



TCMC SECOND TRAIN FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If you have a question, please send an email to info@greatriversrail.org.

What is the TCMC Second Train?

The TCMC Second Train is the common name for the Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago Intercity Passenger Rail Service. The project seeks to implement a second daily round-trip passenger train on the existing Amtrak® *Empire Builder* route between the Twin Cities and Milwaukee and utilizing one of the existing Hiawatha service trains or adding another train between Milwaukee and Chicago. The service would operate at conventional speeds of 79 mph and would serve all existing Empire Builder stations. Visit MnDOT's project site for more information.

The project is being led by: Minnesota Department of Transportation, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Illinois Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority, Great River Rail Commission, and La Crosse Area Planning Committee.

Why is the project being considered?

The corridor between the Twin Cities and Chicago is one of the busiest in the Midwest U.S., with more than 10 million trips taken annually. The TCMC Second Train would provide an alternative transportation mode for travelers. An Amtrak 2015 feasibility report (PDF) found that an additional 155,000 trips would be taken if a second daily round-trip train was added. The favorable ridership and revenue projections identified in the feasibility report supported a more detailed study of the proposed service. More trains would mean more options for travelers in and outside of the River Route corridor, which runs from Saint Paul to La Crescent, Minnesota, beside the Mississippi River. The Great River Commission believes that a second daily train is a first step to more frequent and eventually faster passenger rail. Learn more about the Feasibility Study.

What are specifics about the service? (Speed, stops, schedule)

A TCMC Second Train would operate between 4 and 6 hours apart from departure/arrival times of the existing Empire Builder service. It would take one round-trip per day and potentially utilize one of the existing Amtrak Hiawatha service trains between Milwaukee and Chicago. 13 stations would be served and travel time would be slightly faster than Empire Builder at 7.5 hours despite traveling at conventional speeds.

For more information on the existing Empire Builder service, visit Amtrak.



What are the benefits of the project?

There are job, tourism, safety and community benefits to the TCMC Second Train.

Construction of track and station area improvements, estimated at \$30 million, will create new jobs. In 2016, Amtrak spent over \$60 million on goods and services in Minnesota which only stands to increase if passenger rail service is doubled.

About 46% of Amtrak riders are tourists. TCMC will support tourism growth in Minnesota cities along the River Route, bringing visitors to major sporting events, small town festivals and our beautiful natural attractions.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Federal Railway Administration have invested over \$11 million in crossing safety improvements along the TCMC corridor; \$11.6 million in additional crossing safety improvements are being studied.

Communities all along the River Route stand to benefit from the TCMC Second Train by offering a transportation alternative to college students, providing upgrades to freight rail tracks, and diverting auto users to rail.

For more information on the existing Empire Builder service, visit Amtrak.

What is the current status of the Second Train project?

The first phase of planning is complete. The second phase of planning requires an environmental analysis, preliminary design, and will generate a service development plan. The Federal Railroad Administration has given the project permission to complete the least time-consuming, least-costly environmental analysis. The state of Wisconsin provided \$300,000 in fall 2019 to complete a portion of the second phase of work. The Commission has sought funds each of the past two years from the state legislature, and received no funding. The Commission will advocate for funding again at the 2020 legislative session

What work needs to be completed before a Second Train can begin operation?

First, phase 2 of preliminary planning must be completed. This includes an environmental review process, preliminary design, and a service development plan. Public involvement will continue throughout phase 2. Next comes final design, construction, and operation. Some infrastructure improvements will be required as well as further study. Before any of the work can be completed, the project requires funding from federal, state and local sources.

What is the timeline?

The remaining planning, design and construction process could take three to five years. Without funding, however, the work cannot begin. Check in with MnDOT for more up-to-date information.

What can residents do to help?

Get involved! There are many ways to help spread the word about your support for more passenger rail options along the River Route. Visit our Get Involved page or learn more information on how to help with MnDOT.

