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*Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow*

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

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**news**

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## **GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES OPPORTUNITY RETURNS GRANT TO FUND STUDY AIMED AT IDENTIFYING NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES ALONG I-88 CORRIDOR**

SPRINGFIELD – Delivering on an *Opportunity Returns* commitment to supporting development around the new Union Pacific Global III Intermodal Facility, Governor Rod Blagojevich today announced the awarding of a **\$100,000** planning grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) that will play a critical role in identifying new job opportunities created by the state-of-the-art transportation terminal across the Northwest and Northern Stateline regions. The planning grant, which is being awarded to the Greater Sterling Development Corporation, will be used to conduct an economic impact study that will identify new job growth opportunities emerging in the area and to devise a marketing strategy the intermodal facility can employ to promote usage and expansion.

The Global III Intermodal Facility, located in Rochelle, is designed to serve as a critical interchange hub and loading/unloading terminal for rail intermodal shipments moving through northern Illinois. The new facility has the ability to expedite the operations of more than 25 trains and 3,000 containers daily and provides the capacity for expansion to keep pace with the projected growth of the intermodal market for years to come.

“Union Pacific’s Global III Intermodal Facility is already proving to be a great catalyst of new economic growth along the I-88 corridor. The recent decisions by major corporations such as Walmart, Rayovac, and the toy maker RC 2 Corporation to build or re-locate their distribution facilities in close proximity to the Global III site is a clear indication of its drawing power. But the area’s growth potential is far from being realized. By funding this economic impact study, we’ll be able to identify viable job opportunities that have not yet been tapped and help market the intermodal facility to a larger audience, making sure the economic impact on the region casts an even wider net and that no economic opportunity goes unmet,” Governor Blagojevich said.

The Global III Intermodal Facility lies at the intersection of I-88 and I-39. Both interstates have given rise to major corridors of business and commerce growth, making the intersection a central hub of transportation activity and an ideal location for an intermodal facility. The communities impacted by the facility run north-south from Madison, Wisconsin to Bloomington, and east-west from DeKalb to the Quad Cities. An I-39 Logistics corridor has already been formed to identify new industries and job possibilities that may arise in communities along the north-south axis. While the Greater Sterling Development Corporation will primarily identify similar opportunities along the I-88 corridor, the two groups will collaborate to ensure no opportunities are missed.

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“The Global III Intermodal Facility provides direct interstate access to major east-west and north-south markets, making it a very enticing place for industries to locate their warehousing and distribution facilities. We know that the strategic location gives the I-88 corridor great economic potential, but what we don’t yet know is the best way to take advantage of that potential and make sure that it translates into more jobs for this region. This planning grant will enable us to do that. This was an opportunity we couldn’t afford to miss and thanks to the Governor’s leadership, we won’t,” State Senator Todd Sieben, Assistant Minority Leader, (R-Geneseo) said.

“I’m thrilled that the Governor has awarded this planning grant to our community. The intermodal market is growing at a tremendous pace and the Global III Facility has the capacity to accommodate the projected growth in this market over a long period of time. This grant is so important because it will ensure that as that growth occurs, we will be well prepared to capitalize on it and parlay it into more quality jobs for the area,” State Representative Jerry Mitchell (R-Rock Falls) said.

“The Governor realizes that we have a fantastic opportunity to market and promote this state-of-the-art facility and the I-88 corridor. This funding will help us capitalize on the tremendous economic potential the Global III Facility has today and tomorrow,” Rochelle Mayor Chet Olson said.

“During the course of our extensive outreach efforts in the Northwest and Northern Stateline regions, we kept hearing from regional leaders about the importance of developing a strategic plan to capitalize on the economic opportunity presented by the new Global III Intermodal Facility. The awarding of this planning grant shows the Governor was listening. I know they share our optimism that it will ultimately produce great returns in the form of new jobs and sustained economic growth for communities along the I-88 corridor and beyond,” DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

The planning grant will be awarded to the Greater Sterling Development Corporation (GSDC) by *Opportunity Returns* Northwest Regional Director Nancy Mulcahey at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual GSDC Business luncheon, an event held to honor the highlights and accomplishments of the group’s work in the current fiscal year and discuss some of the challenges on its plate for the year ahead.

Governor Blagojevich recently announced the awarding of more than **\$1.1 million** in state funding to help the major toy manufacturer, RC 2 Corporation, open a new distribution center in the Northern Stateline region. RC2 Corporation will open the 400,000 square foot center in Rochelle, strategically located next to the Global III Intermodal Facility, allowing the company to significantly reduce its shipping costs and greatly improve its business efficiency. RC2’s new distribution center will create a total of **42** new jobs and retain **eight**. The planning grant extended to the Greater Sterling Development Corporation is designed to identify and market similar opportunities.

The *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois’ history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn’t work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. This grassroots effort for the Northwest and Northern Stateline regions were the product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. These plans are tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

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