



Published on *GazetteNET* (<http://www.gazettenet.com>)

Olver heads post for high-speed rail funding

By *Daily Hampshire Gazette*
Created 03/23/2011 - 4:00am

[high speed rail](#) [local news](#) [northampton](#) [olver](#)

With the Northeast designated for federal high-speed rail funding, eligible for \$2.4 billion in competitive grants, Rep. John W. Olver, D-Mass., has become a funding co-chairman of the Congressional Bicameral High-Speed and Intercity Rail Caucus.

The grants, for which there is an April 4 application deadline, were made available after the governor of Florida turned them down. To be eligible for the money, states must show an ability to reduce energy use, improve the efficiency of their transportation network and generate sustained economic growth.

If the states and Amtrak are successful, the federal money could help improve the rail connection between New Haven, Conn., and Springfield, enhancing improvements that are under way between Springfield and White River Junction, Vt. through Greenfield, according to Dana Roscoe, transportation manager for the Pioneer Valley Regional Planning Commission. It could also be used to plan for improvements to the passenger rail connection between Springfield and Boston through Worcester.

Inter-city passenger rail improvements are also eligible for funding if it can increase reliability or speed, although the competition will be fierce, according to state Rail Administrator Richard Davey.

"There are a lot of opportunities for the state to either support or otherwise receive potential grants," Davey said. "We see rail as an economic engine for our citizens," he added, and to improve the freight corridor as well to reduce traffic congestion on the highways.

"The Obama Administration's bold highspeed rail plan will create jobs, reinvigorate our manufacturing sector and spur economic development for years to come," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. "States across the country have been banging down our door for the opportunity to receive additional high-speed rail dollars and to deliver all of its economic benefits to their citizens."

President Obama's vision is to connect 80 percent of Americans to high-speed rail within the next 25 years. To put America on track towards that goal, the administration has proposed a six-year, \$53 billion plan to provide rail access to new communities; improve the reliability, speed and frequency of existing lines; and, where it makes economic sense, build new corridors where trains will travel at speeds of up to 250 miles per hour.

The investments also projected to create hundreds of thousands of jobs, on manufacturing, construction and operation of rail lines, as well as resulting from economic developments along rail corridors. A report by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, projected that high-speed rail would create tens of thousands of jobs in cities and along rail corridors across the United States.

Daily Hampshire Gazette © 2011 All rights reserved

Source URL: <http://www.gazettenet.com/2011/03/23/olver-heads-post-high-speed-rail-funding>