

WisDOT: Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago rail gets \$31.8 million federal boost

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Improvements double available round trips for passengers, aid freight efficiency

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) together with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) today announced a \$31.8 million federal grant for station and rail segment improvements to double passenger rail service and increase freight efficiency along the corridor that connects the Twin Cities, La Crosse, Milwaukee and Chicago.

The Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago (TCMC) Intercity Passenger Rail Project adds a second daily passenger rail round-trip along the corridor shared by Amtrak Empire Builder and Hiawatha Service trains. When combined with the Empire Builder, the corridor will offer two daily round trips between St. Paul and Chicago. The TCMC added round trip is expected to begin in 2024 or sooner. Rail improvements will ease train congestion, modernize sections of track and speed the movement of freight.

“This vital rail project came together because the federal government not only recognized its importance to the region but the extraordinary collaboration among states, local economic groups and freight and passenger rail,” WisDOT Secretary Craig Thompson said. “The team effort we are celebrating today brings us a

stronger and more diverse transportation infrastructure that strengthens supply chains, connects businesses and universities, and brings us all closer together with more travel options.”

“MnDOT is proud to be a partner in this effort to expand service on the TCMC corridor,” said Interim MnDOT Commissioner Nancy Daubenberger. “We are excited about the tremendous benefits that this project will deliver to Minnesotans, including all who work, play, travel or attend a higher education institution along this corridor. This grant is an important piece in our shared goals to enhance our regional economies, from the Twin Cities metro area to our thriving small towns in Greater Minnesota.”

“FRA is committed to supporting states, local communities, and industry to advance passenger and freight opportunities that grow economies, strengthen supply chains, and improve options for riders,” said FRA Administrator Amit Bose. “The Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Grant Program, which made this nearly \$32 million federal investment possible, is funded at even higher levels over the next five years thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This funding means even more opportunities like this one to advance transformational rail projects going forward.”

“Through the leadership of Administrator Bose, strong partnerships with state and local leaders in Wisconsin and Minnesota, and our productive relationship with Canadian Pacific, we are moving the addition of Amtrak service between the Twin Cities, Milwaukee and Chicago to the forefront of our growth efforts,” Amtrak President and CEO Stephen Gardner said. “While we cannot announce a TCMC start date – yet – know all of us working together can make this happen in months instead of years.”

The 411-mile corridor between St. Paul and Chicago will be served by two daily round trips, with departures planned for each city in the morning and mid-day. The

first year of service is projected to serve more than 124,000 riders. More information about the route can be found at: <https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/projects/multimodal/tcmc.aspx>.

Improvements to the line are expected to save \$34.7 million in freight costs over the next 30 years of operation. Grade crossing improvements will reduce gate-down times, and capacity improvements increase efficiency.