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**Congressman Lipinski brings together Metra, Amtrak, and freight railroads
for hearing on process improvements for commuters**

*Mayors Alice Gallagher of Western Springs, John Noak of Romeoville and Sandy Bury of Oak Lawn
joined Lipinski to question rail officials during the hearing*

CHICAGO -- Congressman Dan Lipinski (IL-3) held a hearing on Tuesday, April 16th with officials from Metra, Amtrak, and freight railroads to hold them accountable for the continued service disruptions experienced by commuters. Lipinski, chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials, lead a panel of elected officials including Mayors Alice Gallagher of Western Springs, John Noak of Romeoville and Sandy Bury of Oak Lawn to ask the railroads what is being done to make sure there isn't a repeat of the Feb. 28 meltdown at Chicago Union Station that left nearly 100,000 passengers stranded for several hours.

"Rail is the lifeblood of Northeastern Illinois," Lipinski said, "Too often, Metra riders are not getting the service that they deserve. I said in a town hall I held in December to address problems on the BNSF line that 2019 needs to be a better year for all Metra riders. Metra is still coming up frustratingly short. It is time to stop passing the buck and find solutions."

Railroad executives who faced questioning at the hearing included: Jim Derwiski, Metra CEO; Ray Lang, Amtrak Senior Director of National State Relations; Patricia Casler, BNSF Director of Suburban Services; John Friedmann, Norfolk Southern Vice President of Network Planning and Optimization; and Mike Matteucci, Canadian National Director of Region Contracts and Administration. The freight railroads own most of the actual tracks that Metra runs on and operate both freight trains and passenger trains on some of these lines.

During his opening remarks, Mayor Noak thanked Lipinski for holding the hearing and pointed out that the impacts of service delays often are not accounted for in an economic analysis. "When we talk about reliability, when we talk about time, we're talking about people's lives," he said.

Topics covered at the hearing included:

- Amtrak's system failures that caused the February 28th Meltdown at Union Station and why passengers were not reimbursed
- Capital investment and funding for Metra
- Metra car conditions and schedules
- Community engagement with upkeep of rail infrastructure, such as bridges
- Increasing service on Metra lines and limiting commuter disruption during construction

"Metra and its partners must work better together and improve communications with each other in the towns they serve to enhance the commuter experience," Gallagher said.

Added Bury, "What the trains don't have now is the reliability that they had in the past."

Lipinski highlighted the importance of the discussion because Amtrak and other rail funding programs will need to be reauthorized in 2020, and as the chairman of the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials, he will lead the drafting of this legislation. He expects that the funding will be included in a larger highway and transit funding bill and that it will provide better opportunity to address the concerns of rail passengers and other rail-related issues that his constituents face in the 3rd district.

"Moving forward, I think it's critical that the main focus here was problems that we've been seeing with Metra services," Lipinski said. "Metra passengers deserve to have good, reliable service. I think it's important for everyone to work together and continue to have conversations."