



# MILWAUKEE-TWIN CITIES HIGH-SPEED RAIL CORRIDOR PROGRAM

## FACT SHEET

### High Speed Passenger Rail Coming to the Midwest!

Comfortable, accessible and affordable rail service between Milwaukee and Minneapolis/St. Paul has been a vision of federal, state and local leaders as well as the travelling public for many years. With congestion on I-90, I-94 and other state highways already at unacceptable levels and projected to increase, Wisconsinites, Minnesotans and visitors alike are looking for a faster, safer, more efficient way to commute to and from work, conduct business, and enjoy the numerous recreational opportunities found throughout the region. Thank you for your interest in learning more about this exciting program.

### What is High Speed Rail?

High-speed rail travels faster than conventional passenger rail service, which generally runs at maximum speeds of 79 mph. Various forms of high speed trains are used around the world, including high speed electric trains (125-185 mph) to ultra high speed magnetic levitation vehicles (250-300 mph).

High speed trains proposed for this corridor will utilize next generation diesel/electric steel wheel on steel rail train locomotives and cars. The maximum target speed for this program is **110 mph** with an average speed of 71 mph which is 21 mph greater than the average speed of the existing Amtrak Empire Builder service that runs in the corridor.

### How does the planning process work?

The process for evaluating public benefits and environmental impacts for federally funded transportation projects is directed by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and requires planning activities to ensure the project meets the proposed purpose and need. This corridor project is in the NEPA process and has reached the Alternatives Analysis phase. During this phase, all of the possible route alternatives are identified and evaluated against route distance, population, travel time, intermodal connectivity, safety and reliability, market size, capital and operating costs, and environmental factors to identify the **reasonable and feasible alternatives** for the rail corridor.

The reasonable and feasible alternatives and a no-build alternative are subjected to further evaluation in a Tier 1 EIS document. Within the Tier I EIS, the routes are rigorously analyzed against ridership and revenues, operating costs, detailed capital costs, conceptual engineering, and environmental concerns. The result of the Tier 1 EIS is a **preferred alternative** for the Milwaukee-Twin Cities corridor. A Service Development Plan is prepared for the preferred alternative. Finally, a Record of Decision (ROD) is issued for the corridor.

### About This Project

The Milwaukee-Twin Cities High-Speed Rail Corridor Program is a joint effort between numerous stakeholders. The Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Transportation in association with the Federal Railroad Administration and the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRI) have worked closely with community partners and elected officials throughout this corridor to move this project forward.

In 1996, nine Midwest states, including Wisconsin and Minnesota, and Amtrak initiated the MWRI. The MWRI's efforts have resulted in a well coordinated and integrated business plan that defines the implementation of a 110-mph hub and spoke rail system centered on Chicago connecting rural and urban areas in the Midwest utilizing 3,000 miles of existing rail right of way.

According to MWRI preliminary estimates, the travel time for the 355-mile distance between Milwaukee and Minneapolis/St. Paul is 5 hours and 58 minutes (making all stops) and 4 hours and 27 minutes (express).



## Why is this project being proposed?

The need for the proposed action is based on the limitations and vulnerabilities of available travel modes between Milwaukee and Twin Cities. Existing transportation modes have inherent problems including congested highways near the Milwaukee and Twin Cities metro areas and airport capacity issues at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and Milwaukee’s General Mitchell International Airport. Improved and expanded passenger rail service can provide an alternative mode and/or relief to these congested roadways and airports. The need for high speed intercity passenger rail to meet future regional travel demand and provide intermodal connectivity to existing and planned transportation systems in Minnesota and Wisconsin exists because:

- **Travel demand** is projected to increase within the corridor placing a significant burden on existing transportation infrastructure
- **Competitive and attractive alternative** modes of travel do not exist in the corridor
- Transportation systems require improved **reliability to meet future demand**;
- **Intermodal connectivity** between rail and other forms of transportation are limited and require further development.

## What are the benefits?

High-speed rail implementation has multiple economic, environmental and transportation benefits. The design, manufacturing, construction and operation of passenger rail service creates thousands of jobs while the shift of riders from highways and air travel to rail lowers overall transportation costs, alleviates congestion and lowers carbon emissions. Passengers choosing rail travel over other modes are treated to a relaxing comfortable ride with high amenity services including Wi-Fi, business lounges and quality food and drink options. Rail stations are located in conjunction with other transportation facilities to allow easy connections to commuter rail, light rail transit, busways and automobile facilities.

## What are the Potential Impacts?

The planning, design and construction of large infrastructure projects require careful consideration of all potential impacts to the existing human and natural environment that may occur from the proposed action. Efforts are currently underway to identify critical resources in both the urban, suburban and rural areas of the corridor, and to take early measures to avoid or minimize impacts to those critical resources.

Input from local communities is also critical to these efforts. The current rail study has planned for public meetings at three key phases in the planning process – project initiation, evaluation, and review of the environmental document – to inform and receive feedback from residents, businesses and agencies along the corridor. The first public meeting serves as a public scoping meeting where the Purpose and Need, universe of alternatives, and results of the Interim Alternatives Selection Report are presented for public comment.

## Project Schedule

ACTIVITY	2010	2011												2012						
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Public Involvement																				
Alternatives Analysis																				
Service Development Planning																				
Conceptual Engineering																				
Environmental Analysis & Documentation																				

## Upcoming Public Meetings

Please join us at one of the following public meetings to learn about plans to advance the corridor. Representatives of the DOTs and the consultant team will be available to answer your questions and receive input. Your participation is important!

### St. Paul, Minnesota

Monday, Nov. 29, 2010, 5:00-7:00 pm  
St. Paul Union Depot  
213 4<sup>th</sup> Street East

### La Crosse, Wisconsin

Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2010, 5:00-7:00 pm  
Best Western Riverfront Hotel  
1835 Rose Street

### Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Wednesday, Dec. 1, 2010, 5:00-7:00 pm  
Best Western Trail Lodge & Suites  
3340 Mondovi Road

### Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

Thursday, Dec. 2, 2010, 5:00-7:00 pm  
University of Wisconsin-Fond du Lac  
400 University Drive

### Rochester, Minnesota

Monday, Dec. 6, 2010, 5:00-7:00 pm  
Mayo Civic Center – Elliot Suite  
30 Civic Center Drive SE

### Madison, Wisconsin

Tuesday, Dec. 7, 2010, 5:00-7:00 pm  
Division of Transportation System  
Development – Southwest Region  
Madison Office  
2101 Wright Street