



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Cities Initiative Rallies Around Proposed Cross-Border Passenger Rail Expansion Between Detroit and Windsor

This opportunity will provide a path forward for economic development and environmental sustainability in the region

Chicago, December 8, 2023 – The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative strongly supports the cross-border passenger rail proposal to seamlessly connect Chicago to Toronto through the Detroit River Rail Tunnel, with a new Essex Terminal Railway line joining the CP tracks to Windsor, Ontario's Via Rail station.

Via Rail Canada's recent discussions with Amtrak and other stakeholders to extend the Chicago-Detroit *Wolverine* route to Union Station in Downtown Toronto mean that the communities in Southwestern Ontario and Southern Michigan will be served by a stronger rail transportation system. With growing momentum from both sides of the border, this opportunity is expected to relieve traffic congestion, enhance options for travellers, and create tourism opportunities for local towns and cities in the region.

The return of passenger rail service between Chicago and Toronto, through the Detroit-Windsor region, will see an estimated 66,500 additional annual passengers visiting at least 21 new communities. Amtrak last served Windsor from New York and Buffalo, with its *Niagara Rainbow* service, which continued through to Detroit at the end of 1979, when funding ended.

"The proposed cross-border passenger rail expansion between Detroit and Windsor offers a significant level of connectivity and exciting small business and tourism opportunities for our communities basin-wide on both sides of the border," said Chair of the Cities Initiative and Mayor of Saint-Anicet, Gino Moretti.

The proposed route would be up and running by as early as 2027, with one daily round-trip service between Chicago and Toronto. Passengers would be able to make use of both Amtrak and Via Rail services with just one ticket.

"The Cities Initiative applauds these developments, as they provide countless economic and social opportunities for Southwestern Ontario and our neighbours in Southern Michigan and our rapidly

growing towns and cities,” said Gary McNamara, the Cities Initiative’s lead for Southwestern Ontario and Mayor of Tecumseh. “As a mayor in the region, I can attest to how important this proposal is.”

This initiative also aligns with the mandates of the US and Canadian governments, both of whom wish to expand and improve passenger rail systems across their countries.

About the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a multinational coalition of U.S. and Canadian mayors and chief elected officials dedicated to the environmental, social, and economic health of communities in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin. With more than 250 member cities, the Cities Initiative is the largest municipally driven organization in the basin focused on issues impacting their residents.

For more information, please contact:

Eamonn Horan-Lunney, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative | Eamonn.hl@glslcities.org