

**MINNESOTA HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION MEETING  
MAY 5, 2011  
MEETING SUMMARY**

**MEMBERS:**

Dakota County RRA; Will Branning	City of Red Wing; Michael Schultz
Goodhue County RRA; Ted Seifert	City of Winona; Jerry Miller
Ramsey County RRA; Janice Rettman	City of St. Charles; William Spitzer
Wabasha County RRA; Rich Hall	
Washington County RRA; Autumn Lehrke	
Winona County RRA; Jim Pomeroy	
City of Cottage Grove; Jen Peterson	
City of Lake City; Andru Peters	

\*Ex-officio member

**OTHERS:**

Dakota County; Sam O'Connell	
Goodhue County; Ken Bjornstad	
Ramsey County RRA; Mike Rogers	
Ramsey County RRA; Josh Collins	
Washington County; Andy Gitzlaff	
City of Winona; Judy Bodway	
Tunheim Partners; Darin Broton	

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

**1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

A motion to approve was requested. Councilmember Peterson moved for approval of the agenda. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Peters. The motion passed unanimously.

**2. CHECKS AND CLAIMS**

A motion to approve was requested. Commissioner Branning moved for approval of the checks and claims. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Schultz. The motion passed unanimously.

**3. MINUTES OF THE APRIL 7, 2011 MEETING**

A motion to approve was requested. Councilmember Peterson moved for approval of the April 7, 2011 minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hall.

The motion passed unanimously.

**4. COMMISSION COMMUNICATIONS**

Josh Collins, the new Ramsey County Railroad Authority's public communications manager, introduced himself and provided a background on his previous public communications work for the Hiawatha Light Rail Project and at TriMet in Portland, Ore. He then directed the commission to the memo in the agenda packet and how it laid out a staff recommended communications strategy that builds upon the work done by Tunheim in the Strategic Communications Plan. He noted how the commission should seize upon opportunities to aggressively and proactively

promote high-speed rail and the River Route. With gas at \$4 a gallon, there is an opportunity to provide information on an alternative form of travel and that the time is now for high-speed rail. He had the following suggestions for the commission:

Presentations: The commission should target chambers of commerce, rotary clubs, and other interested groups for presentations on high-speed rail. A goal of one presentation every month is suggested.

Editorials: The commission should work to place editorial content in large and small newspapers along the River Route and ultimately expand to a larger area. A goal of six to ten editorials a year is suggested.

E-newsletter: The commission should target expansion of its email supporters list through its presentation and editorial pieces and develop an additional e-newsletter for distribution to them and on the website. The e-newsletter would provide short updates on high-speed rail and serve as a way to continue to engage the public. A goal of eight to twelve e-newsletters a year is suggested.

Facebook: The commission should develop a Facebook page that will be maintained by commission staff. It will provide a cross promotional opportunity with the commission's website and create an opportunity for supporters to show and declare their support for high-speed rail.

Mr. Collins discussed the need to build grassroots support for high-speed rail in the corridor and throughout Minnesota adding that face-to-face, editorials, and social media were great ways to build grassroots support.

To address the face-to-face aspect of the communications strategy, staff recommended developing an updated PowerPoint presentation. This presentation would provide an overview of high-speed rail. Currently there is a lack of understanding about what high-speed rail is and why the public should care about it. The presentation would offer the commission to position itself as a leader in high-speed rail. The initial focus of the presentation would be on the River Route; however, it would also be a way to convey the need for high-speed rail throughout southeast Minnesota. Staff would handle the logistics of the presentations and a commission member would provide an introduction and set the tone. Commission member attendance for the presentation would be critical to providing a local connection and a "hook" for people to attend the presentation.

Mr. Collins next discussed how guest editorials could be developed and placed in newspapers, blogs and websites along the corridor. Many such publications are searching for content and the commission should utilize them to get its message out about high-speed rail and the River Route. Chair Miller added that when the editorials are developed, care should be taken to advocate the facts while staying above the fray so that offending others could be avoided.

Mr. Collins described the need for a Facebook page and how one would be set up. He discussed how people can "like" the page and use it as a badge showing others what they were interested in.

Chair Miller stated that he supported the commission becoming more active in its advocacy. Councilmember Peters stated that he had given multiple presentations on high-speed rail and the commission to groups in Lake City and Wabasha County. He said he would be willing to give them in the future as well. He added that it was up to each commission member to “carry the torch” for high-speed rail and the commission as they met with members of their communities.

Commissioner Rettman asked about the financial impact to the commission with the change from using Tunheim to using RCRRRA staff for some tasks. Staff responded that Tunheim would still be under contract and the utilization of RCRRRA staff would allow Tunheim to focus on the strategic work of the commission and RCRRRA staff to focus on the day-to-day work.

Commissioner Rettman asked that additional clarification on Tunheim’s work scope be provided at the next commission meeting.

Commission members asked how the new emphasis on advocacy along the River Route would impact work being done by OnBoard Midwest. Darin Broton, Tunheim, stated that OnBoard Midwest has already pivoted away from countering the “River Route” message and instead is focusing on the general need for high-speed rail to come to St. Paul. Additionally, their message has changed to put the primary focus on transitway development. Commissioners asked that additional information be provided on the OnBoard and St. Paul Area Chamber role in high-speed rail advocacy at the next commission meeting.

Mike Rogers transitioned the discussion to the whether or not the commission should do an “event.” In 2010 the “event” consisted of the High-Speed Rail Summit in St. Paul. This event was well attended and successful. At previous meetings the commission had expressed its desire to have a similar event in 2011. Mr. Rogers stated that to hold a similar event in 2011 a “hook” would be needed. For high-speed rail such a “hook” could be an announcement of a route or routes for the Twin Cities to Milwaukee study for further analysis. However, Mn/DOT currently is working on the study and a timeframe for its completion is not specific enough to schedule an event. In the absence of a “hook” staff recommended that the commission instead focus on grass roots efforts.

Commission members discussed potential “hooks” including new members to the joint powers agreement, the recent award of a full funding grant agreement to Central Corridor LRT, and passenger rail bond funds. After additional discussion, commissioners agreed that an event would be worthwhile but felt that it would be in the best interest of the commission to wait until was additional information was available on the Mn/DOT study to get people excited about attending. Until that time, the commission should continue to focus on its grass roots efforts on presentations, guest editorials and social media.

During the discussion regarding “hooks,” Mayor Spitzer asked about getting copies of the letters that were sent out to potential joint powers agreement members. Staff was asked to provide copies of these letters to the commission. *Note: staff provided copies of the letters to the commission electronically.*

Councilmember Peters stated that he attended the last Passenger Rail Forum meeting and at the meeting copies of *Trains* magazine were distributed that included information on high-speed rail. Staff was asked to inquire about the availability of copies for the commission. *Note: Staff*

*inquired with Mn/DOT regarding the magazine and was told that there were not enough copies available for the commission.*

Following the discussion, the commission directed staff to go ahead with the recommended communications plan presented in the memo that was included in the agenda packet.

**5. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Andy Gitzlaff, Washington County RRA directed the commission to the memo in the agenda packet. He noted that the federal government had passed its FY 2011 budget and averted a government shutdown. He highlighted that the FY 2011 budget included \$40 billion in cuts and that one of the cuts was to high-speed rail funding. \$2.5 million in FY 2010 high-speed rail funding was eliminated, which was unfortunate; however, \$2 billion was still available for high-speed rail from previous appropriations.

Mr. Gitzlaff next discussed the upcoming debate over the debt limit and the FY 2012 budget and the pending battle over spending cuts. He added that for transportation the outlook was improving with multiple Republicans and Democrats discussing the need to pass a multi-year transportation bill this year.

Commissioner Branning mentioned that there were possible mini-grants available for multimodal projects. Staff was asked to follow-up on this and provide any information to the commission.

Commissioner Branning provided an update on his trip to Washington, D.C., where he and other county commissioners met with President Obama and cabinet staff on how to streamline the federal to local process. He said that it was an intense day of discussions on how to improve the system and in particular its financial impacts. Ideas for which requirements to remove were also discussed.

Mr. Gitzlaff provided a brief update on state legislative activities noting the likelihood of a special session as both the Republican controlled House and Senate were not in agreement with the governor on the final budget number or how to balance the budget. He added that there is still the possibility of a small bonding bill; however, until a budget agreed to it is unlikely that action will be taken on a bonding bill.

**6. EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY UPDATE**

Mike Rogers, RCRRA, provided an update on the current status of the East Metro Rail Capacity Study. This study is to identify impacts and recommend solutions to freight and passenger rail capacity constraints so that high speed, passenger, and commuter rail can utilize the freight rail system to access the Union Depot in downtown St. Paul.

EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY

# Minnesota High Speed Rail Commission

May 5, 2011



EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY

## What we will discuss today

- Background/Study Partners
- Study Area
- Study Objectives
- Project Development Process
- Study Approach/Simulation Modeling
- Study Milestones



EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY



EAST METRO FREIGHT RAIL SYSTEM




EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY

## Study Partners





EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY

## Project Development Process




East Metro Rail Capacity Study



EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY

## Study Background

- Capacity Issues Identified In:
  - Red Rock Corridor Feasibility Study
  - Red Rock Corridor Alternatives Analysis
  - LOCATE Studies
  - Minnesota State Rail Plan
- Dealt with by:
  - Lump Sum Estimate
  - Grade Separation
  - "Needs Further Analysis"





### EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY

## Study Objectives

- Identify capacity improvement scenarios that:
  - Allow for the introduction of passenger rail
  - Hold Freight: Whole (maintain/slightly improve operations)
  - Allow for Freight and Passenger Rail Growth
  - Provide phased implementation opportunities
- Focus on:
  - Technical issues and constructability
  - Freight railroad acceptance (property owners)
  - Limited cultural and environmental analysis
    - identify areas of concern for inclusion in a future EA/EIS




### EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY

## Analyzed Improvements

- Scheduling/Dispatching
- Train Rerouting
- Lower Cost Capital
  - Sidings
  - Crossovers
  - Additional Yard Track
- Higher Cost Capital
  - Dedicated Passenger Track
  - Additional Freight Track
  - Grade Separations
  - River Crossings




### EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY

## Study Approach

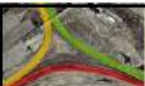
- Solve for the long-term scenario first
- Work backward to identify key phasing opportunities
- Identify freight and passenger service contributions to congestion




### EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY

## Simulation Modeling


- Study Requirements
  - Must accommodate freight trains (150+ existing freight moves in Hoffman Area)
    - Class One: Canadian Pacific, BNSF, and Union Pacific
    - Short Lines: Twin Cities and Western and MN Commercial
  - Must accommodate passenger trains
    - Amtrak Empire Builder
    - Red Rock Corridor Commuter Rail
    - High Speed Rail to Chicago, Rochester, Eau Claire, St. Cloud, Duluth, Mankato
  - Must accommodate future passenger and freight growth

### EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY

## Simulation Modeling

- Freight input
  - Time period/Baseline Traffic (2006 pre-recession)
  - Local activity
    - 10,000 freight cars a day
    - Yard operations (CP, BNSF, UP)
  - Freight growth
    - 36% over the next 10 years
  - Performance metrics
    - Currently congested




### EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY

## Simulation Modeling

- Passenger Rail Assumptions:
  - Empire Builder
    - 2 trains
  - Red Rock Corridor Commuter Rail
    - 10 trains
  - Twin Cities to Chicago High Speed Rail
    - 12 trains
  - Future Services




**EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY**

### Simulation Modeling

- Infrastructure Scenarios
  - No Build
  - Four Build Scenarios
  - Developed with railroad input
  - Stay within Railroad Property



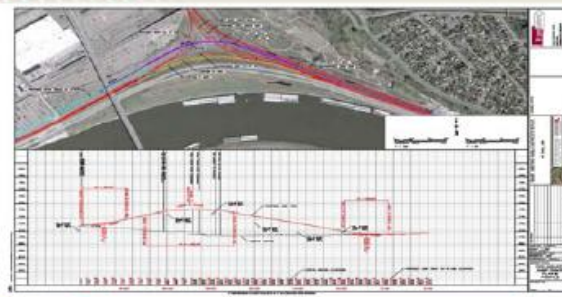

**EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY**

### Simulation Modeling


- Common elements
  - Upgrades to Hoffman Interlocking
  - Third main track from the Union Depot to Newport
  - Grade separation for passenger trains into the Union Depot
  - Protection of passenger access into the Union Depot for future corridors
- Uncommon elements
  - Third Track location from Newport to St. Croix Tower/Hastings
  - Double tracking of the Hastings Bridge
  - Additional grade separations



**EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY**



**Hoffman Grade Separation Plan & Profile**



**EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY**

### Study Observations

- Freight
  - Significant speed reductions due to congestion
  - Infrastructure improvements will be needed to accommodate forecast freight growth
    - Additional Mainline track from the Hoffman Wye south towards Newport
    - Additional crossovers
    - Additional yard track from the Hoffman Wye through the yards and south towards Newport
  - Identified improvements are on existing railroad property



**EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY**

### Study Observations

- Passenger
  - Passenger services further reduce freight train speeds
  - Infrastructure improvements are needed
    - Mainline and yard track
    - Grade separation at Hoffman
    - High speed crossovers
  - The grade separation will not preclude a trail connection
  - Identified improvements are on existing railroad property
- Environmental studies (NEPA) will be required prior to construction



**EAST METRO RAIL CAPACITY STUDY**

### Study Milestones

• Initiation	May 2010
• Define base infrastructure	June 2010
• Define baseline operations and vet capacity improvement scenarios	Aug 2010/Jan 2011
• <i>Complete detailed scenario modeling</i>	<i>April/May 2011</i>
• <i>Carrier modeling confirmations</i>	<i>April/May 2011</i>
• <i>Public Open House</i>	<i>May 2011</i>
• <i>Concept-level costs</i>	<i>Sept 2011</i>
• <i>Study Completion</i>	<i>Nov 2011</i>





**7. ADVOCACY PARTNER UPDATE**

Mike Rogers provided a brief update on activities of OnBoard Midwest/St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce. He discussed how the chamber was focused on high-speed rail, but that it had started to transition to a transit focus for the Twin Cities as well.

Tom Faella provided a brief update on the Empire Builder High-Speed Rail Coalition's efforts. He noted that the coalition would not be hosting an event in the near future, but instead was focusing on the changes happening in Madison. He added that the chamber is trying to schedule a meeting with Secretary of Transportation Mark Gottlieb for this summer or fall. Additionally, the coalition is working on hosting a meeting on the Twin Cities to Milwaukee high-speed rail study and is trying to get Secretary Lahood to attend it. If this happens it provides an opportunity for a larger advocacy event. Mr. Faella stated that he would continue to keep the commission informed.

**8. OTHER**

a. JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT MEMBER UPDATE

Mike Rogers provided an update to the commission on the letters that were mailed to potential joint powers agreement members. The letters were sent to Olmsted, Houston, and Dodge Counties and to Rochester and the Prairie Island Indian Community.

Commissioners asked that in addition to the regular updates from Mn/DOT staff regarding the Passenger Rail Forum that staff pass on any additional information that is sent to the forum.

**NEXT MEETING – JUNE 2, 2011**

Being there was no further discussion the meeting was adjourned at 12:21 p.m.