



RESOLUTION # 65-12/09

TO: HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE LA CROSSE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

ITEM # 12/36

BOARD ACTION

Adopted:
For: 34
Against: _____
Abstain: _____
Abs/Excd: 1
Vote Req: _____
Other Action: _____

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTION

Adopted:
For: 6
Against: _____
Abstain: _____
Abs/Excd: 0

RE: SUPPORT OF MIDWEST HIGH SPEED RAIL VIA THE CURRENT AMTRAK (MISSISSIPPI RIVER ROUTE) CHICAGO, IL TO ST. PAUL, MN AND COMMUTER RAIL SERVICE FROM ST. PAUL, MN TO EAU CLAIRE, WI

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's Connections 2030 plan would establish Phase 1 of high speed rail from Chicago through Milwaukee to Madison, and study route alternatives for completing a Phase 2 connection to the Twin Cities of MN, by comparing the current Empire Builder (Mississippi River Route) via La Crosse to a route through Eau Claire; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of a Midwest Regional High Speed Rail System (MWRRS) from Chicago, IL to the Twin Cities-MN has long been recognized by the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative to best be implemented by upgrading the existing Empire Builder-Amtrak route, crossing the Mississippi River at La Crosse, WI and has been endorsed by the Wisconsin Freight and Rail Passenger Plan offered by the State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation; and

WHEREAS, the Chippewa-Eau Claire Long-Range Transportation Plan 2005-2030 supported two passenger rail options for West Central Wisconsin after completion of the MWRRS: an "Eau Claire plus La Crosse" route and an "Eau Claire West" route with commuter service from Eau Claire to the Twin Cities and back, to improve the financial performance of the base MWRRS and stated that "The Rail Advisory Committee was on record supporting closer examination of these options only after completion of the proposed MWRRS route through La Crosse"; and

WHEREAS, expansion of passenger rail will provide significant economic benefits to the citizens of Wisconsin and Minnesota and competition for limited federal funding will be intense, so the requirement for a much higher capital investment to complete an "Eau Claire plus La Crosse" route could jeopardize our chances of receiving funding approval, while splitting the initial frequency of trains between the two routes would diminish the economic viability of both; and

WHEREAS, if a West Central Wisconsin route through Eau Claire were selected at the exclusion of the River Route, this decision would undercut the local investments in current rail station depots, expend a greater share of the high speed rail line cost in WI than MN, at a higher expected cost per mile than enhancing the existing Empire Builder line, and likely undermine the strong passenger demand that already exceeds the current frequency of one Amtrak train per day; and

WHEREAS, the first step for serving the highest need for passenger rail in one of the most rapidly growing areas of Wisconsin (along the Interstate-94 Corridor), can best be served with frequent stops in multiple communities via inter-city commuter rail service from St. Paul, MN to Eau Claire, WI, linking to the MWRRS for service to Chicago at the St. Paul Union depot; and

WHEREAS, unified support for enhancement of the existing River Route and establishing commuter rail service from Eau Claire to St. Paul ("Eau Claire West") as the first step to serving the needs of West Central Wisconsin, would begin the eventual extension of passenger rail across the state to Green Bay, while enhancing the chance of competing for limited federal, state and local funding, and serving more people at a lower cost than "Eau Claire plus La Crosse", or jeopardizing expansion with contending routes for Phase 2 of WI high speed rail.

RE: SUPPORT OF MIDWEST HIGH SPEED RAIL VIA THE CURRENT AMTRAK (MISSISSIPPI RIVER ROUTE) CHICAGO, IL TO ST. PAUL, MN AND COMMUTER RAIL SERVICE FROM ST. PAUL, MN TO EAU CLAIRE, WI

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors does hereby go on record supporting the existing Empire Builder Amtrak route for Phase 2 connection of Midwest High Speed Rail (MWRRS) from Madison to St. Paul, MN, while also supporting the extension of commuter rail service between St. Paul and Eau Claire ("Eau Claire West") as the first step for serving Western Wisconsin.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT all Counties and Cities along the proposed High Speed Rail (Mississippi River Route) and the proposed commuter rail service St. Paul, MN to Eau Claire, WI ("Eau Claire West") are hereby encouraged to adopt a similar resolution mutually supporting expansion of high speed passenger rail service and commuter rail service.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT a copy of this resolution be sent to WI Governor Doyle, MN Governor Pawlenty, WI Senators Kohl & Feingold, MN Senators Klobuchar & Franken, WI Representatives Kind and Obey, MN Representatives Walz, Kline & McCollum, WI and MN Transportation Commissioners, and all elected representatives in Minnesota and Wisconsin along the proposed High Speed Rail and Commuter Rail service routes (State Senators, Representatives, County Boards and City Councils).

FISCAL NOTE: There is no direct impact requiring the expenditure of La Crosse County funding, however the economic benefits of enhancing passenger rail as described would be very positive.

Date: 12.15.09
[Signature]
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Date: 12/15/09
[Signature]
RECORDING CLERK

	Reviewed Only	Recommended	Not Recommended	
Co. Admin.	_____	<u>SD</u>	_____	Requested By: Steve O'Malley Date Requested: November 2009 Drafted By: Steve O'Malley, Co Admin
Fin. Director	_____	<u>SDI</u>	_____	
Corp. Counsel	_____	<u>MS</u>	_____	
Board Chair	<u>SD/ML</u>	_____	_____	

Adopted by the La Crosse County Board this 17TH Day of DECEMBER, 2009

STATE OF WISCONSIN
COUNTY OF LA CROSSE

I, Linda A. Stone, County Clerk of La Crosse County do hereby certify that this document is a true and correct copy of the original resolution required by law to be in my custody and which the County Board of Supervisors of La Crosse County adopted at a meeting held on the 17th day of December, 2009.

[Signature]
Linda A. Stone, La Crosse County Clerk

Fact sheet: Unified Support of Midwest High Speed Rail System (MWRRS) via the current Amtrak (Mississippi River Route) Chicago, IL to St. Paul, MN and commuter rail service from St. Paul, MN to Eau Claire, WI

High Speed Rail (up to 110 mph) Milwaukee to St. Paul, Empire Builder Mississippi River Route

- Currently the Empire Builder route is the most cost effective long distance route operated by Amtrak in the nation. And passenger demand already exceeds the level of service provided at one train per day
- Empire Builder route already has multiple grade separated interchanges, two lines of track to permit increased train frequency, good track quality and extensive local support along the entire line.
- Extensive local investment in passenger service has been made, as exhibited by recent renovation upgrades of Rail Station Depots in: La Crosse, Winona, Red Wing and St. Paul
- Enhancing the Empire Builder route shares any non-federal share of costs more equally between Wisconsin and Minnesota, than an alternative route through Eau Claire.
- MN Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan (completion Jan. 2010) identifies priority program elements including strong demand for High Speed Rail to Chicago along the current Empire Builder route
- On Board Midwest (grass roots coalition) supports high speed rail connection between downtown St. Paul and Chicago via the current Amtrak route, representing multiple cities, counties, businesses, organizations and individuals. www.onboardmidwest.com

Commuter Rail Service (up to 79 mph) from St. Paul, MN to Eau Claire, WI ("Eau Claire West")

- Existing freight rail line runs parallel to Interstate 94, through some of the fastest growing counties in the State, which if up-graded to handle commuter rail, could offer potential inter-connectivity for multi-modal transportation services.
- Commuter rail could more easily accommodate frequent stations (Menomonie, Baldwin, Roberts, Hudson and Washington County, MN connections) than high speed rail with it's less frequent stops.
- While the West Central Rail Coalition supports the "Eau Claire plus La Crosse" route, the Chippewa Valley group has also advocated for implementing the "Eau Claire West" alternative as soon as possible as part of a network of passenger rail; thereby making it an extension of the initial Madison-La Crosse-St. Paul route.
- An "Eau Claire West" route re-establishes passenger rail to the Chippewa Valley to serve the initial area of greatest demand, while potentially beginning a cross-state route to Green Bay / Fox Cities and Central Wisconsin.
- MN Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan (completion Jan. 2010) identifies priority program elements including moderate demand for standard passenger rail between St. Paul to Eau Claire (79 mph), with:
 - relatively low Passenger-Specific Investments, Infrastructure and ROW/Trackage rights of \$156 million, Operations & Maintenance of \$15 million.
 - Initial projected revenue of \$5 million per year with four train sets per day, helping to relieve traffic congestion.
 - Approximately 68.9 miles of track in Wisconsin set aside for initial passenger service needs

**COMPARISON OF TOTAL POPULATION IN COUNTIES
SERVED BY AN EXCLUSIVE WEST CENTRAL ROUTE**

VS.

**GRAND TOTAL SERVED BY AMTRAK RIVER ROUTE
PLUS EAU CLAIRE COMMUTER RAIL LINE**

County Population	<i>West Central WI Route to Ramsey County Potential County Population Served</i>	<i>Amtrak River Route Potential County Population Served to Ramsey County</i>	<i>Eau Claire Commuter Rail Potential County Population Served to Ramsey County</i>
<u>Wisconsin</u>			
Monroe	44170	44170	
Jackson	20140		
Eau Claire	98302		98302
Chippewa	61872		61872
Dunn	43292		43292
St. Croix	79702		79702
La Crosse		112758	
Buffalo		14200	
Pierce		40253	
Pepin		7743	
Trempealeau		28278	
<u>Minnesota</u>			
Houston		19245	
Winona		49879	
Wabasha		21813	
Goodhue		45897	
Dakota		392755	
		776991	283168
	Total Served 347478	Grand Total Served 1060159	

Note: Washington and Ramsey County populations could access any of the proposed alternatives so their population is not included