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MILELE A. COGGS

6th District Alderwoman

What it Means When Rail Funds Head Elsewhere

**Statement of Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs
December 9, 2010**

As the author of Common Council file #100912 – legislation expressing the City of Milwaukee’s support for development of a high-speed passenger rail network in the Midwest, including an extension of Amtrak’s Hiawatha service from Milwaukee to Madison – today is a very difficult day.

The announcement by the federal Department of Transportation that it is taking back the \$810 million for high speed rail in Wisconsin and instead sending that money to other states for their high speed rail projects is saddening and shocking. The decision is a great loss for Wisconsin and its largest cities, and I believe the cost of not building high speed rail lines in Wisconsin – in terms of jobs, economic development, business development, etc. – will be much higher than the \$810 million.

The fact that Milwaukee and Wisconsin will not be connected to the Midwest high speed rail network means lost opportunities also in tourism and visitors. It also means Milwaukee residents won’t have the ability to access high speed rail (and all of its destination connections) like our neighbors in Illinois and in several other states.

I would like to thank all of the co-sponsors of file #100912 – Common Council President Willie L. Hines, Jr., Alderman Robert J. Bauman, Alderman Willie C. Wade, Alderman Nik Kovac and Alderman Ashanti Hamilton – for their support and assistance.

It is unfortunate that such a promising transportation upgrade and amenity for the people of Milwaukee and Wisconsin fell victim to politics.