



**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706**

**ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH
GOVERNOR**

November 19, 2007

Dear Members of the General Assembly:

I am calling the General Assembly into special session next Wednesday, November 28, to pass a long-term funding plan for the CTA and RTA. With the holidays and the next transit “doomsday” fast approaching, we cannot afford more delays. Transit riders that use the CTA, Metra and Pace to get to work and school are relying on you.

We have discussed several options for funding mass transit. As I have stated before, I support the concept suggested by House Minority Leader Tom Cross, reflected in legislation sponsored by Rep. Skip Saviano, that would redirect revenue from the existing sales tax on gasoline in Cook and the collar counties to the RTA. It does not raise taxes, it redirects them. That’s revenue that is already collected from drivers who contribute to congested roads and air pollution in our region. It makes sense to dedicate that revenue to mass transit, and it also helps reduce congestion and air pollution. The revenue could be replaced by closing corporate loopholes that do not benefit the public. I am open to other ideas so long as it is not another tax increase on people, but one thing is clear: the opportunity to act is quickly passing. The holidays and new year are fast approaching. Whatever agreement can be reached must be reached soon.

Throughout a record-long legislative session that lasted well into the summer, lawmakers failed to address the funding needs of the CTA, Metra and Pace. When I called a special session on the issue in August, a majority of legislators did not show up and the session adjourned without any action.

When the House of Representatives did reconvene to address the issue on September 4, a proposal to raise the sales tax to fund mass transit failed. Republican and downstate lawmakers in both chambers of the General Assembly objected to the tax increase and stated that they would not support a funding plan for Chicago-area transit agencies unless the transportation and infrastructure needs in their communities were also addressed.

On September 12, four days before the CTA's first "doomsday", I advanced the RTA, CTA and Pace \$78 million to avoid their planned service cuts, lay-offs and fare hikes, and to give lawmakers more time to work through their issues. In the subsequent seven weeks, the legislature still did not reach agreement on a long-term funding solution.

Again on November 2, just two days before the second transit "doomsday", I provided the CTA and Pace with \$27 million in additional funding to maintain operations through the end of the year without harming riders or cutting jobs. At that time, legislative leaders expressed in a letter to RTA officials that they were only seven to ten days away from final agreement on a long-term funding plan. That was seventeen days ago, and lawmakers still have not passed legislation to meet the needs of the CTA, Metra and Pace.

The transit agencies have indicated that a third, more severe "doomsday" is looming in January. The transit unions have said that if there is no funding resolution by the end of the year, their contract will be in jeopardy. We cannot let history repeat itself. There are not funds available for me to once again unilaterally avoid a "doomsday" for mass transit riders in the Chicago area. The General Assembly must take action soon. That is why I am calling you into special session after the Thanksgiving holiday.

Enjoy your Thanksgiving and the opportunity to gather with family and friends.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rod Blagojevich". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Rod R. Blagojevich
Governor