



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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Senator Loudon Unveils Initiative to Bring Major Tourist Attraction to St. Louis Area

Regional Railroad Authorities Act Would Be Economic Development Tool for the State

JEFFERSON CITY – Sen. John Loudon, R-Chesterfield, has unveiled a new initiative that will bring a major tourist attraction to the St. Louis area while providing a major economic development tool for the state. Sen. Loudon’s Regional Railroad Authorities Act (SB 905) would allow private developers to put in regional and tourist-themed trains on certain rail lines in Missouri. Similar efforts in Colorado and in the Great Smoky Mountains have netted hundreds of thousands of tourists spending millions of dollars.

“This is a great opportunity for us to open up some of these little used or abandoned railroad lines to improve the shipping capabilities and to open up the tourism possibilities of those lines,” said Loudon. “Approval of my measure would help a developer immediately put in a line for the St. Louis area and give other communities similar economic opportunities in the future.”

It has been proposed that a regional railroad authority operate trains on the old Rock Island line from Chesterfield to Union, one of the most beautiful sections of railway in the entire nation. Given the St. Louis region’s population base of 2.5 million, the railroad could attract over a hundred thousand visitors in its first 12-18 months and potentially develop into an annual ridership in excess of 200,000. Senator Loudon points to the success of Colorado’s Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, which draws more than 195,000 visitors who add more than \$150 million dollars annually to the local economy. In addition, the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad had 205,000 visitors last year.

“This is a proven economic development tool that we cannot afford to pass up,” said Sen. Loudon. “Approval of my Regional Railroad Authorities Act would mean more jobs immediately, more jobs in the future, and enhanced revenues so the state can continue to provide the services all Missourians expect, while giving us another method of moving valuable goods across this state. I heartily encourage all of my colleagues to get on board this train of economic development.”

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