



NEW Rails

NEWSLETTER February 2011

Governor Scott Walker put the brakes on the Milwaukee/Madison segment of the Midwest Regional Rail System by rejecting the \$810 million federal grant. So why are we still pushing passenger rail? Because the need for it has not changed.

NEWRails supports an alternative mode of transportation connecting Milwaukee and Green Bay. AAA reported an average gas price of \$3.07 at year-end, a 16% increase from a year ago. If crude oil reaches \$147 a barrel, a record set in July 2008, we will see \$4 gas. A former Shell Oil President in an interview said that we could see \$5.00 per gallon by 2012. 2010 may go down in history as being in the top three years of the hottest on record according to the World Meteorological Organization. While we are not officially in a recession we in the Fox Valley have not seen a rush to create new job opportunities in our communities. Nothing has changed. Passenger rail remains an important part of the solution to the problems we face.

The Minnesota DOT recently held meetings to present the proposed alternatives of connecting Minneapolis to Milwaukee. The open-houses generated press coverage and brought together those that supported Walker and those that wanted to talk about returning passenger rail to Wisconsin in a meaningful way.

The Minnesota DOT <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/passengerrail/mwrri/phase7.html> discussions revealed important information. Minnesota wants a connection to Chicago via Milwaukee. Significant interest in the western part of our State for passenger rail to Minneapolis caused NEWRails to look at population studies for the proposed routes under consideration. The Minneapolis/Milwaukee route via Madison is comparable to a route that includes Eau Claire, Stevens Point, Neenah and Fond du Lac. The Northern Route has a similar population to the Madison Route, easy connections to Green Bay, and good existing infrastructure.

A study done in 2001 looked at routes from Green Bay to Milwaukee. The report stated, "Passenger rail service in the corridor will provide a wide range of benefits, contribute to economic growth, and improve mobility between the major corporate and industrial centers in the area." The route supported by NEWRails generates the highest economic return as defined by net present value of future cash flows and a positive cost benefit ratio. The relatively lower capital cost requirement of this route contributed to its higher economic return.

NEWRails will continue to engage local communities in the Fox Valley corridor in a discussion of passenger rail return to the Valley. We plan to follow the discussion with

the new administration as it relates to economic development and the place passenger rail can play in sustainable development. Stay informed. We hope we can call on you for support when we see an opportunity to move the train forward.

It is important to recognize the financial limitations of our times. It is, however, also important to recognize the financial costs of not doing things that will benefit and sustain our local economies.

Kathleen T. Riley
Chairperson