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Historic train highlights rail travel's past and future

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SPRINGFIELD — A historic train from Chicago rolled into Springfield's Amtrak station Wednesday in an attempt to highlight rail travel's past and lobby for money to protect its future.

The train arrived about 90 minutes late, due in part to the need for railroad improvement, according to Heather Shadur, spokeswoman for the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency program. The trip should have taken just over three hours but lasted almost five.

"We left on time," Shadur said, explaining that the 120 passengers on the train are supporters of CREATE, a partnership between the Chicago Department of Transportation and the Association of American Railroads, and rode the train into town to publicize a \$330 million overhaul of the Chicago freight railroad system.

The city of Chicago, the railroads and federal government are providing \$230 million toward the project. The group plans to ask for \$100 million in state funds.

"The train was put together especially for this trip," Shadur said. "I doubt if you'd ever see these cars together again."

The nine cars gathered from CSX Transportation and the Union Pacific and Canadian National railroads "are pretty amazing ... and some rich history," Shadur said.

They included:

- A coach provided by CSXT, the oldest car, was built by the Pullman Co. between 1915 and 1920. It was rebuilt in 1985 as a diner. Called the Greenbrier, it was used by President Bush on his 2000 campaign.
- The CN provided a theater car, built in 1950 by Pullman Standard Car Manufacturing. Still in service, it is now a track-inspection car and mobile classroom.

- UP provided the last seven cars, including the Walter Dean. Built in 1955, it was named after a Union Pacific employee who served guests from 1942 until 1971, when passenger service ended. He remained with UP for special business car trips. American Car and Foundry built the dome lounge car, which includes a bar with the rear wall painted with an Old West scene.

- The City of Los Angeles, a diner car built in 1949 by American Car and Foundry, remained in use until 1971. It retains its original design.

- A dome coach called the Columbine, built by American Car and Foundry in 1955, was named after the state flower of Colorado. Originally used for the route between Chicago and Denver, its glass-domed ceiling provides an unbroken view of the passing scenery.

- The Missouri River Eagle, built by Pullman Standard in 1958, was converted to a dome diner in the 1980s.

- The Portola, a sleeper car, is another by American Car and Foundry. Built in 1950, it includes eight bedrooms.

- Power Car 208, built in 1949 as a baggage/dormitory car, was rebuilt as a steam generator dormitory in 1987. Another American Car and Foundry car, No. 208 includes living quarters for an electrician.

- The Fox River, an inspection car built by Pullman Standard in 1954, originally was a two-bedroom sleeper. It was renovated into a galley for buffet-meal preparation.

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