

State to Study Expansion of Passenger Rail

Written by GOV Press Wisconsin
Monday, 11 December 2023 16:54 -

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Eau Claire, Green Bay, and Madison to be considered as future Amtrak stops under BIL program.

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers, together with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and local leaders in Green Bay, Madison, and Eau Claire, applauded the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for funding four studies to expand passenger rail service in the state.



“Safe, reliable infrastructure is critical to the success of Wisconsin’s economy and workforce, and this federal funding is an important first step in improving the passenger rail system in Wisconsin and expanding our opportunities to serve more communities across our state,” said Gov. Evers. “With these strategic connections, we can keep our state moving forward and keep building the 21st-century infrastructure Wisconsin needs to support a 21st-century economy and workforce.”

“The long range WisDOT rail plan was the result of listening to the public, and community

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leaders and many others have asked for passenger trains to reach more of our communities,” said WisDOT Secretary Craig Thompson. “We will work closely with all our stakeholders to explore this possibility, and we will also continue to look at other proposed improvements that are aligned with our long-range plans.”

The \$500,000 grants announced last week under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law’s (BIL) Corridor Identification and Development (ID) Program will fully cover the costs of studying these proposals, which were submitted by WisDOT, including:

- Adding Eau Claire and Madison along the route between Milwaukee and the Twin Cities;
- Extending the Hiawatha Service from Milwaukee to Green Bay;
- Increasing the number of round trips on the Hiawatha service; and
- Adding an additional round trip between Milwaukee and the Twin Cities.

After the study phase is completed, projects may be selected for future grants, environmental clearance, and other review.



“We are thrilled to have the extension of passenger rail service to Green Bay included in the Corridor ID program. This decision is not the end of the line, but it’s a critical piece of the journey to restore passenger train travel to Green Bay,” said Green Bay Mayor Eric Genrich. “The ability to connect the people and products of our region to destinations in the area and beyond, with various modes of transportation, is a core feature of any 21st-century infrastructure plan.”

The FRA also awarded \$500,000 to Eau Claire County for its submission to study passenger rail service to St. Paul on an existing corridor that would be able to serve several communities along the route.

“I am grateful for this planning grant from the USDOT’s Federal Railroad Administration for passenger rail service to Eau Claire. This investment underscores the vital role of sustainable transportation in fostering connectivity and economic growth,” said Eau Claire City Council President Emily Berge. “This grant will propel Eau Claire into a new era of accessible and

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efficient transportation, enhancing the quality of life for our residents and fostering regional collaboration. We are grateful for the continued support of the Federal Railroad Administration and look forward to advancing our shared vision of a well-connected and vibrant future for Eau Claire.”

Corridor ID will fully fund a project’s general study and allow projects to progress toward a service development plan and, later, the preliminary engineering and environmental clearance.

“This is an important next step in bringing passenger rail service to Madison. Once again, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is ushering in generational change for the Madison community, and I want to thank President Biden and Secretary Buttigieg for their leadership. I look forward to working with WisDOT to make Amtrak service to Madison a reality,” said Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway. “The city is already working to identify an accessible station site that would meet operational needs and encourage economic development. Our hope is that a new Madison Amtrak station would become a dynamic destination woven into the fabric of our vibrant city and that rail service will better connect us to our neighbors in Milwaukee, Eau Claire, and beyond.”