

**MINNESOTA HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMISSION MEETING  
 GOODHUE COUNTY JUSTICE CENTER, RED WING, MN  
 OCTOBER 6, 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	*Prairie Island Indian Community: Marc Mogan
Wabasha County RRA; Rich Hall	*LAPC; Tom Faella
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:**

Senator John Howe	Ramsey County RRA; Tim Mayasich
Ramsey County RRA; Mike Rogers	City of Winona; Judy Bodway
Goodhue County; Ken Bjornstad	Mn/DOT; Dan Krom
Washington County; Andy Gitzlaff	
Dakota County; Joe Morneau	

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

**1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

A motion to approve was requested. Commissioner Pomeroy moved for approval of the agenda with the adjustment to add time at the beginning of the agenda for Senator Howe to speak. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Seifert. The motion passed.

Senator Howe thanked the commission for their time and past support. He stated that the commission’s efforts made a significant impact in St. Paul and was key to continued funding for Mn/DOT’s Office of Passenger Rail. He said that high speed rail and the commission has his continued support and that the commission should continue to be the voice of high speed rail. He ended by thanking the commission for all of their hard work regarding high speed rail. Chair Miller thanked Senator Howe for his hard work in the district and St. Paul for continued high speed rail funding.

**2. CHECKS AND CLAIMS**

A motion to approve was requested. Commissioner Branning moved for the approval of the Checks and Claims. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hall. The motion passed.

**3. MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 4, 2011 MEETING**

A motion to approve was requested. Councilmember Schultz moved for approval of the September 1, 2011 minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rettman. Councilmember Schultz asked that the minutes be amended to reflect that Red Wing Councilmember Peggy Rehder was also in attendance. The amendment was accepted as ‘friendly’ by the proposers. The motion passed.

**4. DRAFT COMMISSION COMMUNICATIONS WORK SCOPE**

Mike Rogers directed the commission to the memo included in the agenda packet. He provided an update on the proposed schedule for the development of a work scope and a request for proposals (RFP) for commission communications. He noted that the schedule includes receiving all comments on the draft work scope by October 21, 2011. This would allow for finalization of the work scope and development of a RFP for approval at the commission's November meeting. Mr. Rogers added that if the RFP was released in November, it would be beneficial to the review process to reschedule the commission's December 1, 2011 meeting to December 8, 2011.

A motion to change the December meeting from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> was made by Commissioner Seifert and seconded by Councilmember Petersen. The motion passed.

Mr. Rogers next walked through the draft work scope. Commissioners commented on the scope and asked that the scope ask for a consultant to be more proactive in their communications activities. The commission expressed a desire to be proactive and ahead of issues, rather than being reactive. However, the commissioners also expressed the importance of being collaborative with partners, including Mn/DOT, and not getting "out in front" of them on making announcements about the project.

Commissioners also commented on their expectations for consultant staffing. They expect that the appropriate level of staff will be selected for each work task.

Councilmember Peters raised the question on whether or not the commission should become more involved in special events that are held along the corridor. For instance, there is an annual fall color train along the corridor that may present an opportunity for commission advocacy. Chair Miller stated that while this could be an opportunity, in his experience trying to advocate at special events does not represent an ideal use of time. People are often not interested in receiving information on a cause when they are at an event for a completely different cause. However, he added that it would be beneficial to distribute the commission's literature at Amtrak stations along the corridor.

Commissioner Rettman asked if the RFP would include more detail on the work tasks, particularly the Media and editorial placement work task. Mr. Rogers stated that it would.

In discussing the commission's web site, commissioners expressed a desire to have the site updated so that it could be used to "tell a story" for the corridor. It was felt that this would help to -attract more interest and support of high speed rail, even from cities that do not have a station. One way to do this would be to have a write up on each city along the corridor. Mr. Rogers said that the site needed to be refreshed and that telling the story of the corridor would be a good way to drive repeat traffic.

Commissioners discussed the speakers bureau and the need to continue to focus on the corridor, but to also to branch out and speak to those in Wisconsin and throughout Minnesota so that people could gain a better understanding of high speed rail and its benefits.

**5. PASSENGER RAIL UPDATE**

Dan Krom provided an update on Mn/DOT's efforts to advance the Twin Cities to Milwaukee Route Analysis and the Second Frequency Study for passenger rail service between the Twin Cities and Chicago.

Regarding the Twin Cities to Milwaukee Route Analysis, Mr. Krom summarized a letter recently received from WisDOT. In the letter, the DOT states that Wisconsin will no longer be a partner in the Twin Cities to Milwaukee Route Analysis or future high speed rail work. Wisconsin will instead focus on existing passenger rail corridors including the Hiawatha Corridor between Milwaukee and Chicago and the Empire Builder.

Mr. Krom then went on to discuss Mn/DOT's status of recommending a route for the Twin Cities to Milwaukee portion of the Twin Cities to Chicago high speed rail corridor. He said that analysis showed that the best route was the existing Amtrak Route commonly known as the River Route. The analysis showed that out of the four routes analyzed in detail, the River Route was the best route because:

- There are zero miles of steep grades
- It is the least expensive to build (\$140-\$690 million)
- It is the least expensive to maintain
- 95% of the train control systems are already in place
- It has the shortest travel time

Mn/DOT is currently discussing its preference to advance only the River Route into the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). If the FRA approves this approach, then they will send a letter signifying their concurrence, and upon receipt of the letter, Mn/DOT will schedule open houses along the River Route to present information on the study to the public. Mr. Krom added that the FRA had indicated that they were comfortable with taking a single corridor into the PEIS.

Mr. Krom next discussed the PEIS for the corridor. He stated that it would look at 28 different criteria and take about a year and a half to complete. A consulting firm, HDR, is already under contract to complete the work and will also complete a service development plan for the corridor. Once the PEIS is complete, Mn/DOT will seek FRA approval to undertake Preliminary Engineering for the corridor.

Senator Howe asked Mr. Krom if he could provide an update on the recent event that included Secretary LaHood. Tim Mayasich answered for Mr. Krom and said that the secretary was at the Union Depot with FTA Secretary Rogoff to promote President Obama's jobs plan and to showcase the efforts of the 300 daily workers on the Union Depot project and the 800 daily workers on the Central Corridor project.

Councilmember Peters asked Mr. Krom about the second frequency study. Mr. Krom stated that the work scope for the study was still being developed, but that Mn/DOT, WisDOT, Amtrak and others were supportive and engaged with the study. He said that funding had been secured to complete the analysis of a second daily passenger train frequency. He also added that the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) that was passed in 2008 forbids Amtrak

from funding regional trains so if a second frequency was added, it would have to be fully funded by the states along the route.

Commissioners discussed the best way to publicize the selection of the River Route as the high speed rail route. They were cautioned that the route had not been officially selected until the FRA provided formal concurrence. Chair Miller stated that he did not think the commission should be out in front of Mn/DOT with an announcement on the route and should instead be there to provide support for Mn/DOT. Commissioners agreed and asked staff to prepare a press release or guest editorial for release to the media along the corridor once Mn/Dot made the route announcement.

**6. MINNESOTA GO**

Mike Rogers directed the commission to the memo and Draft Minnesota Go Vision provided in the agenda packet. He walked them through it and noted that the Minnesota Go Vision is a 50 year vision focused on Quality of Life, Environmental Health, and Economic Competitiveness. Additionally, it covers all modes of transportation and advocates for a balanced transportation system. He added that Mn/DOT is accepting comments on the Minnesota Go Vision until October 21, 2011 and that commissioners can submit them online, by mail, or by phone.

Council member Peters stated that he attended the Minnesota Go session in Rochester. He said that about 100 people attended the visioning session and that participants were broken out into groups that focused on goal and objectives for inclusion in the plan with an emphasis on melding all viewpoints into the final vision. He added that the overall vision process was a good way to get all ideas on the table.

**7. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Andy Gitzlaff directed commission members to the memo provided in the agenda packet. He walked them through the memo providing additional detail on each of the items. Discussion focused on debt concerns and the future six-year transportation bill.

**8. ADVOCACY PARTNER UPDATE**

Tom Faella provided an update on advocacy efforts in the La Crosse, WI area. He noted that Wisconsin has backed away from high speed rail, but continues to support existing passenger rail and improvements to the existing routes. This includes the Empire Builder route from La Crosse to Milwaukee and the Hiawatha route from

**9. OTHER**

Commissioner Hall stated that he talked to Rollin Hall, the mayor of Wabasha, and Wabasha is interested in hosting a commission meeting. He asked if commissioners were interested in having a meeting in Wabasha at the National Eagle Center. Commissioners discussed this possibility and agreed that it would be a good idea. Commissioner Hall said that he would coordinate with Mayor Hall and commission staff to see if the November meeting could be held in Wabasha.

Councilmember Peters provided a brief update on a Goodhue County Board meeting where ZIP Rail proponents provided an informational presentation to the board.

Mike Rogers provided a brief update on the presentations that were given to the Zumbrota and La Crescent Rotary Clubs.

**NEXT MEETING – OCTOBER 6, 2011**

Being there was no further discussion; the meeting was adjourned at 11:42 a.m.