



# IOWA RAILS

IOWA ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

==October 2010==

## IARP to meet in Cedar Rapids

### Topics:

Our next meeting is Saturday, November 06, 2010, at the Cooper's Mill Restaurant, 100 F Avenue NW, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52405-2736, phone (319) 366-5323.

Lunch will be at noon. Our meeting will follow lunch.

### Speakers

**Joshua Sabin** (Confirmed)  
Director of Administration, Iowa Northern Railroad, oversees the railroad's *Hawkeye Express* passenger operations.

Prior to the Iowa Northern Railroad, Josh served as Amtrak's Senior Government Affairs Officer in Washington DC and Chicago, press secretary and legislative assistant for transportation for former Michigan congressman, Nick Smith, and staff assistant to former Michigan Governor John Engler.

**Patrick Hendricks**, President, IARP

**Dick Welch**, Iowa representative of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) Council.

- ◇ Federal legislation supporting the national rail passenger system
- ◇ Passenger Rail Advisory Committee
- ◇ Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission
- ◇ California Zephyr and Southwest Chief
- ◇ Cedar – Iowa River Rail Transit Project
- ◇ Proposed Passenger Train Service to Dubuque
- ◇ Proposed Passenger Train Service to the Quad Cities and Iowa City
- ◇ Proposed Passenger Train Service to Des Moines
- ◇ Proposed Passenger Train Service to Waterloo

☺ ☺

Tim Kenyon has been working on a new logo for IARP. He will be bringing copies of the logo to the meeting. Members will have an opportunity to comment on this proposed logo.

Iowa and Illinois are working together to try to bring passenger train service for the following routes  
Chicago – Quad Cities – Iowa City (see pages 2-4)  
Chicago – Rockford – Dubuque

The Des Moines Metropolitan Planning Organization did a recent survey on passenger rail. Pages 5-7 of this newsletter show the results of this survey.



Illinois



Iowa

August 5, 2010

Administrator Joseph C. Szabo  
Federal Railroad Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Szabo,

As Governors of Illinois and Iowa, we are writing to support our states' joint application for FY2010 funding to construct a passenger rail route between Chicago, IL and Iowa City, IA. The route is an important part of the multi-state Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI), an effort started 15 years ago to connect Midwesterners through reliable, fast and frequent train service.

The proposed route will introduce new green products and practices to passenger train service that will help our local economies. As Illinois and Iowa are national leaders in corn and soybean production, using biofuels and soy-based lubricants will not only help the environment, but create new jobs for the people of our states. Other key initiatives for the project include using recycled materials in the construction of trains, serving locally grown produce in train dining cars and using recyclable and bio-degradable containers in food service.

The economic benefits of investments in a Midwest rail network cannot be overstated. The rail network between Iowa and Illinois will attract new private real estate development that will help reshape the entire region, and will revitalize our towns and cities with pedestrian-friendly business districts. The Midwest, with a large, skilled labor pool and a robust supply chain, offers rail car manufacturers an ideal opportunity to re-establish a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Midwest rolling stock industry. Illinois' and Iowa's valuable connections to capital and business centers, as well as access to world-class university research, will create incentives for new companies and more jobs for Midwesterners.

Despite very difficult budget conditions in both states, Illinois and Iowa have committed state funding toward construction of the route between Chicago, IL and Iowa City, IA. Illinois announced in January that it would use \$45 million from its state capital plan for construction on the route. Iowa has also committed \$20 million to match a federal investment.

Illinois and Iowa have always been great neighbors to each other. We are anxious to build this new connection to create economic opportunities and transportation alternatives for residents in both states, within the framework of livable, sustainable practices and communities. We appreciate your consideration of our application, and we eagerly anticipate your decision.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Pat Quinn in black ink.

Pat Quinn, Governor of Illinois

Handwritten signature of Chester J. Culver in black ink.

Chester J. Culver, Governor of Iowa

# The Chicago-Iowa City Passenger-Rail Program at a Glance



## Route and Train Characteristics

- Initial maximum speed of 79 mph; average speed of 53.5 mph
- Total route of 219.5 miles - Trains operate on Amtrak at Chicago Union Station, 0.8 miles; BNSF Railway from Chicago to Wyandot, Illinois, 116.2 miles; and Iowa Interstate Railroad from Wyandot to Iowa City, Iowa, 102.4 miles
- New stations at Geneseo and Moline, Illinois; and Iowa City, Iowa
- Each train can accommodate 230 passengers and will offer coach seating and food service

## Project Costs

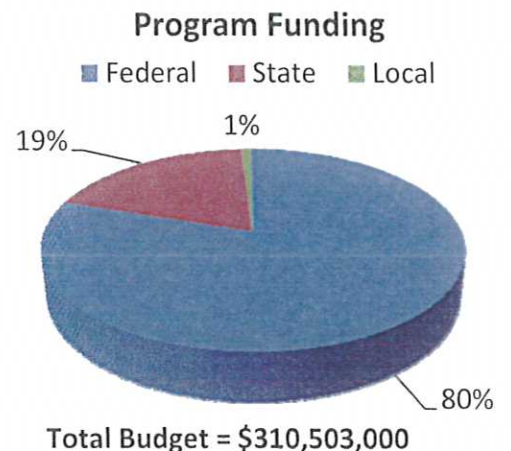
- Overall costs: \$310 million
- Iowa Share: \$102 million
- Prorated according to mileage in each state (73% Illinois - 27% Iowa)
- Iowa Match required: \$20.6 million

## Service Outcomes

- Projected Annual Program ridership - 246,800 for year 2015
- Passengers diverted from other modes annually: 148,000 passengers from automobile; 59,200 from air; 22,200 from bus; and 17,200 from induced ridership - new riders who otherwise would not have made the trip
- On-time performance will be 90 percent or higher

## Collaboration

- Iowa DOT and Illinois have a strong partnership in this joint application for passenger rail service.
- The Midwest High Speed Rail Steering Group, representing eight Midwestern states, executed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2009 to demonstrate support for Midwest routes connecting to the Chicago Hub.
- Agreements in Principle with Iowa Interstate Railroad, BNSF and Amtrak
- Local support as demonstrated by Agreements in Principle with the Cities of Iowa City, Moline, and Geneseo for station development



## Public and Political Support

- The Program has broad enthusiasm and support from the public ([www.chicagoiowacity.com](http://www.chicagoiowacity.com))
- State and local politicians have partnered and endorsed the Program as shown by numerous letters of support

## Legislative Support

- Legislature appropriated funding in 2009 and 2010 for passenger rail, and approved intent language to provide up to \$20 million over four years to fully fund Iowa's commitment for matching federal passenger rail funding
- Illinois announced in January 2010 that it would use \$45 million from its state capital plan for construction of the route

## Public and Economic Benefits

- Helps create jobs, improve our nation's transportation infrastructure and assist in providing transportation alternatives to the citizens of Iowa and the Midwest
- Supports the framework of livable, sustainable practices and communities
- Benefit-cost ratio of 1.7, discounted at 7 percent
- Program job growth estimated at 588 per year over first four years during design and construction
- Program increase in business activity estimated at \$25 million per year following service initiation
- The Program encourages transit-oriented development
- The Program enhances intermodal connectivity with existing rail, bus, air, and transit services

## Environmental Benefits

- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions of 89,943 tons in the first 30 years of the Program
- Realization of \$7.4 million in highway safety benefits per year
- Fuel savings of 10,791,109 gallons during first 30 years
- Reduces vehicle miles by 25,611,484 in the corridor annually
- Reduces congestion and saves \$16.3 million for highway upgrades annually
- The Program will incorporate Iowa's and Illinois's "GreenLine" vision – a program advancing innovative sustainable practices

## Competition of the federal High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail program

- In 2009, the program received many more requests than the amount of funding available. We anticipate fierce competition for funds again in 2010.
- Federal Railroad Administration feedback on 2009 application was positive; since fall 2009, Iowa and Illinois have worked to strengthen the project through building strong partnerships with communities and host railroads and in refining the project engineering and environmental documentation.

## Long-Term Vision

- Program schedule frequency can be expanded to offer more than two daily roundtrip trains
- The Program is planned to be extended incrementally to Des Moines, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska
- Speeds can be increased from 79 mph to 90 mph or 110 mph

**"We are anxious to build this new connection to create economic opportunities and transportation alternatives for residents in both states, within the framework of livable, sustainable practices and communities."**

*~ From Illinois Governor Pat Quinn and Iowa Governor Chester J. Culver in the Joint Letter of Support*

For more information: [www.iowadot.gov/iowarail](http://www.iowadot.gov/iowarail)

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The MPO Wants to Know: Passenger Rail

In an effort to better understand public views, the MPO has launched a series of online surveys about various transportation-related topics. The survey results will help the MPO develop plans and projects for the future. The responses also will be shared with appropriate roundtables and policymakers. For a list of available surveys, please visit the MPO website at <http://www.dmampo.org/user/survey.html>. Below are the results of a survey related to passenger rail, which has been the focus of numerous efforts as of late.

Question 1. Do you support passenger rail in the Des Moines metropolitan area?

Yes .....96.0%  
No.....4.0%

Question 2. If you answered yes to question 1, what is the primary reason for your support?

Congestion avoidance .....6.2%  
Improved mobility and connectivity .....70.4%  
Job creation and economic development .....14.2%  
Potential shift in development patterns .....5.6%  
Reduced environmental impacts .....3.7%

One individual pointed to the cost savings associated with passenger rail, while others noted that more transportation choices would mean less time in personal automobiles and result in better use of their time. Passenger rail could serve as a low-cost feeder to airlines as well. Other respondents want passenger rail in order to put Iowa on par with Illinois and to minimize the driving hassles when traveling to Chicago.

Question 3. If you answered no to question 1, please explain.

While the results of question 1 demonstrate overwhelming support for passenger rail, some individuals do not support this initiative. Several of these individuals are concerned about the costs of passenger rail. It would be a “waste of money on something that will not be profitable and will cause more government involvement and expense.” Another respondent noted that the “potential ridership will never justify the cost” of passenger rail. According to another individual, “passenger rail service in the

Midwest has not been economically feasible for decades and will not be economically feasible for the next decades... The rails would need a lot of upgrading to support any higher speed, and it does not make sense for the taxpayers to pay for that upgrade.”

Some are concerned about the demand for passenger rail in the Des Moines metropolitan area. “We do not have congestion in Des Moines and can improve our current street network to make it more bicycle and pedestrian friendly. Expanding the bus system is much cheaper than creating passenger rail...” One individual feels that passenger rail would be “nothing more than a novelty.”

Others are concerned that the proposed passenger rail is not high speed and that travel times would be too lengthy; “it needs to be the right passenger rail system (efficient/modern/high speed).”

*Question 4. For what purpose would you predominantly utilize passenger rail service?*

Business .....	20.8%
Leisure.....	76.3%
I would not utilize passenger rail service.....	2.9%

*Question 5. The MPO’s Des Moines Area Passenger Rail Station Feasibility Study recommends the former Rock Island Depot, located at 100 4<sup>th</sup> Street in Des Moines, as the preferred site for a passenger rail station for future service through the region. What do you think of this location?*

Overall, respondents are pleased with the MPO’s recommendation. They feel that it is an “excellent downtown location” that “seems reasonable;” the former Rock Island Depot is “the best option for practicality, history, location, and parking.” Many others echoed this sentiment; the downtown location is accessible and would “get people into a vibrant part of Des Moines.” The site also is near the Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority’s (DART) planned intermodal facility.

Others are excited about the reuse of the former Rock Island Depot. The site offers “nostalgia and functionality;” it is “the perfect blend of logical placement and historical relevancy. It also would bring more development to the southern edge of downtown.” One individual noted that “reusing a building and reviving history would be great for the city.”

While most respondents are enthused about this recommendation, others are concerned about parking options, congestion at rush hour, and the impacts on people who live next to the tracks. One individual suggested utilizing the airport for a passenger rail station, while others recommended combining the rail station with DART’s new facility.

Question 6. Please rank the following long-distance travel modes from your most preferred to your least preferred mode.

<u>Mode</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
Airline	43.9%	23.7%	22.5%	9.8%
Automobile	26.0%	33.5%	35.3%	5.2%
Intercity Bus	0.0%	5.2%	13.9%	80.9%
Passenger Rail	30.1%	37.6%	28.3%	4.0%

Question 7. What concerns do you have about passenger rail in the Des Moines metropolitan area?

Respondents expressed a variety of concerns about passenger rail. Some are concerned about its connectivity to other modes of transportation as well as its proximity to food establishments, hotels, and public transportation. One respondent stated that “it needs to connect the communities and allow for intermodal use.”

Several others are concerned about the costs associated with passenger rail. Some wonder if it is economically feasible and if there will be enough riders to support it. Rates must be competitive in order to foster use; it “needs to be affordable *and* dependable.”

Many are concerned about why it is taking so long to bring passenger rail to the area. They feel that it “needs to happen sooner rather than later” and fear that it will not become a reality. While some desire passenger rail in the Des Moines metropolitan area no matter the speed, others feel that officials need to make sure that it is high speed passenger rail; this will help encourage more riders. It also will make riding the train a good alternative to driving.

Still more individuals feel that generating support for passenger rail in the Des Moines metropolitan area may be a challenge. Similarly, others are concerned about a lack of use; reliability, frequency of trains, and arrival and departure times, as well as travel times to major cities, will profoundly impact the success of passenger rail.

Despite the aforementioned concerns, other respondents simply are “thrilled to think passenger rail is being considered.” One individual stated that “it will bring jobs, connect the area with other large cities, and alleviate congestion on Interstate 80.” Another respondent noted that “it would be a wonderful alternative for all demographics, and it could be a stepping stone for further advancement around Iowa.”

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