Commissioner	Trade organization related to the rail industry
Raymond Lai	06/10/2022	Governor	Commissioner	McLean County Regional Planning Commission
Martin J. Moylan	08/12/2021	Speaker of the House of Representatives	Commissioner	Speaker of the House of Representatives
Jason Osborn	11/16/2022	Statute	Commissioner	Secretary of Transportation
Cassaundra Rouse	10/13/2022	Statute	Commissioner	Chair of the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority
Bria Scudder	11/17/2023	Governor	Commissioner	Governor
Brian Shanahan	08/25/2021	Minority Leader of the House of Representatives	Commissioner	Minority Leader of the House of Representatives
P.S. Sriraj	03/13/2023	Governor	Commissioner	University of Illinois System
Sen. Steve Stadelman	08/31/2022	President of the Senate	Commissioner	President of the Senate
Katrina R. Thompson	07/25/2025	Governor	Commissioner	Metropolitan Mayors and Managers Association
Brian Vercruysse	09/20/2022	Statute	Commissioner	Illinois Commerce Commission
Bogan Vitas, Jr.	10/06/2023	Governor	Commissioner	Illinois Municipal League
James Wild	06/10/2022	Governor	Commissioner	East-West Gateway Council of Governments

There is currently one vacant position awaiting appointment from the City of Chicago Mayors Office.

2025 COMMISSION MEETINGS

During 2025 the High-Speed Rail Commission meetings were held at two simultaneous in-person locations, one in Springfield and one in Chicago. This included the Illinois Department of Transportation Headquarters, 2300 S. Dirksen Parkway, Room 347, Springfield, IL 62764, and the Illinois Department of Transportation Office of Intermodal Project Implementation, 69 W. Washington St., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60602 or Metra Headquarters, 547 W. Jackson, 13th Floor, Chicago, IL 60661. Two conference rooms were connected via video conferencing software. A virtual attendance option was also available.

The Commission met eight times in 2025. The first meeting was held on **Wednesday, January 15th**, at 10:30 a.m. At this meeting, Commissioners were advised of mandatory training they must complete by August. The focus of this meeting was to learn about the Alternatives Analysis process for the Feasibility Study. This includes three phases: Route Option Analysis, Service Options Analysis, and Investment Options Analysis. The Route Options Analysis is underway and includes identifying city pairs that connect Chicago and St. Louis.

The second meeting was held on **Monday, February 10th**, at 11:00 a.m. An update on the Alternatives Analysis was provided noting that potential alignments are in development. A report was provided on the Public Involvement (PI) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting that was held. Members of the PI TAC were eager to utilize their channels to maximize outreach to support the upcoming public survey and virtual public event.

The Commission met for the third time on **Monday, March 10th**, at 10:30 a.m. A presentation from the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) was given to explain the role of high-speed rail in a statewide rail network and California's plans for enhancing rail and transit connectivity.

An update was provided on the Feasibility Study including plans to meet with local stakeholder agencies. Routes continue to be evaluated, and potential intermediate station locations are being explored.

The fourth meeting was held on **Monday, April 14th**, at 10:30 a.m. This was the only meeting held at Metra Headquarters and not IDOT in Chicago. A report on the Feasibility Study covered route alignment, station considerations, stakeholder engagement, return on investment, and market analysis including the methodology for forecasting ridership. A stated preference survey will be conducted with corridor travelers.

The Commission met for the fifth time on **Monday, May 19th**, at 10:30 a.m. A presentation was given to explain the types of rights-of-way that are being considered for route alignment and the stated preference survey progress. An update on the progress of participation at an online virtual public event that was taking place from April 28 through May 31, 2025 and a public interest survey were also presented.

On **Monday, July 14th**, at 10:30 a.m. the sixth Commission meeting was held. Since the last Commission meeting, the Feasibility Study team held two Project Delivery Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings to review the progress of the Study and discuss upcoming milestones. The Commission meeting focused on the estimated travel times on multiple potential corridors. An update on the progress of the stated preference survey was provided, and highlights of the virtual public event were presented. A summary report of the event was distributed electronically to the Commissioners.

The seventh meeting of the Commission was held on **Wednesday, September 10th**, at 10:30 a.m. The study team presented eight potentially feasible routes and discussed service and investment options. Final results of the Stated Preference Survey and Public Interest Survey were presented. A written report on the Public Interest Survey was sent to the Commissioners.

On Wednesday, **November 19th at 10:30 a.m.** the Commission met for the eighth time. The focus of this meeting included progress of the Feasibility Study. The Study team presented information on governance strategies including several models and issues to consider. An update on the market analysis was also presented.

FEASIBILITY STUDY MILESTONES

Significant progress was made during 2025 on the Feasibility Study. Highlights include:

- Identified potentially feasible routes (Appendix A)
  - Route 1 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Bloomington/Normal-Joliet-Chicago Interstate Route Option
  - Route 2 - East St. Louis-Springfield-Bloomington/Normal-Joliet-Chicago Greenfield Route Option
  - Route 3 – East St Louis-Springfield-Champaign/Urbana-University Park-Chicago Interstate Route Option
  - Route 4 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-University Park-Chicago Greenfield Route Option
  - Route 5 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-Joliet-Chicago Greenfield Route Option
  - Route 6 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-Joliet-Chicago Interstate Adjacent and County Road Route Option
  - Route 7 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Peoria-Bloomington/Normal-Joliet-Chicago Interstate Route Option
  - Route 8 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Peoria-Bloomington/Normal-Joliet-Chicago Greenfield Route Option
- Designed route alignments

  Developed preliminary route alignments informed by high-level horizontal and vertical geometry, as well as standard railroad typical sections. Established design criteria to guide and support the alignment development process.
- Developed service plans and schedules

  Prepared service plans for each potentially feasible route, evaluating service frequency, operating speeds, travel times, equipment utilization, and potential station locations.
- Built ridership and revenue forecasting model

  Created a customized forecasting model incorporating existing intercity travel patterns, projected travel demand growth, and the anticipated market share for high-speed rail.
- Hosted 3 Technical Advisory Committee meetings and 3 Working Group meetings

  See Technical Advisory Committees section below
- Engaged local stakeholders

  Conducted meetings with cities along the corridor to introduce the project and gather preliminary feedback.
- Completed the Stated Preference Survey and results analysis

  Administered a Stated Preference Survey to support ridership forecasting and analyzed results to estimate the potential market share of high-speed rail.
- Completed the Public Interest Survey and results analysis (Appendix B)

  An electronic public interest survey was conducted to gather opinions regarding high-speed passenger rail service and to gage public support.
- Hosted a one-month-long virtual public event (Appendix C)

  A virtual public event was held to provide information on high-speed passenger rail service and to introduce the feasibility study.

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Durning the past year two Technical Advisory Committees (TAC) were established. The TACs were made up of Commissioners or their representatives with expertise in a given area. The first, a Public Involvement (PI) TAC included representatives from Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, City of Moline, High-Speed Rail Alliance, McLean County Regional Planning Commission, Illinois Commerce Commission, Illinois Department of Transportation, and Illinois Tollway. The PI TAC met in January to provide input to the public survey and the virtual public event. The role of this TAC is to provide feedback on outreach activities and to assist in the promotion of study events and materials.

The second a Project Delivery (PD) TAC, was developed to provide guidance in advancing the study. The PD TAC included representatives from Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, East-West Gateway Council of Governments, Illinois Commission, Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois Railroad Association, and Metra. Two meetings were held in June, one in Chicago and the other in Springfield, covering the same information. The information presented included operating characteristics, route development, city pair selection, route identification and next steps.

ANTICIPATED NEXT STEPS

In 2026 the Commission will focus on the completion of the Feasibility Study by mid-year. The first quarter will include a virtual Public Meeting. Additional public involvement opportunities will take place at completion of the Study. It is anticipated that a draft final report will be produced by mid-2026. Upon completion of the final report, the Commissioners will present the results to the legislature and make recommendations on next steps.

2026 COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE

Following legislative requirements, the 2026 Commission meetings are scheduled for 10:30 am on the following dates:

- Monday, January 26th at 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
- Monday, February 23rd at 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
- Monday, March 23th at 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
- Monday, April 20th at 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
- Monday, May 11th at 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
- Monday, June 15th at 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
- Wednesday, July 15th at 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
- Wednesday, August 19th at 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
- Wednesday, September 16th at 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
- Monday, October 19th at 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
- Monday, November 16th at 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
- Wednesday, December 16th at 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

**Please note: All meeting dates are tentative and subject to change based on availability.*

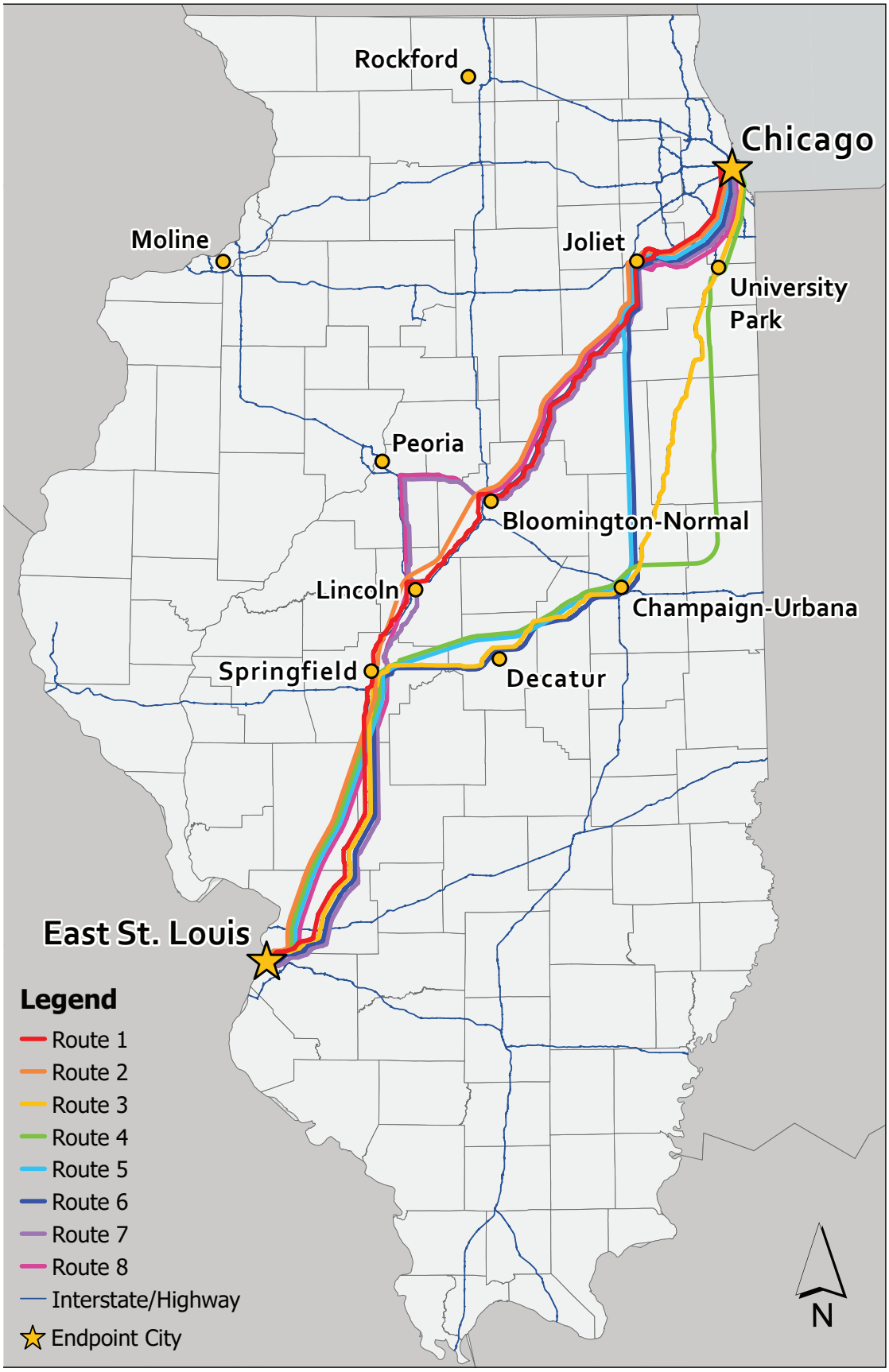
All meetings will continue to be held at the Illinois Department of Transportation Headquarters, 2300 S. Dirksen Parkway, Room 347, Springfield, IL 62764, and at a location in Chicago accessible to the public, along with a virtual option. Meeting materials will be posted to the IDOT website prior to each meeting.

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION

APPENDIX A

Illinois Department of Transportation

POTENTIALLY FEASIBLE ROUTES



ILLINOIS
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APPENDIX B

Illinois Department of Transportation

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

Strengthening our State. Connecting the Region.

PUBLIC INTEREST SURVEY

SUMMARY
JULY 2025

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION

PUBLIC INTEREST SURVEY

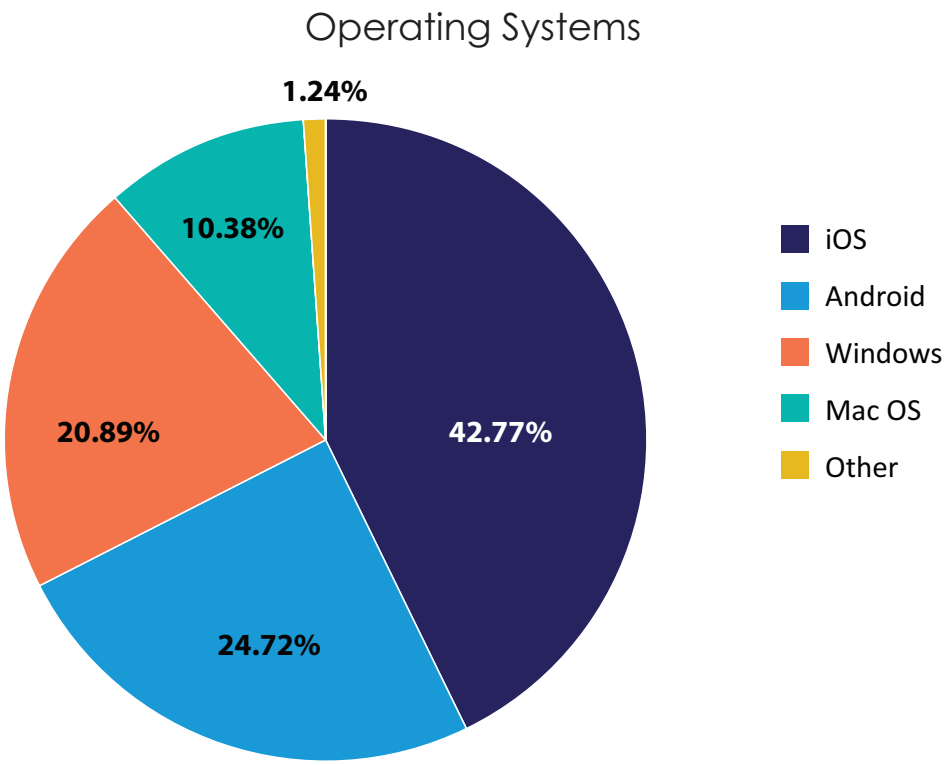
SUMMARY
JULY 2025

Established by the High-Speed Railway Commission Act, the Illinois High-Speed Railway Commission is completing a Feasibility Study to evaluate developing a high-speed rail line connecting St. Louis, Missouri, and Chicago, Illinois. This also includes connecting to current passenger rail and bus services throughout the state and to the cities of Rockford, Moline, Peoria, and Decatur.

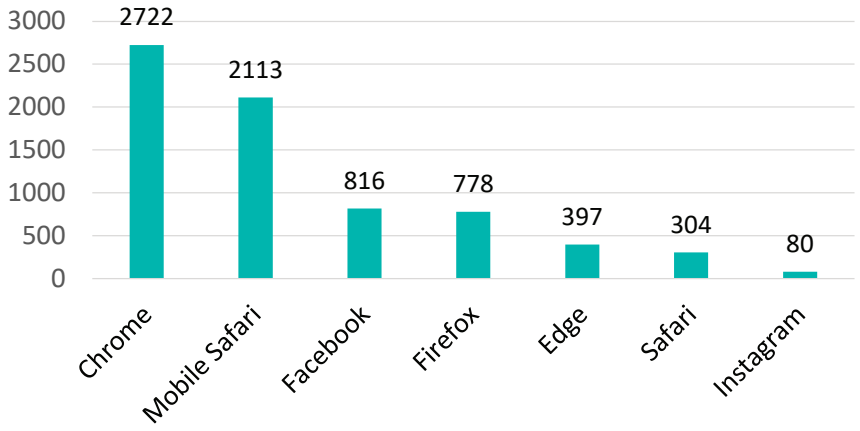
As a part of the Feasibility Study a public survey was conducted. The survey gauged public interest and knowledge about passenger high-speed rail travel, as well as perceived benefits.

The survey was hosted online from April 28 until May 31, 2025, in tandem with a virtual public event that provided education on high-speed rail service and an overview of the Feasibility Study. Public input is a critical component of the Feasibility Study and was reflected in the interest generated before, during, and after the event. The virtual public event had 7,341 unique visitors that viewed the site a total of 8,827 times, and the survey fielded 7,506 original responses.

Of the responses received, 28% were within the first week the survey was open. Most of those completing the survey (87%) did so in less than three minutes. iOS (Apple) was the most commonly used operating system at 43% and at 36% of surveys were submitted using a Chrome browser.



Top Browsers



The majority of respondents linked to the survey directly from the study website, www.ilhighspeedrail.org. Others reached the survey through links on reddit, facebook, bsky, and LinkedIn. The chart below lists the top ten referrer links.

Top 10 Referrers

Referrer Link	Count of Referrer
https://www.ilhighspeedrail.org/	3793
https://www.reddit.com/	440
https://out.reddit.com/	215
android-app://com.reddit.frontpage/	141
http://m.facebook.com/	66
https://go.bsky.app/	66
https://www.linkedin.com/	65
https://prod.cdn.everyaction.com/	59
https://l.instagram.com/	56
https://bit.ly/	44
Grand Total	**4945**

The survey was made up of nine questions that were created to assess the public's perception of the feasibility of new passenger rail service between St. Louis and Chicago. Survey questions focused on the likelihood of use, travel time and preferences, and awareness and support levels. An additional three questions gathered demographic information, including zip code, age, and race and ethnicity.

With strong public response, the online survey provided valuable insight into the public's support of a statewide high-speed rail service. Of respondents, 86% reported that they would be "very likely" to utilize the rail service, indicating widespread interest in the initiative. After completing the survey, a total of 4,031 respondents indicated that they wished to be added to the email list.

The following introduction was made to survey participants before getting into the questions:

The Illinois High-Speed Railway Commission, assisted by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), is conducting a feasibility study for high-speed rail service between Chicago and St. Louis. While Amtrak currently operates trains at up to 110 mph on the Chicago to St. Louis corridor, this study is looking at speeds up to 220 mph on a new corridor. These high-speed trains require dedicated rail lines powered by electricity. To improve safety, the high-speed rail line must be built so that it doesn't cross roads or other train tracks at the same level.

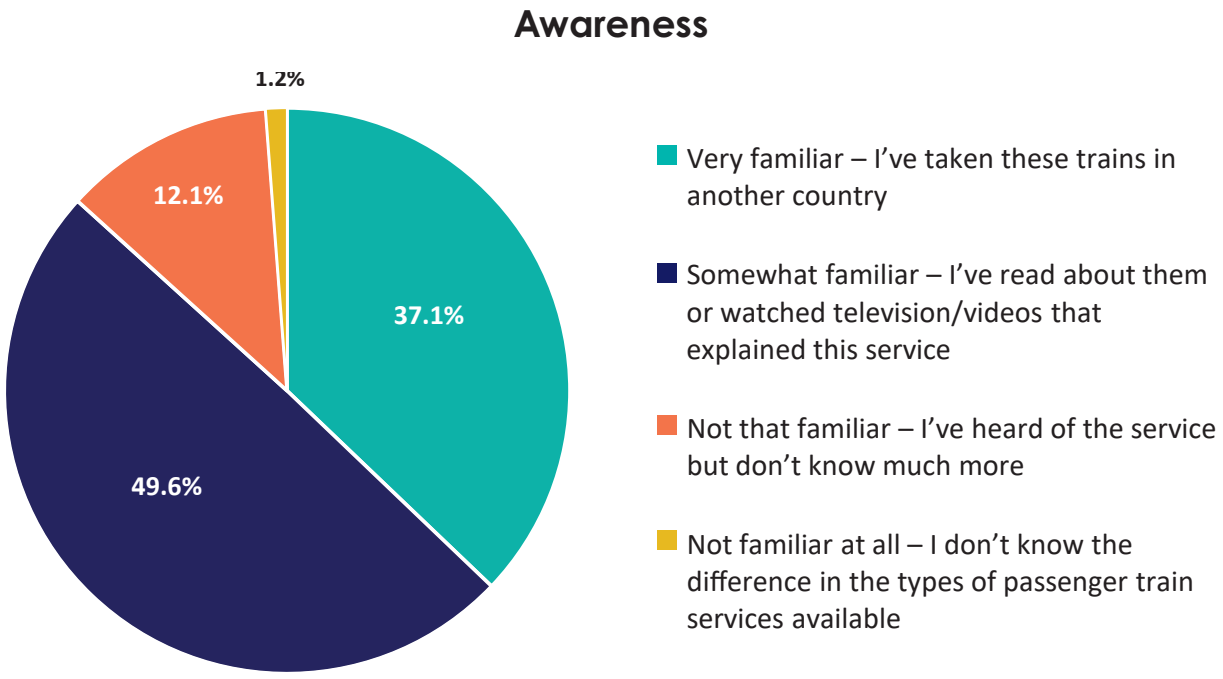
The study is also looking at various ways to connect other cities around the state such as Rockford, Moline, Peoria, and Decatur, to the high-speed rail corridor, using existing Amtrak, Metra, and MetroLink passenger rail lines and local bus services.

This survey is to gauge public understanding and interest in high-speed rail service. Thank you for taking a few minutes to answer these questions.

The results of the survey are depicted on the following pages.

Q1: How familiar are you with high-speed rail service (passenger trains traveling at speeds up to 220 mph) around the world?

Question one measures how familiar respondents were with high-speed rail services. This baseline question was critical in understanding the degrees of respondents' awareness of high-speed railways. 50% of respondents answered that they were "somewhat familiar," having read or watched media that explained the service. An additional 37% of respondents reported being "very familiar" with the service, and 12% said they were "not that familiar." Combined, 99% of respondents had some degree of familiarity with high-speed railways. Only 1% answered that they were "not familiar at all."

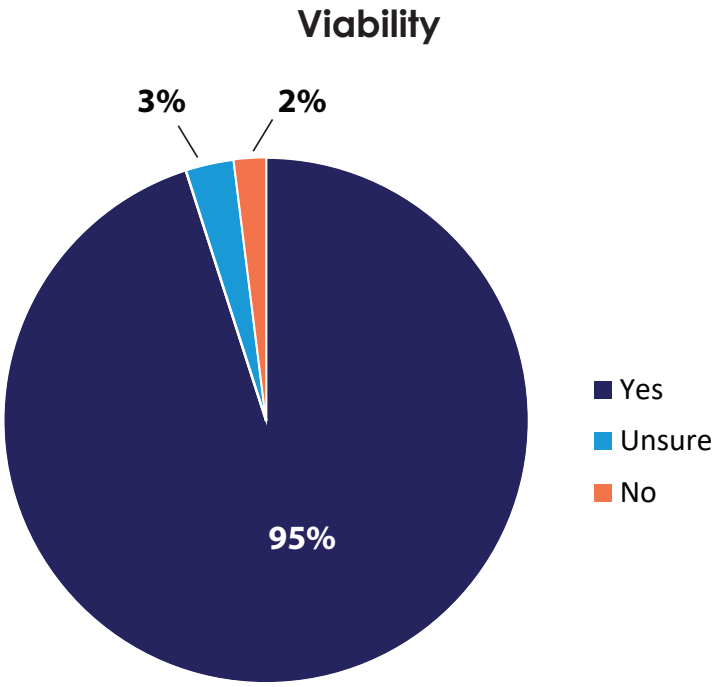


When analyzed alongside respondents' ages, the group with the largest percentage of individuals who were "not familiar at all" was "under 18" at 9%. Of respondents who did not disclose their ages, 78% reported being either "somewhat" or "very familiar" with high-speed rail services.

The ethnic/racial demographic that reported the highest percentage of high familiarity was Asian at 55%, indicating "very familiar". Respondents reporting a level of "somewhat familiarity" included 56% of Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 56% of American Indian or Alaska Native, 54% of Black or African American, 51% of White, non-Hispanic, 51% of Hispanic, and 37% of Asian respondents.

Q2: Do you think that high-speed rail service is a viable mode of transportation for Illinois?

Question two assesses respondents' opinions on the viability of high-speed rail services, for which there was great agreement. 95% of respondents answered affirmatively, while 3% answered "unsure," and 2% felt that it was not viable. This notable difference further documents widespread interest and confidence in a high-speed rail program in Illinois among residents.

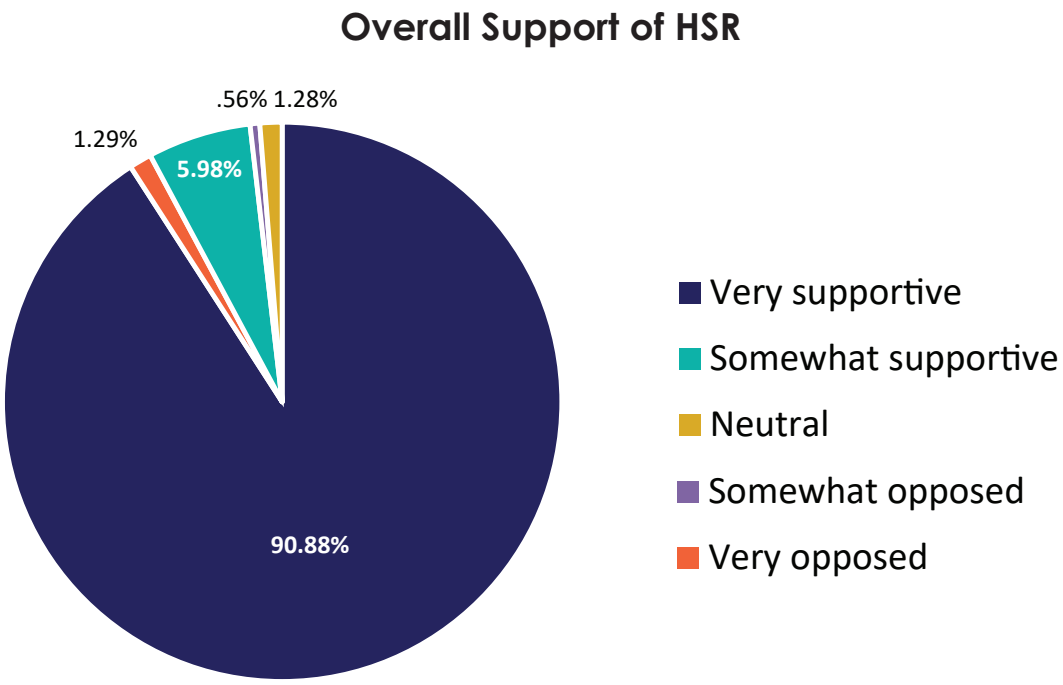


A cross-analysis of the viability and awareness results show that those with the least familiarity with high-speed rail services had the greatest percentage of "unsure" responses at 17%. This group similarly had the lowest percentage of affirmative responses to whether high-speed rail service could be a viable transportation option for Illinois at 81%. Furthermore, the percentage of respondents who answered affirmatively rose alongside familiarity levels. Of respondents who were "not that familiar", 91% answered affirmatively. Respondents who were "somewhat familiar" also answered affirmatively at 96%, as well as 96% of those who were "very familiar."

As answered in question three below, the vast majority at 95% of those who answered that high-speed rail sevices could be viable in Illinois indicated that they would be "very supportive." This is in contrast to 0.1% who indicated they would be opposed to some degree. Of those who answered "unsure" to the question of viability, 45% selected that they would be "somewhat supportive," and another 24% indicated a neutral degree of support. Of respondents who did not think high-speed rail could be viable, 63% indicated strong opposition to its development in Illinois, but 6% of those who thought it was non-viable answered that they were "very supportive."

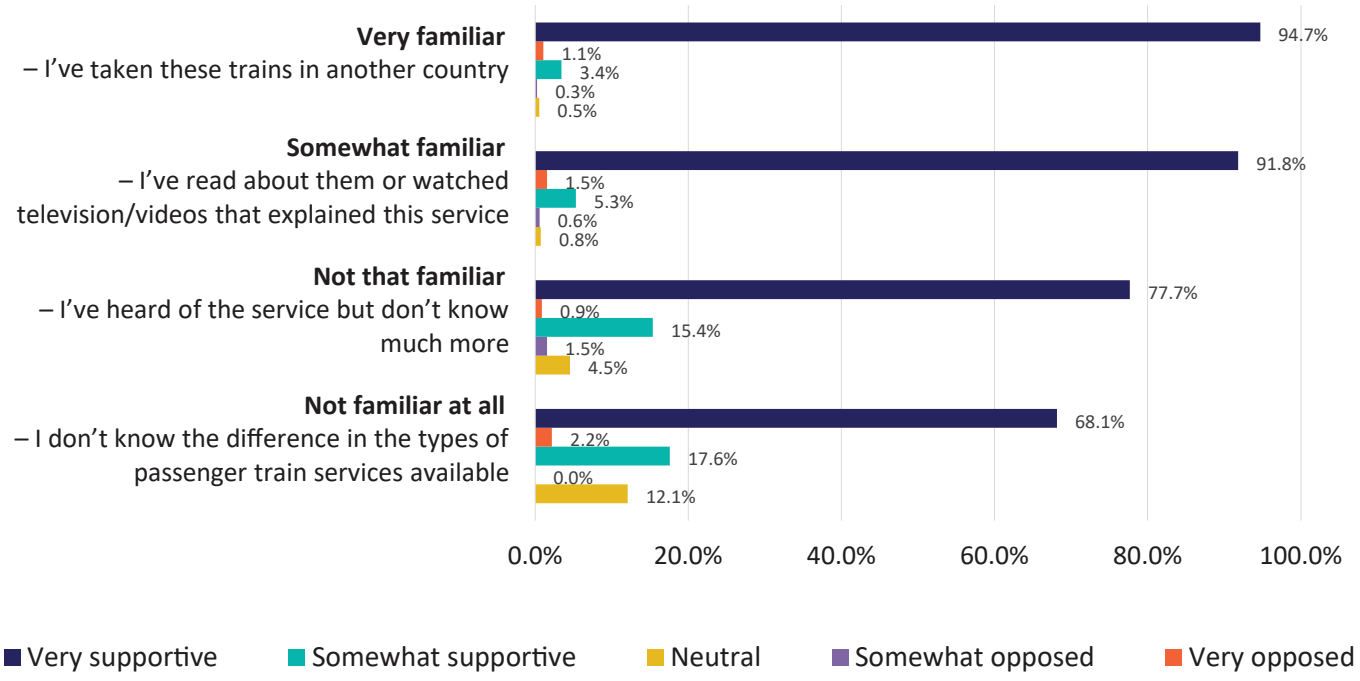
Q3: How supportive are you of the development of high-speed rail (passenger trains traveling at speeds up to 220 mph) in Illinois?

Question three gauges levels of support among survey respondents and is a keystone marker in studies like the Illinois High-Speed Railway Study. Overall support of high-speed rail was remarkably high—97% of respondents answered positively. Of those who were in support, 91% identified as "very supportive." Furthermore, only 1% of respondents reported that they were "very opposed" to the development. An additional 1% answered that they were "somewhat opposed," and the remaining 1% were "neutral."



As seen in the table below, support (especially strong support) seems to grow alongside familiarity with high-speed rail. Instances like these are important for the Commission to be aware of, as educating the public about potential projects may influence their support.

Support with Familiarity

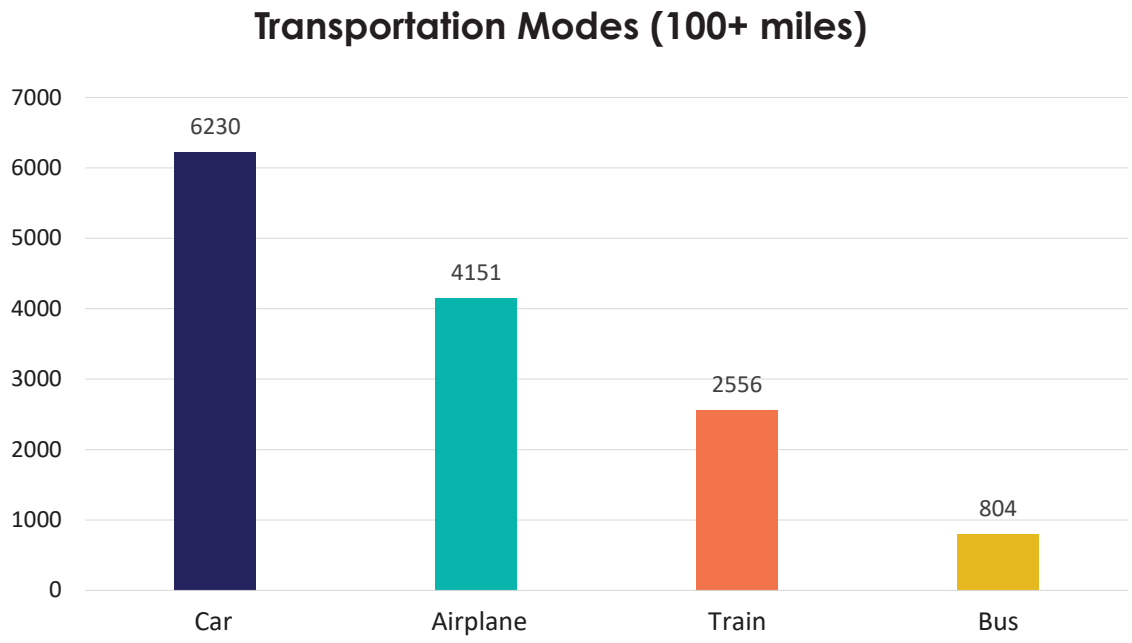


Other cross-analysis reveals that the age groups with the most overall support are 18-24 and 25 – 34 -year-olds at 99%, followed by 35-54 -year-olds at 97%. These groups had both the greatest numbers of "very supportive" answers, as well as the greatest numbers of "somewhat supportive" answers. The age group with the greatest percentage of composite opposition was "Prefer not to answer," with 25% selecting either "very" or "somewhat opposed." After that age group, 5% of respondents 65 and older answered that they would be some degree of "opposed."

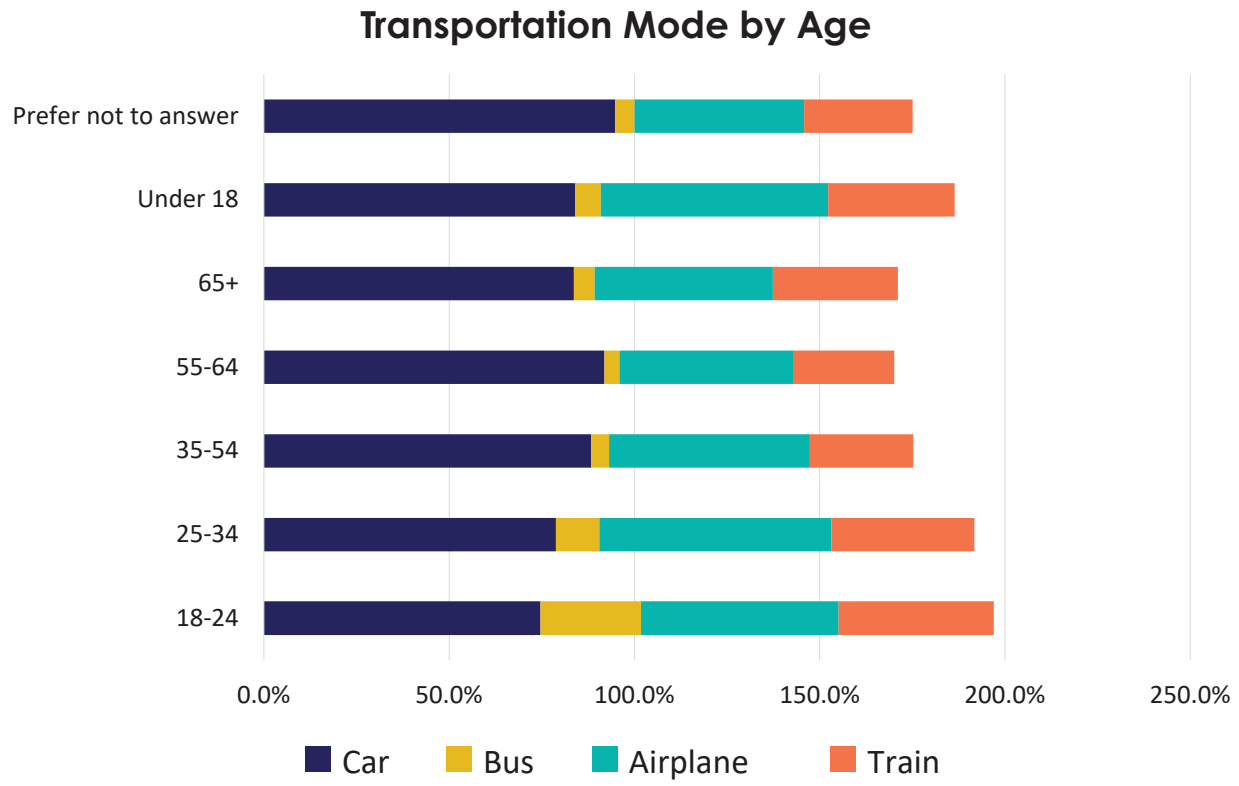
As stated on the previous page, 91% of respondents indicated that they were "very supportive" of the development of high-speed rail in Illinois. 78% of those who did not disclose their race or ethnicity answered in that manner. The defined ethnic/racial category that had the lowest percentage of answering "very supportive" was American Indian or Alaska Native at 82%. An additional 12% of respondents who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native indicated that they were "somewhat supportive."

Q4: What is your current primary mode of transportation for long-distance travel (over 100 miles)?

Question four permitted respondents to check all answer choices that applied. The results provided valuable insights into commuting habits, which are beneficial to the study because they reveal current behaviors, preferences, and conditions of potential future passengers. The most selected answer was "car". "Airplane" was the second most-frequented choice, followed by "train", and "bus".



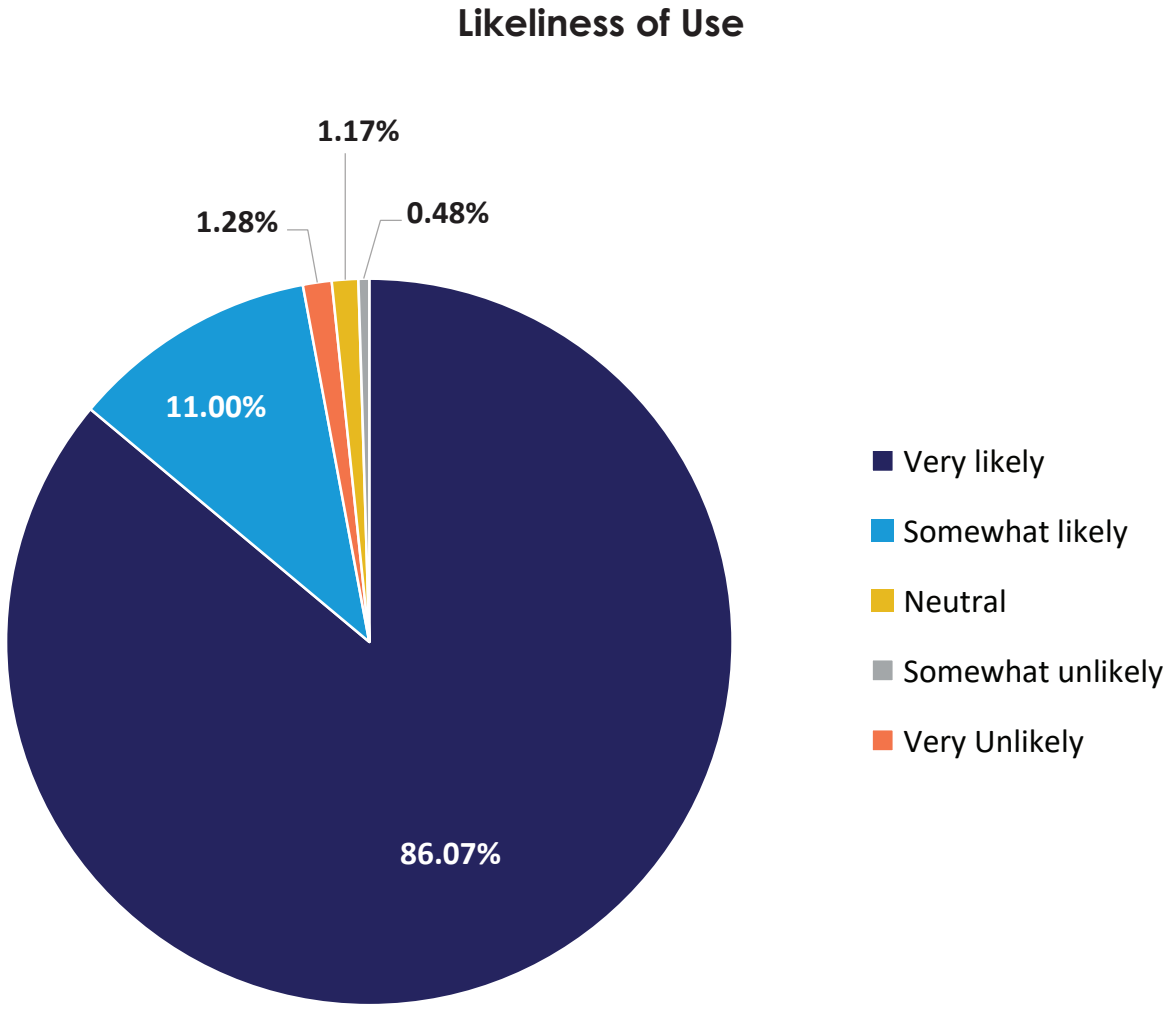
The following chart provides a visualization of transportation choices by age:



"Car" was the most commonly selected mode of transportation across all age groups. Percentages of respondents choosing train and airplane were fairly similar throughout all groups, but there were different ranges of bus usage. 18–24-year-olds had the highest percentage of bus usage at 27%, while only 4% of 55–64-year-olds reporting using the bus for long-distance travel. 12% of respondents aged 25-34 selected "bus," while only 5% of 35–54-year-olds, 6% of people aged 65 and older, and 7% of people under the age of 18 did.

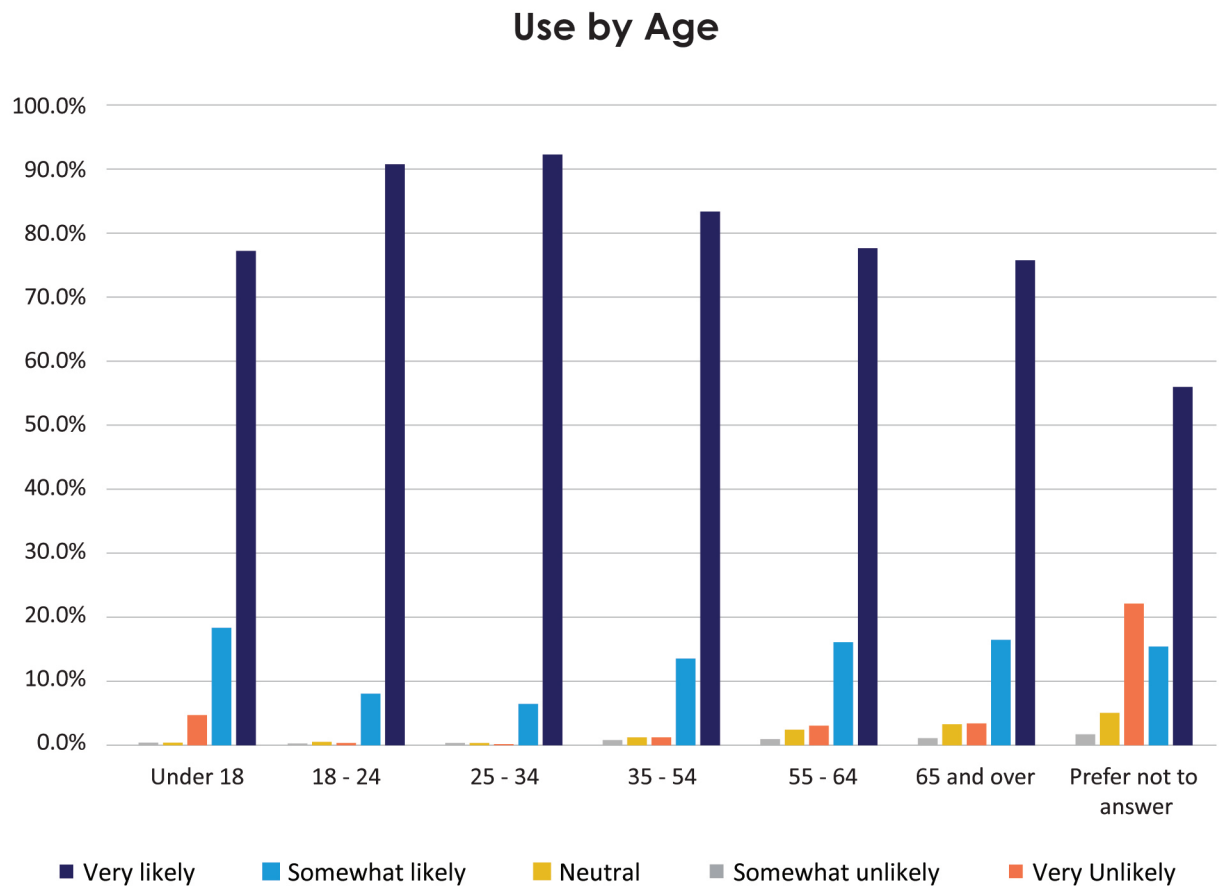
Q5: How likely are you to use a high-speed train for long-distance travel (over 100 miles) if it were available?

Question five measures the likelihood of respondents using a potential high-speed passenger train for long-distance travel. The question and its responses establish a baseline that is instrumental in measuring public interest and enthusiasm for the network. Results show strong likelihood of using the service, 97% of respondents answered that they were likely to do so. Of those individuals, 86% of them reported a "very likely" chance. Conversely, just 2% of respondents indicated they were unlikely to use the service, and 1% were neutral.



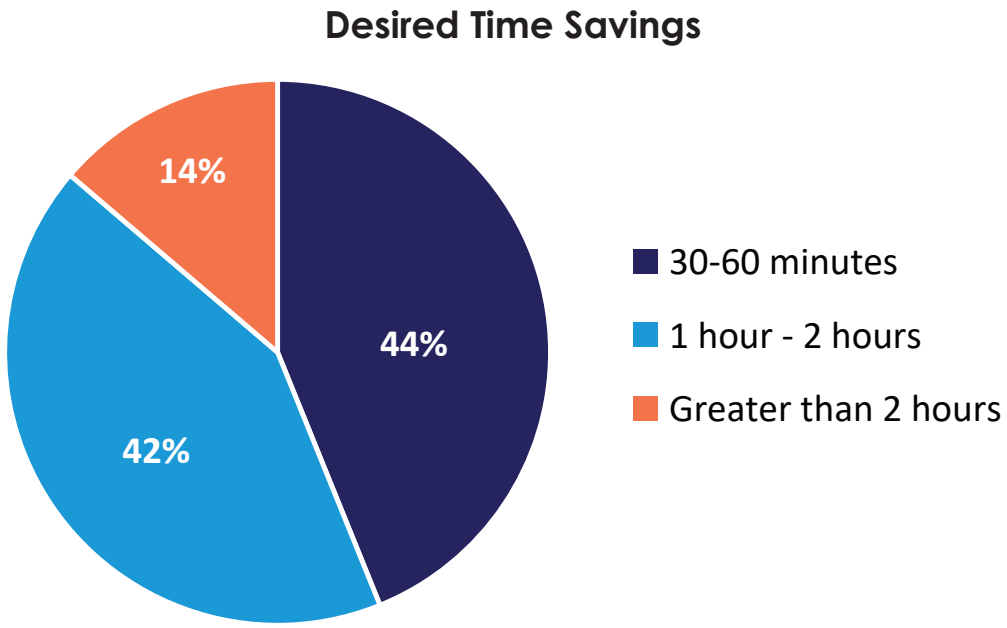
Of those who answered "very familiar" to question one (familiarity with high-speed trains), 92% also answered that they would be "very likely" to use a high-speed train for long-distance travel. Those who selected "car" as an option in question four typically responded that they were "somewhat" or "very likely" to use a high-speed train for long-distance travel at 97%. Similar trends followed for the other modes of transportation, including 99% of bus-users, 98% of airplane-users and 99% of train-riders indicated a positive likelihood.

The graph below provides a visualization of how different age categories responded to question five. As stated on the previous page, 86% of respondents indicated a strong likelihood of using high-speed rail. Age groups 18-24 at 91% and 25-34 at 93% answered slightly stronger than this overall percentage, while age groups 55-64 at 78%, 65 and older at 76%, under 18 at 77%, and those who did not disclose their ages at 56% responded less strongly.

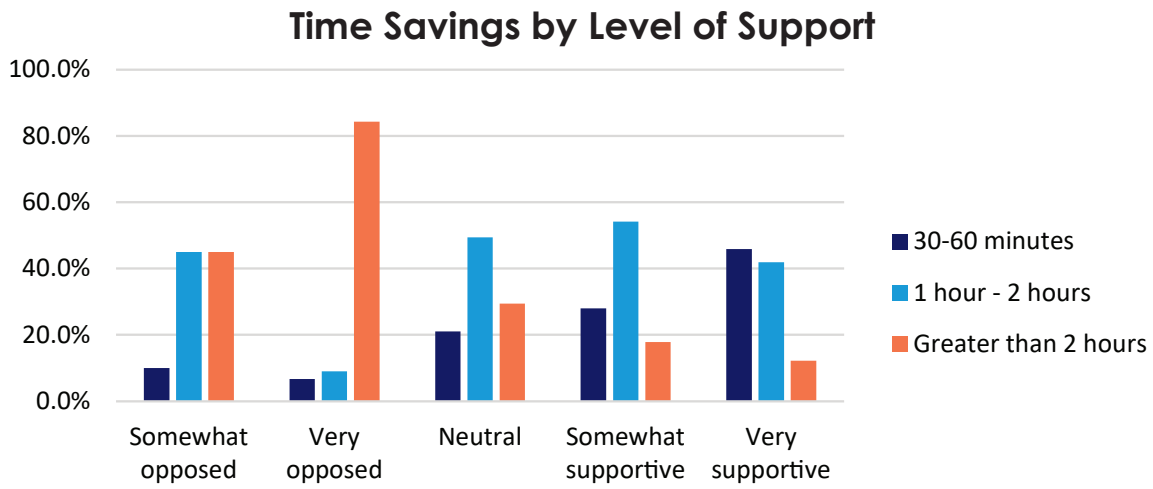


Q6: What time savings would there need to be for you to take a high-speed train versus driving between Chicago and St. Louis?

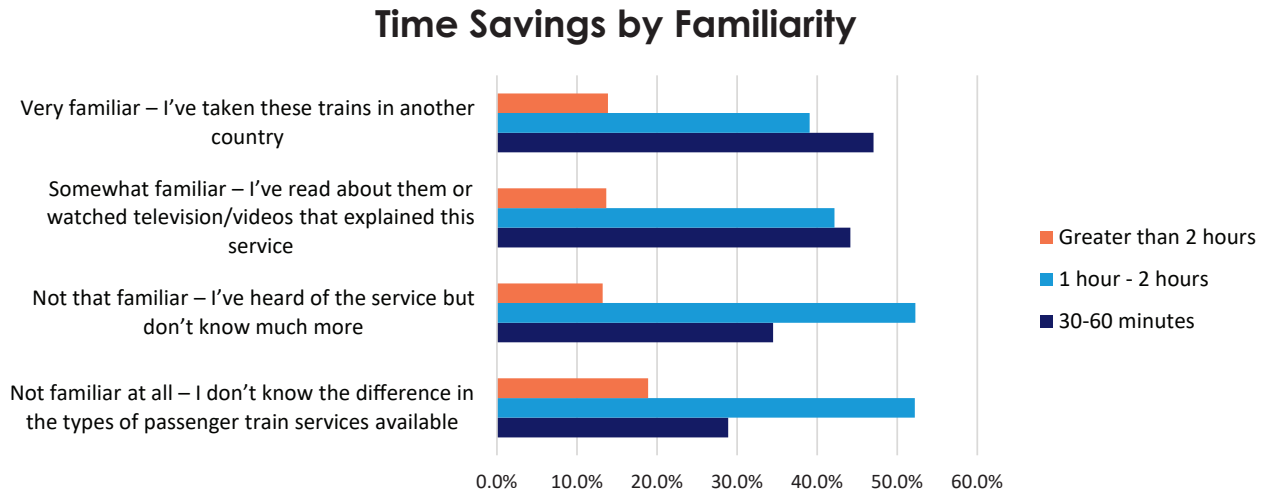
Question six was designed to measure desired time savings for travel between Chicago and St. Louis. Respondents were offered three choices: 30-60 minutes, 1 hour-2 hours, or greater than 2 hours. Results were split and reflected slightly differing opinions. Respondents indicating that saving 30-60 minutes in travel time would be sufficient for them to take a high-speed train on that route came in at 44%, while 42% responded that they would need to save between 1 and 2 hours. Only 14% of individuals reported they wanted to save at least 2 hours.



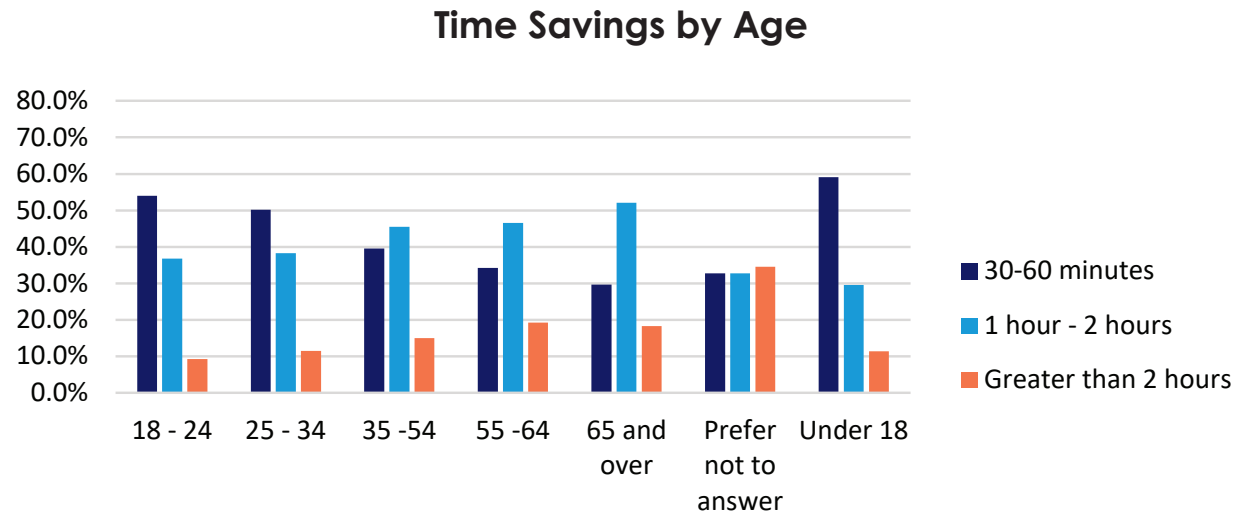
The table below visualizes the responses to question six by support levels. It is notable that most of the respondents who indicated that they would need to save at least 2 hours of travel time in order to make taking a high-speed rail between St. Louis and Chicago worthwhile already indicated a strong opposition to the development of a network (84% of those "very opposed" selected "greater than 2 hours").



The next table analyzes the responses to question six by familiarity levels. As familiarity increases, it appears that the percentage of "30-60 minutes" selections does as well.



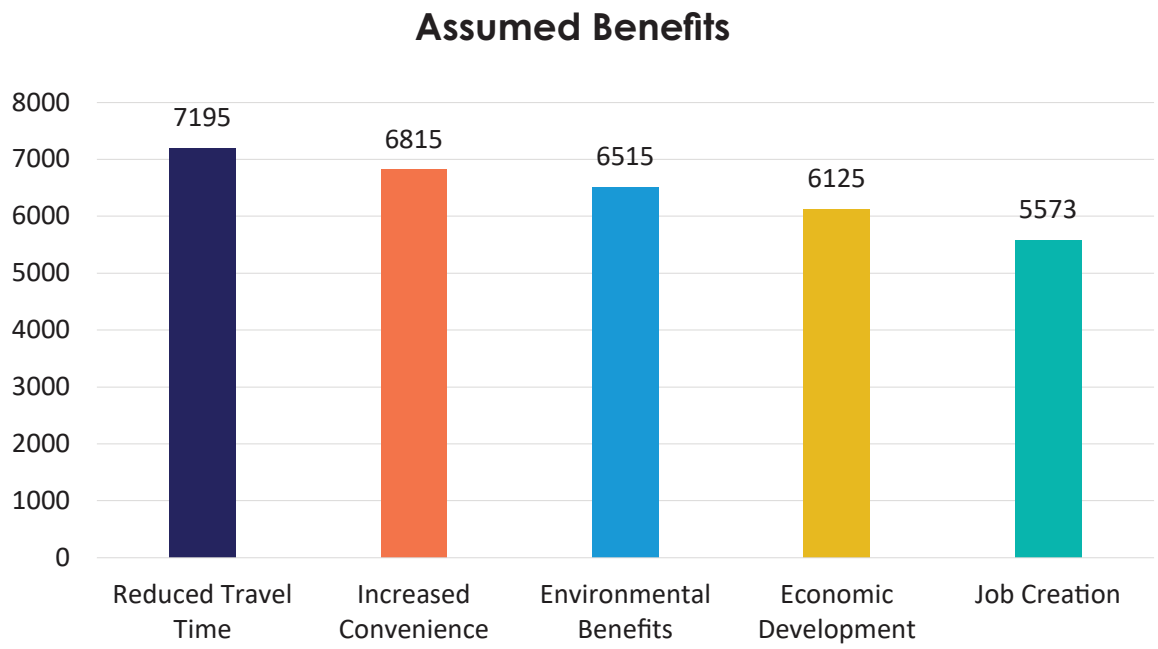
This table analyzes differences in responses according to age category in regard to travel time savings:



As age increases, so do the percentages of answers indicating higher time savings. 59% of Under 18 age group respondents chose "30-60 minutes" of savings, while only 30% of those aged 65 and older selected that option. In contrast, 11% of respondents under the age of 18 selected the "greater than 2 hours" option, while 19% of respondents aged 55-64 and 18% of respondents aged 65 and older did.

Q7: What benefits do you think a high-speed rail network could provide to Illinois residents?

Question seven provided respondents with the opportunity to select as many answers as desired. Answer choices included: reduced travel time; increased convenience; environmental benefits; economic development; and job creation. Reduced travel time was the most selected choice with 96% selection, reflecting what most respondents identified as a priority. 91% of respondents selected increased convenience as another benefit of a high-speed rail network. The more holistic-oriented answer choices followed closely behind. Environmental benefits were chosen 87%, economic development 82%, and job creation 74%. These numbers indicate that at least 74% of respondents believe that a high-speed rail network could provide all five of these benefits to Illinois residents.



Respondents were also given the opportunity to detail other associated benefits they thought a high-speed rail network could provide to Illinois. The following key themes were mentioned at least once in their responses:

1. Increased Accessibility and Equity
2. Cost Savings and Affordability
3. Reduced Dependency on Cars and Oil
4. Environmental Impact
5. Enhanced Travel Experience
6. Economic Competition and Innovation
7. Boost to Infrastructure and Urban Development
8. Social and Lifestyle Improvements
9. Strategic and National Importance

When question seven responses are analyzed with demographic age data, it reveals that respondents seemed to become less optimistic about benefits as their ages increased. For example, 98% of respondents aged 18-24 selected "reduced travel time" as an answer option, but 92% of respondents aged 65 and older chose that option as well. These are rather minor differences but can impact how the Commission understands different potential customer groups. See the tables below to learn how many respondents from each age category selected the respective benefits.

Reduced Travel Time	Total: 95.9%	Total: 7195
Under 18	90.9%	40
18-24	98.3%	1,255
25-34	97.7%	2,206
35-54	96%	2,387
55-64	91.7%	589
65 and over	91.6%	673
Prefer not to answer	77.6%	45

Increased Convenience	Total: 90.9%	Total: 6815
Under 18	88.6%	39
18-24	94.1%	1,202
25-34	94.8%	2,141
35-54	89.6%	2,227
55-64	85.7%	550
65 and over	83.9%	617
Prefer not to answer	67.8%	40

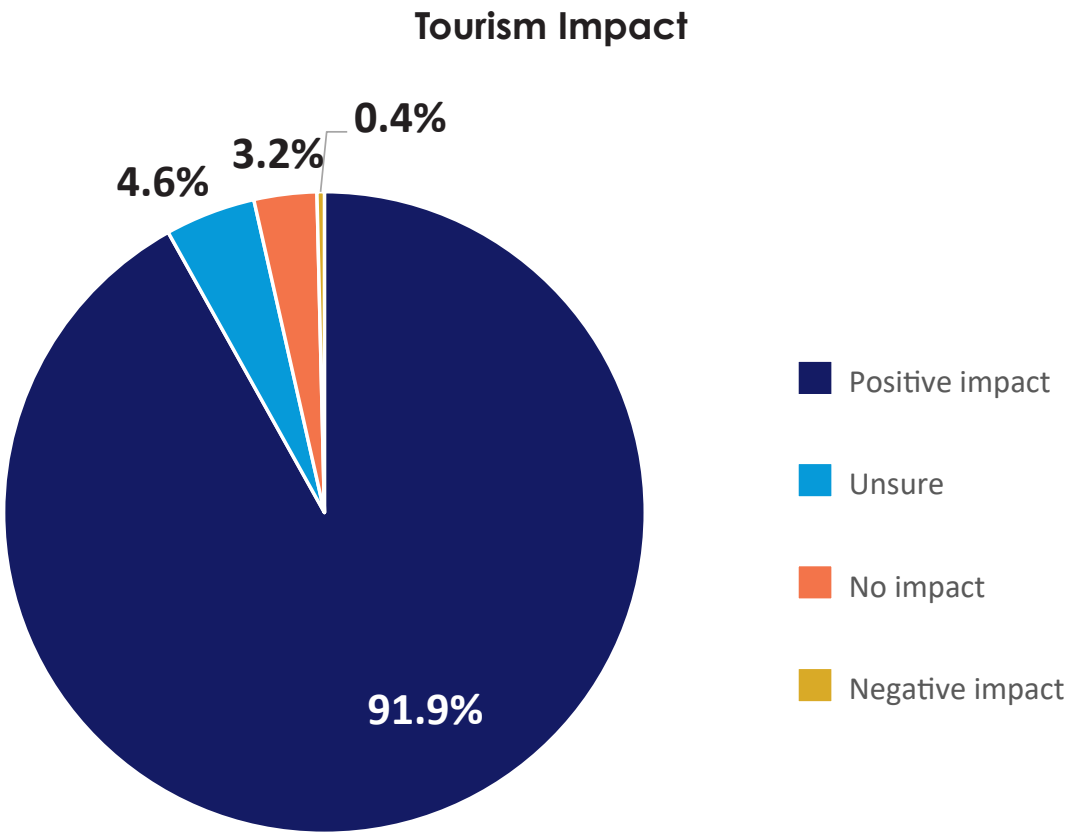
Environmental Benefits	Total: 86.9%	Total: 6515
Under 18	90.9%	40
18-24	89.9%	1,148
25-34	91.9%	2,075
35-54	85.8%	2,133
55-64	77.3%	496
65 and over	80.3%	590
Prefer not to answer	58.6%	35

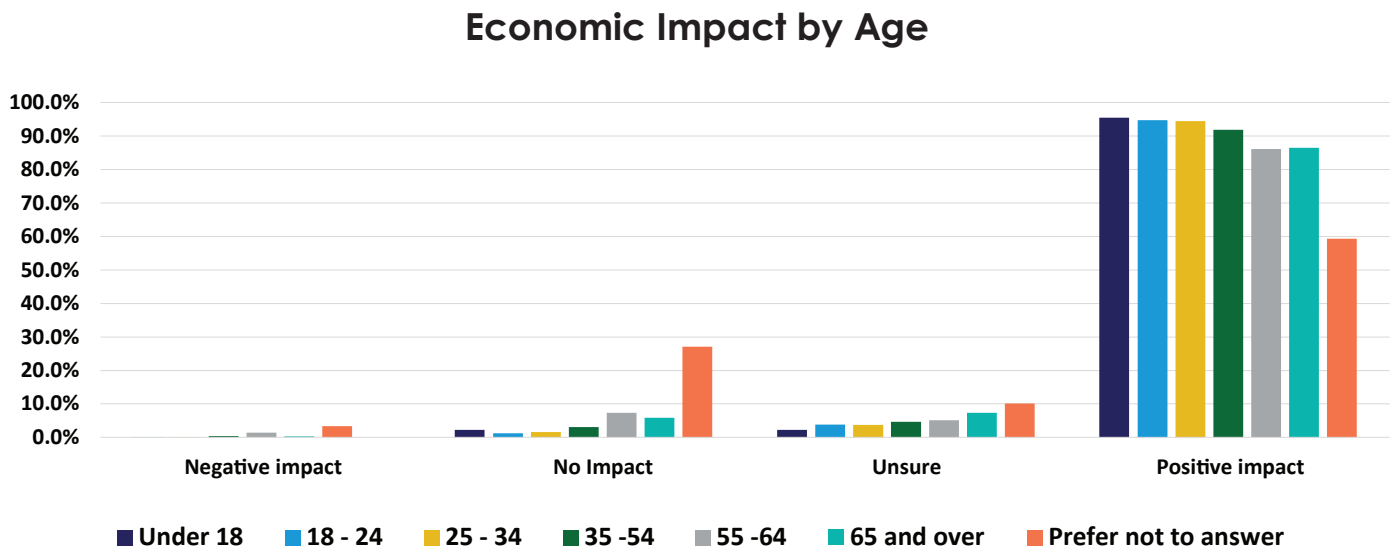
Economic Development	Total: 81.7%	Total: 6125
Under 18	88.6%	39
18-24	84.6%	1,080
25-34	85.9%	1,940
35-54	81.8%	2,034
55-64	71.5%	459
65 and over	73.9%	543
Prefer not to answer	58.6%	35

Job Creation	Total: 74.3%	Total: 5573
Under 18	77.3%	34
18-24	78.4%	1,001
25-34	79%	1,784
35-54	72.5%	1,802
55-64	66.5%	427
65 and over	67.5%	496
Prefer not to answer	48.3%	29

Q8: What impact do you think high-speed rail would have on tourism within Illinois?

Question eight measured respondents' predictions on the impact high-speed rail would have on tourism within Illinois. It is an important question as it indicates how taxpayers are considering the project and its effects. 92% of responses answered that such a network would have a "positive impact." While 5% of respondents indicated that they were "unsure" and 3% responded that it would have "no impact," just 0.4% of respondents believed it would have a "negative impact." Overall, these numbers indicate that the public believes in the potential for tourism benefits from a high-speed rail network.

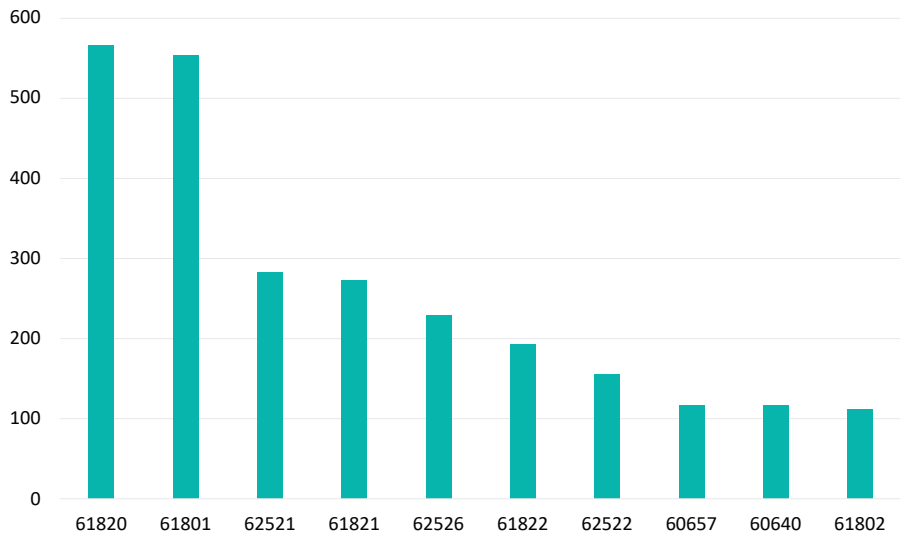



Economic Impact by Age
100.0%
90.0%
80.0%
70.0%
60.0%
50.0%
40.0%
30.0%
20.0%
10.0%
0.0%
Negative impact
No Impact
Unsure
Positive impact
Under 18
18 - 24
25 - 34
35 -54
55 -64
65 and over
Prefer not to answer

Q10: What is your zip code?

There was a total of 845 zip codes represented in the survey responses. The top ten zip codes consisted of 35% of the responses. The top zip codes were 61820, Champaign, IL, and 61801, Urbana, IL, both with 7% responses. The third-most common response, 62521, Decatur, IL, had 4% total responses. It is important to note that the top ten zip codes represent four cities – Champaign, Chicago, Decatur, and Urbana. This question was important in ensuring a diverse and representative group of voices from throughout the state were heard in the survey.

Top 10 Zip Codes



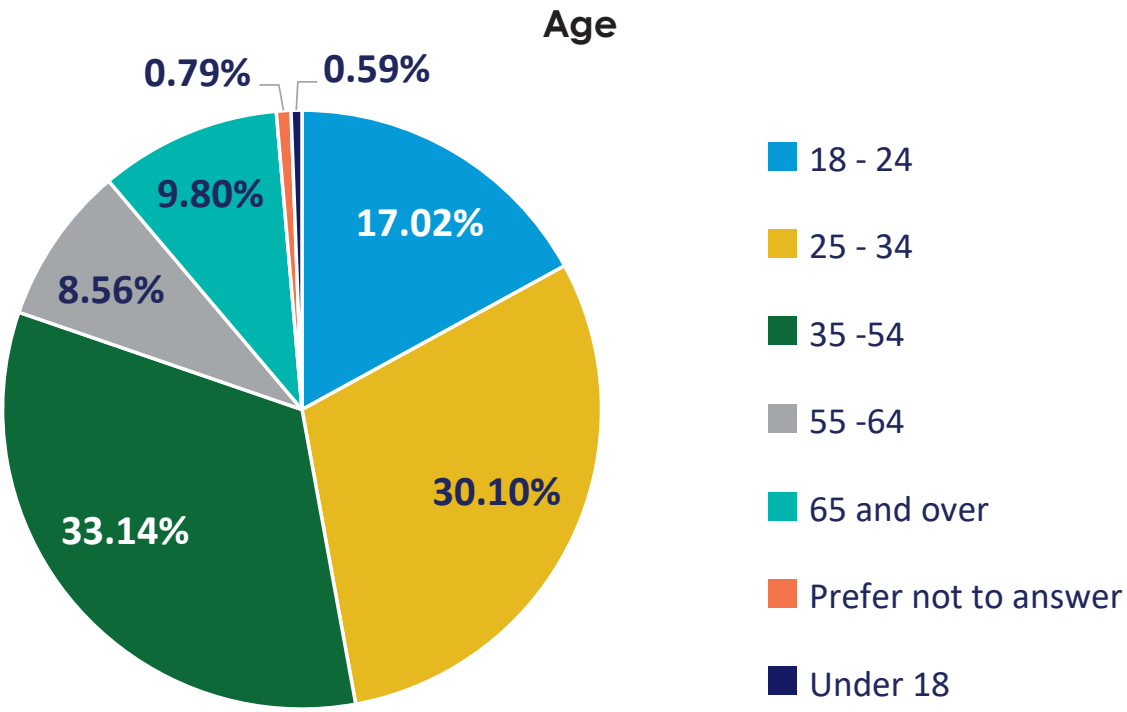
Top 10 Zip Code Locations

61820	Champaign	61822	Champaign
61801	Urbana	62522	Decatur
62521	Decatur	60657	Chicago
61821	Champaign	60640	Chicago
62526	Decatur	61802	Urbana

Of the top cities represented in survey responses, over 90% of residents of the 5 most popular cities responded affirmatively to question nine (positive economic impact of high-speed rail). Yes responses came in at 94% of respondents from Chicago, 95% of respondents from Champaign, 96% of respondents from St. Louis, 93% of respondents from Urbana, and 91% of respondents from Decatur.

Q11: What category best describes your age?

This question was asked for demographic purposes to ensure diverse and representative feedback. Respondents were offered 7 choices: under 18, 18-24; 25-34; 35-54; 55-64; 65 and over; and prefer not to answer. The group that fielded the most responses was 35-54 with 33% of respondents selecting this age category. The second-most often age category was 25-34 and was selected by 30% of respondents. This was followed by 18–24-year-olds in the third-largest age category with 17% of respondents choosing this answer. The 65 and over category was selected by 10% of respondents and the 55-64 age category was selected by 9% of respondents. 0.6% of respondents reported being under 18 and only 0.8% of respondents preferring not to disclose their ages. The results of this question signal a broad range of ages participated in the survey.



ILLINOIS
HIGH-SPEED
RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

Strengthening our State. Connecting the Region.

This report was produced with funding from
the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Illinois Department
of Transportation

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION

APPENDIX C

Illinois Department of Transportation

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

Strengthening our State. Connecting the Region.

VIRTUAL OUTREACH MEETING #1 SUMMARY

JUNE 2025

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION

A public information event was held for the Illinois High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study. The event was advertised to run from April 28 to May 11 and was extended to run until May 31, 2025. This event was held virtually using a web-based platform on the study website at www.IlHighSpeedRail.org. The platform was designed to take participants through each component, just as if they were attending in person. When they clicked on the event, a registration page was displayed; however, providing contact information was not required to join.

The next tab provided participants with the opportunity to watch a nineteen-minute presentation that explained the purpose of the study, educated on what high-speed rail service is and how that differs from the existing Amtrak service in Illinois, and provided information on next steps and a link to a public survey.

Following the presentation, the following displays and newsletter were available for review and download.

BOARDS

HSR Around the U.S.

Northeast Corridor Improvements

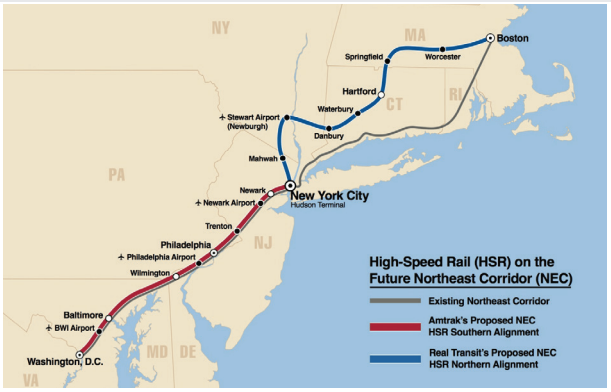
PROJECT FUNDING

Amtrak was awarded over **$18 billion** in Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grant Program funds **between 2022 and 2024** to improve service on its Northeast Corridor.

This funding will support dozens of projects in the corridor from Project Planning through Construction stages.

PROJECT BENEFITS

The projects will bring assets to **a state of good repair**, **improve reliability**, **improve traffic flow**, **enable higher operating speeds**, and other benefits.



AMTRAK UPDATES

Amtrak has procured brand new high-speed trains that will replace the current fleet of Amtrak's Acela service.

The NextGen Acela trainsets will operate at top speeds of 160 mph. In preparation for the introduction of the new NextGen Acela fleet, Amtrak has upgraded its infrastructure to increase track capacity, improve ride quality, increase speeds, and offer greater reliability along the Northeast Corridor. Amtrak will continue to upgrade its tracks to allow for top operating speeds of 160 mph across portions of the corridor.

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY | Illinois Department of Transportation

HSR Around the U.S.

Cascadia High-Speed Rail

FRA awarded WSDOT $49.7 million in December 2024 to develop a Service Development Plan for the Cascadia High-Speed Rail Project as part of FRA's Corridor Identification and Development Program. The federal funds will be matched with $5.5 million in state funds from the Washington State Legislature.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Proposed greenfield HSR system connecting **Portland, Oregon**; **Seattle, Washington**; and **Vancouver, British Columbia** metropolitan areas at speeds of up to 250 miles per hour

PROJECT STATUS

Project Planning stage funds **awarded in December 2024**

PROJECT NEXT STEPS

After SDP is complete, Preliminary Engineering/ Environmental review **(Project Development stage)**

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY | Illinois Department of Transportation

BOARDS

HSR Around the U.S.

Brightline West

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Brightline West will be America's first true high-speed passenger rail system. The modern, eco-friendly system will redefine train travel in America and connect two of our most iconic destinations: **Las Vegas** and **Southern California**.

The 218-mile passenger rail service will operate from Las Vegas to Rancho Cucamonga, California with the majority of the alignment within the median of the I-15.

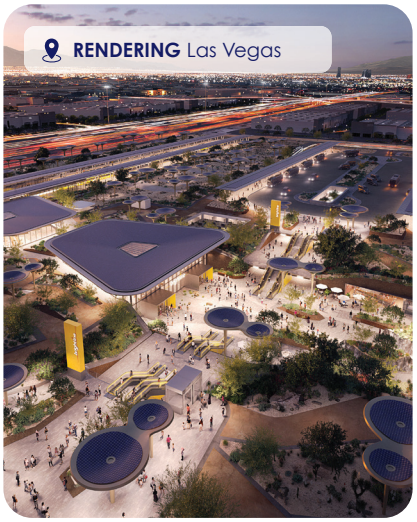
PROJECT BENEFITS

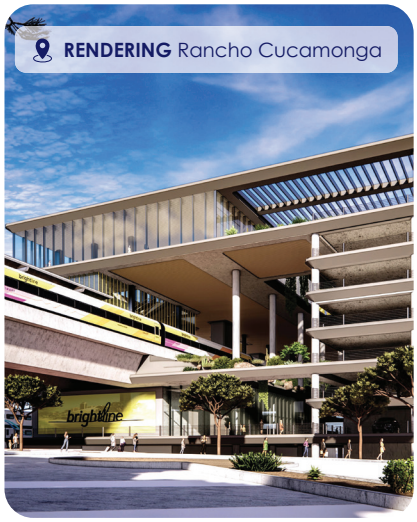
- 35,000+ Construction Jobs
- 1,000 Permanent Jobs
- Hiring of Underrepresented Populations
- Partnerships with Educational Institutions

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY | Illinois Department of Transportation

Imagine the Possibilities

High-Speed Rail Station Renderings





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Case Studies
Around the World

Fuxing Hao (CHINA) — **220 mph**, can travel 819 miles in 5 hours

Frecciarossa (ITALY) — **200 mph**, traveling 360 miles in under 3 hours

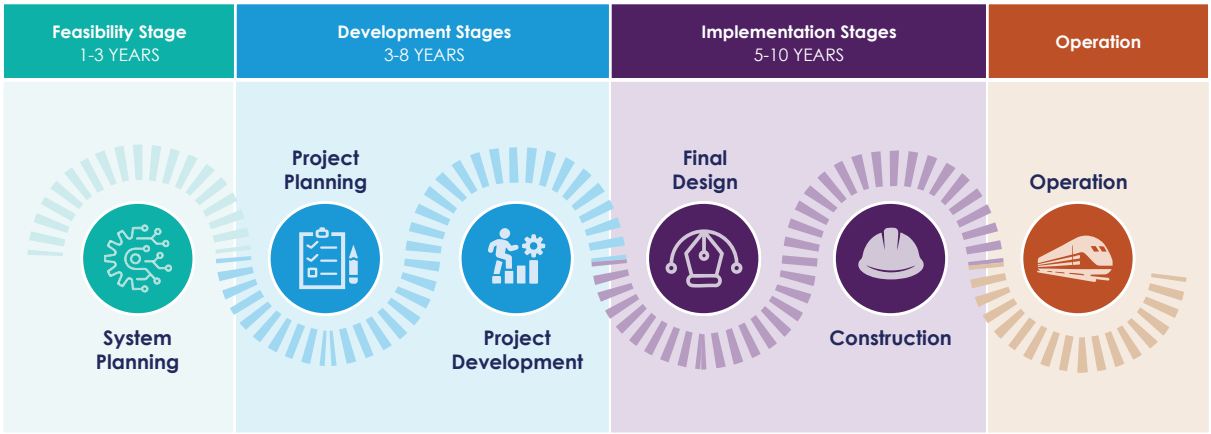
Brightline West (USA) — **200 mph**, will travel 218 miles in approx. 2 hours

Shinkansen (JAPAN) — **199 mph**, traveling 420 miles in 3 hours

Haramain HSR (KSA) — **186 mph**, can travel 280 miles in 2.5 hours

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY | Illinois Department of Transportation

Project Lifecycle Stages



This study is currently in the early feasibility phase, and will provide data to determine if this concept should advance to future phases should funding be identified.

Funding has not been identified for any future phases of this project beyond the Feasibility Study.

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY | Illinois Department of Transportation

NEWSLETTER

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

Newsletter Public Event #1

APRIL 2025

Introducing the Illinois High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study

Building a Vision for Faster, Connected Travel Across Illinois

The Illinois High-Speed Railway Commission is conducting the Illinois High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study to assess the potential for high-speed rail between Chicago and St. Louis with a feeder network that includes existing Amtrak, Metra and MetroLink services, and connects major cities across the state. By integrating current Amtrak, Metra, MetroLink, and intercity bus services, the proposed high-speed rail network would aim to improve connectivity across Illinois, enhance travel options for residents, and support the state's long-term transportation needs.

The study follows the 2021 signing of the High-Speed Railway Commission Act, which established a 21-member commission to guide the project. Together, the study and the Commission will lay the groundwork for a statewide high-speed rail plan, ensuring it aligns with Illinois' transportation goals and evaluating its overall feasibility.

High-Speed Railway Commission

Mission Statement

To create a statewide high-speed railway network for Illinois through actionable, achievable recommendations engaging governments on the local, state, and federal levels. Our efforts will support connecting the state with high-speed trains integrated with other modes of transportation linking additional communities into the passenger rail system. Our plan will benefit the people of Illinois through enhancements to both passenger and freight rail mobility, positive environmental benefits, potential economic development, and positioning Illinois for future funding opportunities.

Strengthening our State. Connecting the Region.

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION

Illinois Department of Transportation

Amtrak's Lincoln Service operating between Chicago and St. Louis

Imagine the possibilities...

- *Your college student home for the holidays in record time.*
- *A weekend getaway, no road trip required.*
- *Transportation that is safer and more reliable than driving.*

Illinois has been a leader in advancing passenger rail, achieving 110 MPH speeds on the Lincoln Service corridor and modernizing equipment with next-generation passenger cars and Charger locomotives. However, shared tracks and at-grade crossings limit further improvements.

This study explores the potential for a dedicated, fully electrified, grade-separated passenger rail corridor, allowing speeds up to 220 MPH. The goal is to enhance service frequency, expand connections, and build a strong future for passenger rail in Illinois.

High-Speed Rail Around The World

Fuxing Hao (CHINA) ..... **220 mph** (819 miles in 5 hours)
Frecciarossa (ITALY) ..... **200 mph** (360 miles < 3 hours)
Brightline West* (USA) ..... **200 mph** (218 miles in 2 hours)
Shinkansen (JAPAN) ..... **199 mph** 420 miles in 3 hours)
Haramain HSR (KSA) ..... **186 mph** (280 miles in 2.5 hours)

**Service slated to begin in late 2028*

Photos courtesy of Brightline West

CASE STUDY

Brightline West

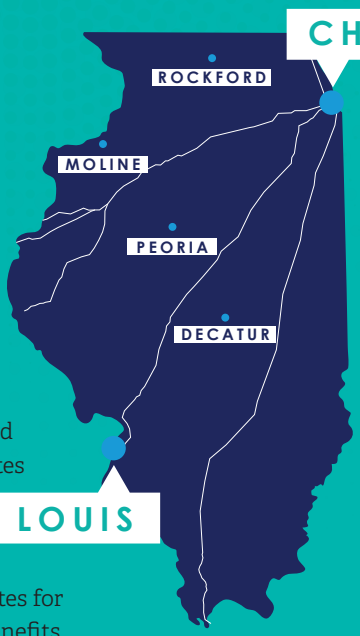
Brightline West will be America's first true high-speed passenger rail, connecting Las Vegas and Los Angeles with a modern, 218-mile system. Expected to generate over $10 billion in economic impact, the project will create 35,000 construction jobs and 1,000 permanent jobs. Funded primarily through private bonds, with only $3 billion in public funding, it serves as a model for high-speed rail in the U.S. Running mostly along I-15, Brightline West will connect with the San Bernardino Metrolink in Rancho Cucamonga, offering seamless travel to LA. With service launching in late 2028, it aims to shift millions from congested highways to reliable rail.

Benefits of High-Speed Rail

"User" (Traveler) Benefits Elements	Broader Societal Impact Elements	Local (Area & Stakeholder) Impact Elements
Travel Time Savings	Safety Benefits	Station Area Land Development
Travel Cost Savings	Emissions Reduction	Land Value Increases
Travel Time Reliability	Accessibility & Intermodal Connectivity Benefits	Regional Economic Development
		Government Revenues from Taxes

Our Study

This feasibility study will use lessons learned from Brightline West's success story including environmental stewardship through construction in disturbed areas, enticing private development and investment in the service, and utilizing existing transit routes for multimodal connections. The study will evaluate potential high-speed rail routes for ridership potential, public benefits, and costs to construct, operate, and maintain the service.

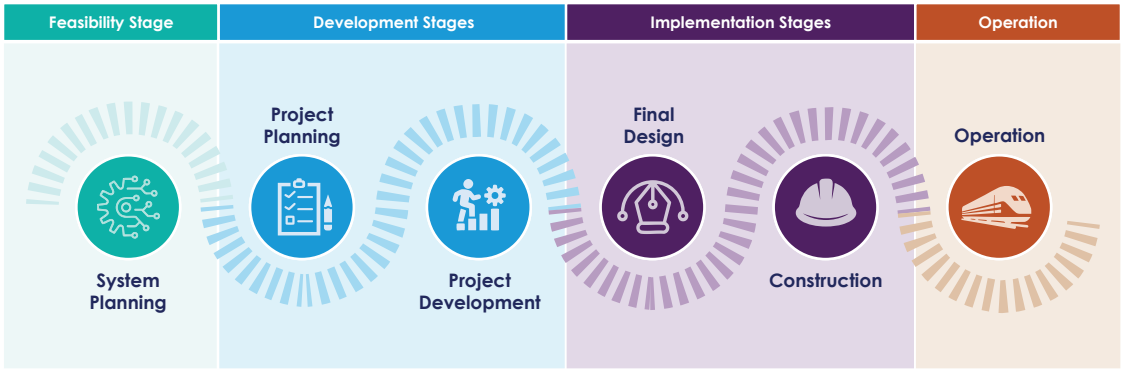


Vision for Illinois High-Speed Rail Connectivity

ADVANCING ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL
Responding to the state's commitment to high-speed rail options

MAJOR CITY CONNECTIONS
Links Chicago and St. Louis

ENHANCED STATEWIDE CONNECTIVITY
Integrates with Amtrak, Metra, MetroLink, and intercity buses



Project Lifecycle Stages

The Illinois High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study is the first step in the project lifecycle process defined by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Feasibility studies, which occur during the systems planning stage, are high-level planning studies that can examine needs, challenges, and opportunities that can be addressed with a rail transportation solution. Systems planning considers connections with other transportation modes for safe, seamless, integrated transportation networks that carry travelers between large cities and communities across a corridor and region.

Stay Connected

Stay connected with the Illinois High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study and be a part of shaping the future of transportation in our state. Visit our website to:

- Learn more about the study
- Subscribe and receive updates
- Share your feedback and ideas

Visit us at **ilhighspeedrail.org** to take part in this exciting journey toward building a more connected Illinois.

Take the survey

Get Involved! Take the survey!

Share Your Input on the Future of High-Speed Rail in Illinois

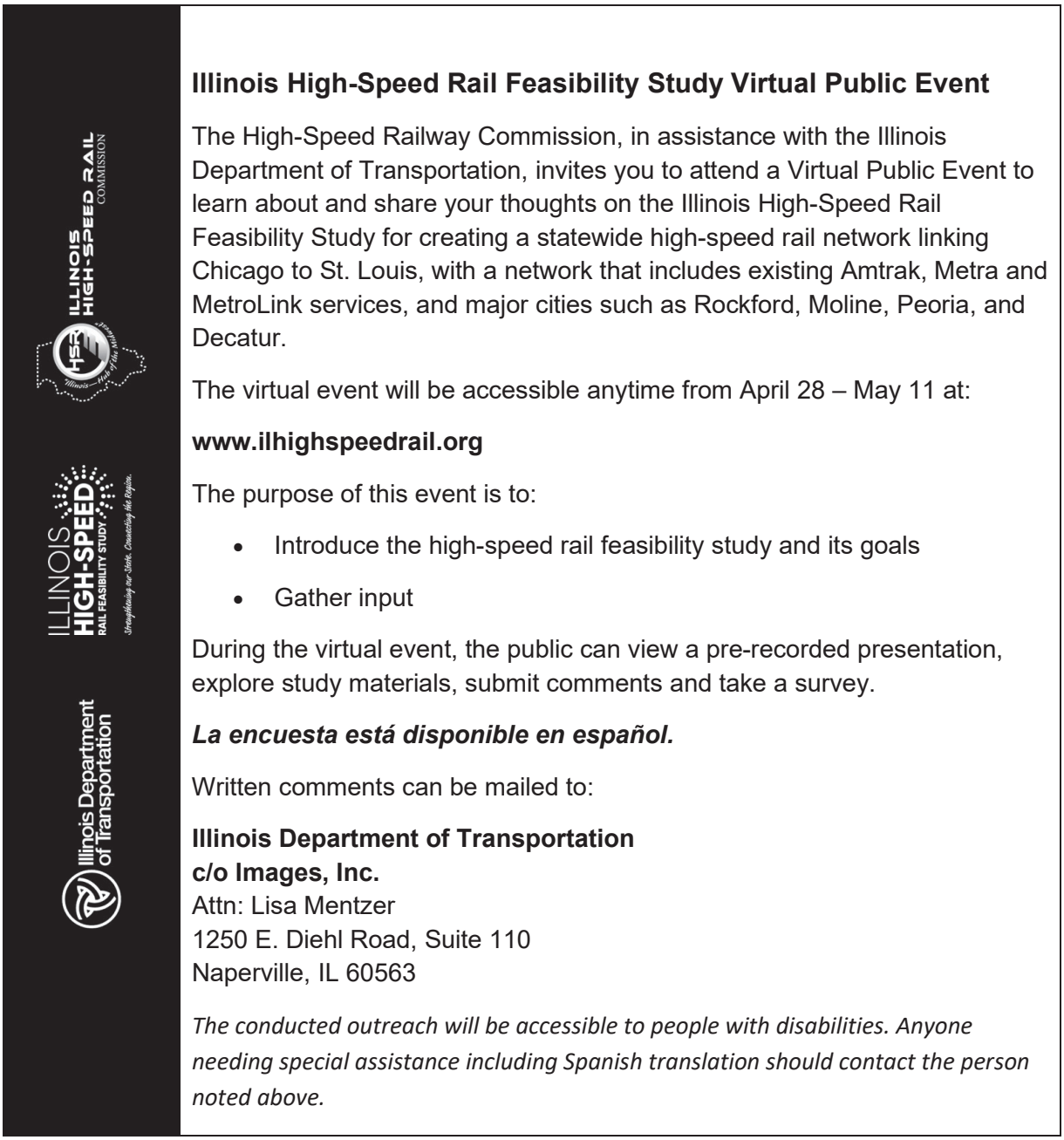
The success of this feasibility study depends on input from Illinois residents. We invite you to participate in our survey to share your thoughts, concerns, and ideas for the Illinois high-speed rail network. Your feedback will help shape the development of this transformational transportation project and ensure it meets the needs of the communities it will serve.

Available in English: bit.ly/HSRStudySurvey
Available in Spanish: bit.ly/HSRStudySurveySpanish

NEWSPAPER AD

The event concluded by giving participants the opportunity to leave comments and to click a link to take the survey.

Notification of the event throughout the state was critical to the success of this event. In addition to traditional newspaper advertisements, billboards, posters, and social media were used. This included the following advertisement placed in twelve newspapers throughout the state.



ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

Illinois Department of Transportation

Illinois High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study Virtual Public Event

The High-Speed Railway Commission, in assistance with the Illinois Department of Transportation, invites you to attend a Virtual Public Event to learn about and share your thoughts on the Illinois High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study for creating a statewide high-speed rail network linking Chicago to St. Louis, with a network that includes existing Amtrak, Metra and MetroLink services, and major cities such as Rockford, Moline, Peoria, and Decatur.

The virtual event will be accessible anytime from April 28 – May 11 at:

www.ilhighspeedrail.org

The purpose of this event is to:

- Introduce the high-speed rail feasibility study and its goals
- Gather input

During the virtual event, the public can view a pre-recorded presentation, explore study materials, submit comments and take a survey.

La encuesta está disponible en español.

Written comments can be mailed to:

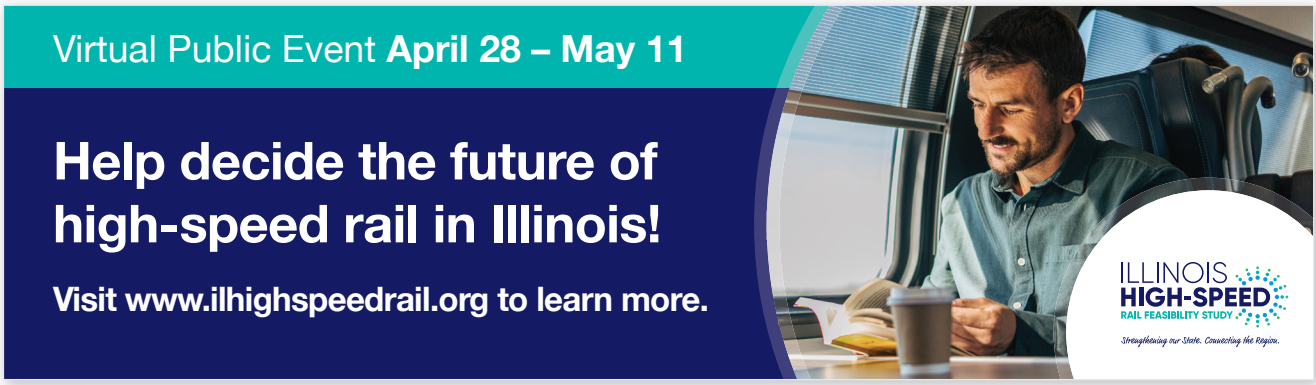
Illinois Department of Transportation
c/o Images, Inc.
Attn: Lisa Mentzer
1250 E. Diehl Road, Suite 110
Naperville, IL 60563

The conducted outreach will be accessible to people with disabilities. Anyone needing special assistance including Spanish translation should contact the person noted above.

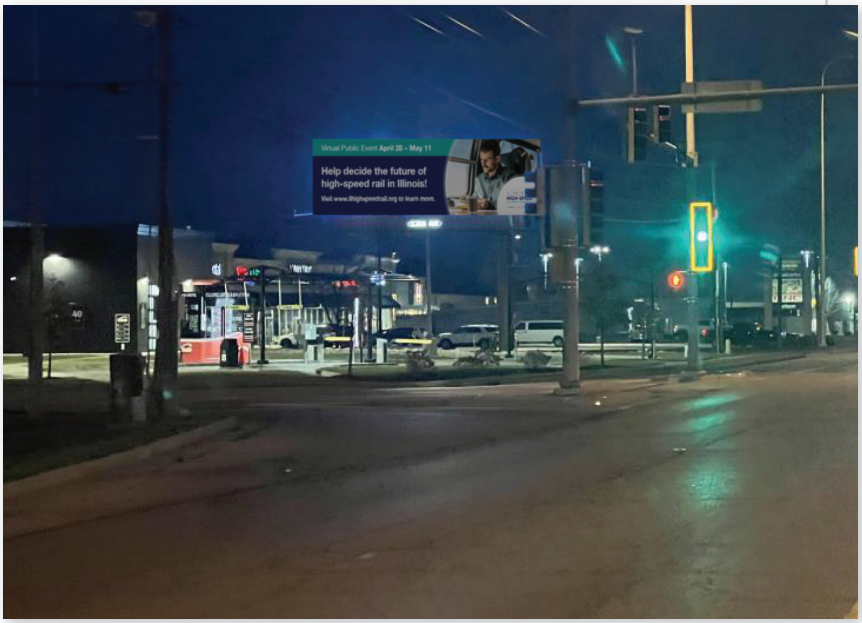
The table below lists the publications, run date, and type of advertisement.

Publication	Location	Run Date	Ad Type
Sun Times	Chicago	April 28	Print and e-edition
Herald News	Joliet	April 26	Print and e-edition
Journal Register	Springfield	April 28	Print and e-edition
Dispatch Argus	Quad Cities	April 27	Print, e-edition, banner
Quad City Times	Quad Cities	April 27	Print, e-edition, banner
Register Star	Rockford	April 28	Print and banner
Journal Star	Peoria	April 28	Print
Herald Review	Decatur	April 28	Print
The News Gazette	Champaign/Urbana	April 29	Print
The Pantagraph	Bloomington/Normal	April 28	Print and banner

BILLBOARD



Billboards were utilized to advertise the event. In Springfield, the billboard shown below, located at Dirksen Parkway and Walton Drive ran the advertisement from April 28 – May 4, 2025.



BILLBOARD

A second billboard, located at 1816 Water Street in Decatur advertised the event from April 28 – May 11, 2025.

BUS POSTER

Posters that included a QR code with a direct link to the event were placed on public transit. This included all state-sponsored Amtrak trains and systemwide on Metra trains; all 669 Pace buses; all 13 Quincy Transit buses; and all 118 Champaign-Urbana MTD buses.

TRAIN POSTER

THIRD PARTY ADS

Third party assistance was a key to event notification. A letter signed by Chairman Derwinski was sent to local officials in all municipalities inviting participation in the public event. Additionally, a request was made to 234 organizations, including chambers of commerce, visitors bureaus, metropolitan planning organizations, industry organizations, government agencies, transit providers, community organizations, universities, and libraries, to share information and materials regarding the event and survey. Third party ads are shown here.

EBLAST

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

Strengthening our State. Connecting the Region.

Have Your Say on Illinois' Futuristic High-Speed Rail—Participate in the Virtual Public Event!

The High-Speed Rail Commission invites you to attend a Virtual Public Event to learn about and share your thoughts on the Illinois High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study, which examines the possibility of a cutting-edge statewide high-speed rail network linking Chicago and St. Louis, with a potential feeder network that includes existing Amtrak, Metra and MetroLink services, and major cities such as Rockford, Moline, Peoria, and Decatur.

Available April 28 – May 11, the virtual event will feature a pre-recorded presentation and study materials, and will allow attendees to provide feedback and participate in a survey. The project website, *www.ilhighspeedrail.org*, is also a great resource for updates and ongoing input.

Help shape the future of transportation in Illinois by joining us.
We look forward to your participation!

CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE VIRTUAL PUBLIC EVENT

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION

www.ilhighspeedrail.org

Illinois Department of Transportation

An eblast invitation, shown above, was sent to the stakeholder list.

PRESS RELEASE

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

Strengthening our State. Connecting the Region.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 28, 2025

CONTACT: Janet Henderson
630-890-0263

VIRTUAL PUBLIC EVENT ANNOUNCED FOR ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

ILLINOIS - The High-Speed Railway Commission, assisted by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT,) will hold its first virtual public event in April 2025 to introduce the concept of high-speed passenger rail service, present study information and gather feedback on the Illinois High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study. This Study explores the feasibility of establishing a high-speed rail network within the state, focusing on a corridor from Chicago to St. Louis and connections to existing Amtrak, Metra, and MetroLink services and to additional key cities across Illinois, such as Rockford, Moline, Peoria, and Decatur.

The virtual event will be held between April 28 – May 11 on the project website. Participants can join the event at any time by visiting www.ILHighSpeedRail.org and clicking on the link on the home page. As part of the event, attendees will have the opportunity to view a pre-recorded presentation, review exhibits, provide feedback and participate in a survey. The survey is also available in Spanish. Public participation is encouraged to raise awareness and gather feedback.

The Illinois High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study was initiated in response to legislation signed by Governor J.B. Pritzker on August 6, 2021, establishing the High-Speed Railway Commission.

The Illinois High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study is part of the High-Speed Railway Commission's commitment to expanding Illinois' transportation options and supporting economic growth through enhanced connectivity. Following the April meeting, all materials will be made available on the project website.

This study is currently in the early feasibility phase and will provide data to determine if this concept should advance to future phases should funding be identified.

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A press release was issued and reported on by numerous news outlets including, ABC 7 Chicago, ABC 20 Springfield, Chicago Construction News, KWQC 6 Davenport, IA, Quad Cities Business Journal, The News Gazette, WAND 20 Decatur, WICS 2 Springfield, WQAD 8 Moline, and WSIL Carterville.

The outreach resulted in a total of 7,341 unique visitors viewing the site a total of 8,827 times. The average session duration was 5 minutes and 12 seconds. A total of 293 participants completed the registration form. Of those who completed the form, it indicated most received notification from the eblast, followed by social media. Only nine identified the newspaper, and one a billboard, as the source of information for the event. Others learned about the event through the media, friends, and third-party outreach.

Visitors had a second opportunity to provide their contact information when they filled out a comment form. While some visitors never provided their information, others provided it on multiple occasions. Overall, this event added a total of 493 new stakeholders added to the list. While the majority are from Illinois, stakeholders also registered from Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania,

While most participants joined through a direct link to the site, visitors also connected through links on Facebook, reddit.com, survey planet, google, WAND TV, and IDOT.Illinois.gov. Mobile devices were used most (70%), followed by desktop (29%) and tablet (1%). The most traffic took place on Tuesdays with Sundays having the least participation. Recording 1,130 sessions, May 6th was the single day with the highest volume of traffic.

Of the participants, seventy provided comments on the site, and one comment was received through the mail. All commentors except one listed an address in Illinois with the exception from Iowa.

All event materials are available on the study website in the Resources tab.

Highlights of the comment topics include:

- Support for high-speed rail service.
- City pairs in addition to Chicago to St. Louis should be explored.
- Support for the I-55 corridor.
- Support for the I-57 corridor.
- Support for passenger rail service to Moline.
- Incorporate Decatur, Carbondale, Champaign-Urbana, Peoria into the system.
- Use California statewide plan for transportation as an example.
- Connecting to universities.
- Consider the impact on the environment.
- Build stations in economically deprived areas.
- Be sure trains can accommodate more bicycles than Amtrak currently does.
- Consider whether funds would be better spent on existing transit improvements.
- Safety concerns for wildlife.
- Opposition to the service and use of funds.
- Incorporate frequent service to avoid long layovers.

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

Strengthening our State. Connecting the Region.

This report was created with funding from the
Illinois High-Speed Rail Commission

ILLINOIS HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION