



Newsletter May 2011

The Midwest High Speed Rail Association recently released a summary of the research project prepared by AECOM and the Economic Development Research Group, Inc. and sponsored by Siemens. The report, "The Economic Impacts of High Speed Rail: Transforming the Midwest", can be found at: (<http://www.midwesthsr.org/2011-economic-study-downloads>).

The project incorporates visioning work done in 2004 under the title Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI) and expands the vision. It begins to define the steps toward achieving a true High Speed Rail system (up to 220 m.p.h.) that will connect all major metropolitan regions within 450 miles of Chicago with travel times between 2 and 3 hours. There are four corridors of 220 m.p.h. service being proposed:

- Chicago to Minneapolis/St. Paul
- Chicago to St. Louis
- Chicago to Cincinnati
- Chicago to Detroit/Cleveland.

Regional rail service at 110 m.p.h. in the Fox River Valley is part of the concept plan connecting to the 220 m.p.h. HSR network at Milwaukee. (NEW Rails envisions starting this service with 79 m.p.h. service and incrementally upgrading if ridership and economics warrant.)

The project report suggests key steps to incrementally develop this 220 m.p.h. Midwest HSR system beginning in the near term with implementation of 79/90/110 m.p.h. services as identified in the MWRRI. The intermediate term phase calls for the introduction of 220 m.p.h. equipment along a demonstration corridor. A longer-term phase calls for a build out of other corridors.

The study concentrates on specifics of the Chicago hub and logistics around what needs to be improved/built in the Chicago metropolitan area. It also suggests short-term changes that might be necessary to accommodate emerging HSR such as freight /passenger rail grade separations. Issues that are identified and considered in the study include:

- Identification of terminals and intermediate stops
- Determining speed of service
- Identification of alignments for 110, 150 and 220+ m.p.h. service
- Frequency of service and clockface scheduling (departures on the hour, half hour, or 15 / 45 minutes after the hour).

The published document to be found at the link above provides a good summary of the vision for true HSR in the Midwest and the issues to be considered.

Kathleen T. Riley
Chairperson