

Project Update – May 4, 2017

SCOPE OF WORK AND SCHEDULE UPDATE

Purpose and Need

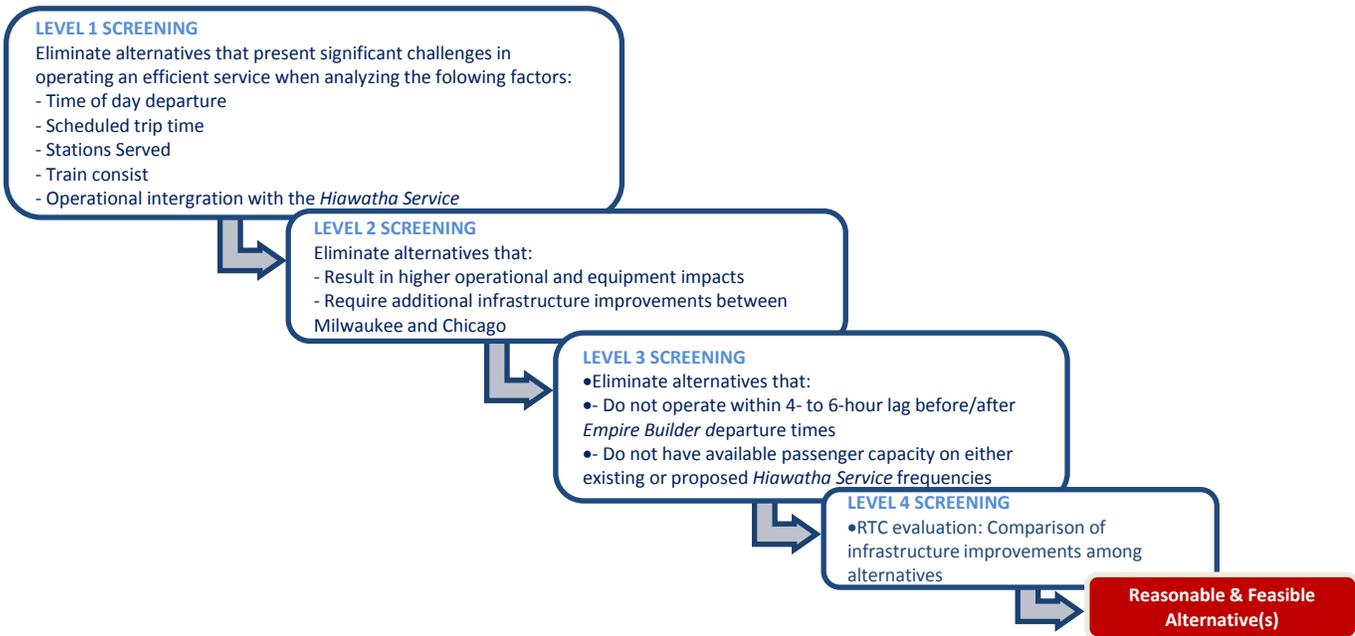
The purpose and need for the proposed Project is currently under review by the Federal Railroad Administration. In addition to providing a second frequency round-trip schedule that maximizes ridership potential for the existing *Empire Builder* passenger rail service between St. Paul and Chicago, a key component of the proposed Project would be the regional connectivity provided between the larger and smaller cities and the reliability and frequency that an additional service would provide. The project will also strengthen transportation connections to other transportation modes, such as transit, bus, bicycle facilities, air, and ride sharing options, meet existing and future regional passenger rail demand, and integrate with current and future freight operations in the corridor. The need for the Project has been further refined to address the following issues:

- One daily round trip passenger rail service between the Twin Cities and Chicago does not provide schedule choices for existing and future intercity travel demand, as well as other travelers within the region
- The once-daily round trip is not always reliable due factors related to the long-distance Empire Builder Service, as well as freight traffic within an outside of the TCMC corridor
- The Empire Builder Service reaches near capacity conditions during peak travel months
- Because of limited funding availability, implementation of any passenger rail service must maximize operational efficiencies and minimize capital costs and operations and maintenance costs
- Riders in communities between the Twin Cities and Chicago have limited transportation options for trips to the Twin Cities, Milwaukee and Chicago and have limited access to multi-modal connections once they arrive.

The purpose and need is anticipated to be completed in May 2017.

Alternatives Analysis

The Alternatives Analysis (AA) is under development and will evaluate route and service alternatives. The route alternatives analysis will focus on work completed under the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative and the Chicago-Milwaukee Intercity Passenger Rail Service Environmental Assessment. The service alternatives analysis will utilize a four-tier screening approach that will evaluate four operational service alternatives. The four levels of screening are:



The four operational service alternatives are:



TWIN-CITIES-MILWAUKEE-CHICAGO INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE PHASE I STUDY [continued]

- TCMC frequency operated as an extension of one of the existing seven *Hiawatha Service* schedules
- TCMC frequency operated as an extension of one of the proposed three additional *Hiawatha Service* schedules
- TCMC frequency and *Hiawatha Service* operated as two separate consists that attach in Milwaukee and operate as one consist to Chicago
- TCMC frequency operated as a separate additional frequency, in addition to the seven *Hiawatha Service* daily roundtrips

The AA is anticipated to be finalized in May 2017.

Operations Modeling

The Rail Traffic Controller (RTC) model created for the corridor was based upon 2014 infrastructure and train volumes and therefore was updated to reflect current infrastructure and operating conditions. Several meetings were held with Canadian Pacific (CP) to develop the base model and review preliminary modeling results. Modeling is being completed in two segments, (1) Milwaukee to the St. Croix and (2) St. Croix to St. Paul. This effort will include identification of equipment needs for the additional service and refinement of schedule alternatives. An Operations Analysis Report (OAR) will be completed summarizing the existing conditions, scheduling analysis, future freight growth, RTC outputs and future infrastructure needs.

RTC modeling and associated reports and documentation are anticipated to be completed in May 2017. Refer to the PowerPoint presentation for additional information.

Conceptual Engineering and Cost Estimating

Based on the infrastructure needs identified in the OAR, the team will develop conceptual engineering plans and capital cost estimates for the infrastructure improvements. The conceptual engineering plans are anticipated to be completed in Q3 2017.

STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT UPDATE

In March, MnDOT launched a public website that provides project information, including an overview of the Phase 1 Study and links to the Minnesota Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation Forum and the Minnesota High Speed Rail Commission meeting schedules. MnDOT will update the website as opportunities for public engagement become available. The public can also sign up for project updates through the website, located at: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/passengerrail/tc-mil-chi/index.html>

NEXT STEPS

- May 2017: Complete Purpose and Need; Alternatives Analysis and Operations Modeling
- Q3 2017: Complete Conceptual Engineering; Cost Estimates; Public Meetings; Complete Phase I Study
- Q4 2017: Anticipate initiation of Phase 2 Study, including:
 - Complete environmental clearance requirements for federal funding to implement project
 - Complete Service Development Plan