



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

In 2011, the Minnesota High-Speed Rail Commission put all its effort into the completion of the Alternatives Selection Report, culminating in the announcement of the Mississippi River Route being named the preferred route for high-speed rail in Minnesota.

In 2012, we got back to work. Work on new studies and work on building the infrastructure for the advocacy that will be required to fund and eventually build and operate a high-speed passenger rail service between the Twin Cities and Chicago.

We are constantly reminded of the need for transportation infrastructure improvement:

- More than 11 million trips are taken by car and air between the Twin Cities and Chicago annually.
- More than 110 freight trains each day, five percent of the nation's freight volume, pass through sections of the Mississippi River Route.
- With transportation infrastructure already stretched, forecasts show that freight rail shipping will increase by 36 percent in the coming years between Hastings and St. Paul, and passenger trips will grow as well.

Investment in rail infrastructure would prevent the increased delays and increased costs that will result if no improvements are made. High-speed rail provides an opportunity to fund many of these improvements while providing the public with an additional transportation option.

In 2013, the commission will work with the legislature to ensure continued funding for MnDOT so that it can continue to advance high-speed rail, including the completion of environmental work for high-speed rail between the Twin Cities and Milwaukee and a feasibility study to add a second round-trip passenger train between the Twin Cities and Chicago.

We want you on-board. Visit our website at www.mnhighspeedrail.com and "like" us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/mnhighspeedrail to learn more.

Jerry Miller, Chair
Minnesota High-Speed Rail Commission

2012 ANNUAL REPORT

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CURRENT PROJECT STATUS



Transportation infrastructure investment projects in the United States must follow a methodical process in order to ensure a successful, cost-effective, safe and useful service to residents. The process for approval and construction of high-speed rail between the Twin Cities and Chicago is overseen by the Federal Railroad Administration and conducted by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). It includes these technical steps:

- Alternatives Selection Report – completed November 2011
- Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement – underway (2012–2013)
- Preliminary Engineering
- Final Design, construction and procurement of train sets

Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement

MnDOT began work in 2012 on a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the 340-mile Twin Cities to Milwaukee corridor (study of the Milwaukee to Chicago route is a separate project). This will identify environmental impacts and mitigation along the corridor and will identify specific areas in need of additional analysis as part of preliminary engineering. A Draft Tier 1 EIS will be produced in 2013, with a Final Tier 1 EIS anticipated in late 2013 after agency reviews and public involvement hearings.

“Progress on this study is proceeding as planned,” said Dan Krom, Director of MnDOT’s Passenger Rail office. “Major stakeholders, including Amtrak and freight rail operators have been excellent partners on the project.”

Second Train Study

Minnesota, Wisconsin and Amtrak are conducting a feasibility study to expand the current passenger train service between Chicago, Milwaukee and the Twin Cities. The work studies the feasibility of adding a second daily round-trip for Amtrak’s Empire Builder line between the Twin Cities and Chicago. There is currently one round-trip Empire Builder train between the two metropolitan areas as part of the long-distance service from Chicago to Seattle and Portland. More frequent service would make trains more convenient for short trips between Chicago, Milwaukee and the Twin Cities, or from the metro areas to a destination such as Winona, Red Wing, or Wisconsin Dells. The feasibility study would estimate costs, benefits and ridership of the expanded service. The study is expected to be completed in spring 2013.

East Metro Rail Capacity Study

The East Metro Rail Capacity Study was completed in October 2012. This study identified capacity improvements needed to implement high-speed, and commuter rail on an increasing congested freight rail network. Today, the 19-mile freight rail corridor from Union Depot in St. Paul to Hastings/Rosemount sees more than 110 daily trains. In the coming years freight traffic is forecast to increase by 36 percent resulting in 140 daily trains. The growth will slow trains, increase shipping costs and negatively impact passenger rail service. This freight increase and the introduction of high-speed and commuter rail necessitate significant capacity improvements along the corridor. These improvements include adding sidings, crossovers, mainline tracks, and additional capacity at critical bottlenecks such as Hoffman, St. Croix, and the Mississippi River.

Union Depot

The historic Union Depot reopened to the public on December 8, 2012, 41 years after the last train pulled out of the station and downtown passenger rail service ended. Following a decade-long effort, Union Depot received a \$243 million makeover, which restored the St. Paul landmark to its original grandeur. Union Depot will serve as an intermodal transit hub, accommodating buses, bikes, Amtrak and light rail. It is also the future home of Minnesota High-Speed Rail.

HIGH SPEED RAIL ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

Many high-speed rail proposals gained steam in 2012. From California to the Northeast, communities across the nation are rallying around high-speed rail projects that will ease traffic, help the environment and boost the economy. Some of the 2012 highlights include:

Voters approved funding for a high-speed train in California's central valley in 2012. When completed, a trip between San Francisco and Los Angeles is expected to take less than 2 hours and 40 minutes, at speeds of up to 220 mph.

110 mph service began in Michigan on an 80-mile segment of track. This track is used by the Amtrak's Wolverine and Blue Water Service connecting Chicago to Detroit, Port Huron, Ann Arbor and East Lansing.

Amtrak's Acela high-speed rail train connecting Washington D.C., New York and Boston has become travelers' preferred transportation option over planes. Between New York and Washington, 75 percent of travelers go by train, and 54 percent use Acela between New York and Boston. Those percentages have grown from 33 percent and 20 percent, respectively, a decade ago.

The Texas Department of Transportation is launching a two-year, \$14 million study of passenger rail service between South Texas and Oklahoma City.

110 mph service began in Illinois on a 15-mile segment along the Chicago-St. Louis corridor just in time for the heavily traveled Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

All Aboard Florida, privately owned and operated by Florida East Coast Industries, will connect Miami and Orlando with passenger rail service on a 240-mile route along the Atlantic coast. One segment of the proposed line will operate at speeds of up to 125 miles per hour.

THE RIVER ROUTE, AN UNPARALLELED DESTINATION



The Mississippi River Route, current home to Amtrak's Empire Builder and future home to high-speed rail, is an amazing destination for so many reasons.

Schools like Saint Mary's and Winona State Universities in Winona, and Southeast Technical in Winona and Red Wing, draw students from around the world.

Major employers, such as Fastenal, Hearth & Home Technologies, Red Wing Shoes and Smead are scattered throughout the route.

The River Route is also defined by its natural beauty which lures tourists for fishing, sailing, waterskiing and more:

- Explore the river by Paddle Wheel replica on the Pearl of the Lake in Lake City.
- Bike or ski the 20-mile Cannon Valley Trail at Red Wing or Coffee Mill Ski Area in Wabasha.
- See live eagles up close at the National Eagle Center in Wabasha.
- Find gaming action and top-notch entertainment at Treasure Island Resort & Casino near Red Wing.
- Eat at the famed Nosh Restaurant and Bar, Lake City and Slippery's in Wabasha.
- Explore LARK Toys, Kellogg, one of Reader's Digest's "10 Coolest Toy Stores in the World."

More about River Route destinations is at www.mnhighspeedrail.com



ABOUT THE COMMISSION

The Minnesota High-Speed Rail Commission is one of the leading authoritative voices on high-speed rail in Minnesota. Comprised of local elected officials, the Commission advocates for the development of Minnesota's first high-speed rail line within the federally designated high-speed rail corridor that connects the Twin Cities to Milwaukee and Chicago. The Commission is a strong proponent of bringing high-speed rail to the Midwest through the scenic upper Mississippi River valley.

Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority
 Goodhue County Regional Railroad Authority
 Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority
 Wabasha County Regional Rail Authority
 Washington County Regional Railroad Authority
 Winona County Regional Railroad Authority

City of Cottage Grove
 City of Goodview
 City of Hastings
 City of Lake City
 City of Red Wing
 City of St. Charles

City of St. Paul
 City of St. Paul Park
 City of Utica
 City of Wabasha
 City of Winona

Ex officio
 Prairie Island Indian Community
 La Crosse Area Planning Commission



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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