

**Chicago-Milwaukee EA/SDP**  
**Agency Stakeholder Conference Call and Webinar**  
**December 2, 2014**  
**2 PM-3:30 PM Central**

**AGENDA**

Call-in: 216-706-7052

Passcode: 2063220

### **1.0 Welcome, Introductions, and Purpose of Meeting**

Melanie Johnson of Quandel Consultants hosted the webinar and conducted a roll call of the participating agencies. Arun Rao, project manager for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, welcomed the participants and gave a background of the federal and state participation in the project.

Melanie described the purpose of the meeting as threefold:

- To give agency stakeholders and update on the project since the last agency coordination meeting in 2012;
- To provide an opportunity for the stakeholders to provide comments on the environmental process; and
- To describe future public outreach and agency coordination opportunities.

### **2.0 Project Scoping**

Melanie presented a brief overview of the project for those unfamiliar with it. The project study area is the existing Amtrak route between Chicago and Milwaukee. The *Hiawatha Service* currently operates 7 round trips per day Monday through Saturday and 6 round trips on Sunday between Chicago and Milwaukee with stops in Glenview, IL; Sturtevant, WI; and Milwaukee Airport Rail Station, WI. The route currently operates at a maximum speed of 79 MPH.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) will assess the potential impacts of increasing the service to 10 round trips per day between Chicago and Milwaukee and the potential impact of increasing the maximum speed to 90 MPH between Rondout (Green Oaks, IL) and Milwaukee Airport Rail Station (Milwaukee, WI). The Service Development Plan (SDP) will describe how the proposed service will be implemented operationally and financially.

The goal of the project is to improve the *Hiawatha Service* by adding train frequencies and reducing travel times and meeting the stated purpose and need of the project. The EA and SDP will be completed following federal and state environmental requirements in order to make the Chicago-Milwaukee corridor eligible for future federal funding for final design and construction.

### **3.0 Review of 2012 Agency Coordination**

Melanie noted that in the fall of 2012, agency coordination webinars were held to discuss the following project elements:

- Purpose and need of the project
- The operational, route, and service alternatives
- Draft 79 MPH and 90 MPH schedules

- Proposed infrastructure improvement projects
- Stakeholder and public outreach opportunities

#### 4.0 Project Status

Melanie reported that work on the project elements that were discussed in 2012 advanced significantly. Melanie presented the project status which is summarized in this section.

##### 4.1 Railroad Stakeholder Engagement

Intense railroad engagement started in January 2013 with a working group meeting at which Federal Railroad Administration, Wisconsin and Illinois Departments of Transportation, Amtrak, Canadian Pacific, Union Pacific, Metra, and Quandel attended. The purpose of the January 2013 meeting was to agree on infrastructure improvements needed to accommodate the increase in frequencies to 10 round trips per day. The consensus among the railroads was that the modeling must be updated to account for current and planned freight traffic, maintenance windows, and random events.

Working group meeting #2 occurred on April 5, 2013. Current and future constraints were discussed and infrastructure and operating improvements needed to mitigate unreasonable impairment of freight and Metra trains were considered. Initial improvements were identified during the meeting. Canadian Pacific offered to internally assess the need for additional infrastructure by performing RTC modeling at their expense. Canadian Pacific conducted detailed modeling analyses and provided results in August 2013. The improvements identified by the Working group meeting # 2 and additional improvements identified by the Canadian Pacific modeling effort are as follows:

- Glenview Universal Crossover
- Lake Forest Universal Crossover
- UPRR Siding Extension at A-20 (Northbrook, IL)
- Speed Increase between Rondout and A-20 (Green Oaks, IL and Northbrook, IL)
- Deerfield Holding Track
- Rondout Siding Extension/Metra Fox Lake Second Track (Green Oaks, IL)
- Milwaukee Airport Rail Station Second Platform
- Muskego Yard Signalization
- MKE-Cut Off CTC

Proposed 79 and 90 MPH train schedules were vetted by Metra, Canadian Pacific, and Amtrak to determine any conflicts with existing freight and passenger scheduled service.

##### 4.2 Environmental Assessment Overview

An outline for the EA was formulated with the FRA for the project. The outline is as follows:

1. Purpose and Need
2. Alternatives Analysis
3. Environmental Resources for Chicago-Milwaukee Corridor
  - a. 79 PH Alternative
  - b. 90 MPH Alternative
4. Environmental Resources for Chicago- Milwaukee Projects
5. Cumulative and Direct Impacts

6. Mitigation and Permitting
7. Comments and Coordination
  - a. Public Involvement
  - b. Agency Coordination

The assessment of potential environmental impacts is separated into two chapters: one to assess the impacts within the Chicago-Milwaukee corridor as a whole due to the increase to 10 round trips and the speed increase to 90 MPH; the other to assess the impacts to the environment within the improvement project areas listed in Section 4.1.

Conceptual engineering has been completed on the projects listed in Section 4.1, with the exception of the speed increase between Rondout and A-20 and the MKE–Cut Off CTC. Completion of conceptual engineering enables the assessment of the environmental impacts in these project areas. FRA provides a list of categories that, if a project fits, allows the project to be excluded from the preparation of an EIS or EA because the project was determined not to have a significant effect on the human or natural environment. The following table depicts the categories that apply to the proposed improvement projects. See the full list of categories within the FRA Categorical Exclusion Worksheet at <http://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L02707>.

<b>Proposed Improvement Project</b>	<b>Applicable Categorical Exclusion(s)</b>
Glenview Universal Crossover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor Rail Line Additions (crossover)</li> </ul>
Lake Forest Universal Crossover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor Rail Line Additions (crossover)</li> </ul>
UPRR Siding Extension at A-20 (Northbrook, IL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridge Construction (Shermer Road)</li> <li>• Minor Rail Line Additions (side track)</li> <li>• Track improvements (improving/ replacing interlockings, installation of ancillary equipment)</li> <li>• Installation of Equipment Designed to Promote Communication (signalization)</li> </ul>
Speed Increase between Rondout and A-20 (Green Oaks, IL and Northbrook, IL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installation of Equipment Designed to Promote Communication (signalization)</li> </ul>
Deerfield Holding Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor Rail Line Additions (side track)</li> <li>• Installation of Equipment Designed to Promote Transportation Safety (warning devices)</li> </ul>
Rondout Siding Extension (Green Oaks, IL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor Rail Line Additions (side track)</li> </ul>
Metra Fox Lake Second Track (Green Oaks, IL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor Rail Line Additions (side track)</li> <li>• Installation of Equipment Designed to Promote Transportation Communication (signalization, train control system)</li> <li>• Bridge Replacement (North Branch Chicago River)</li> <li>• Installation of Equipment Designed to Promote Transportation Safety (warning devices)</li> <li>• Track improvements (improving/ replacing interlockings, installation of ancillary equipment)</li> </ul>
Milwaukee Airport Rail Station Second Platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction of Stations (passenger platform, pedestrian overpass)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track Improvements (installing track, replacing rail and ties)</li> </ul>
Muskego Yard Signalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minor Rail Line Additions (yard tracks)</li> <li>Installation of Equipment Designed to Promote Transportation Communication (signalization, train control system, communications systems equipment)</li> <li>Track Improvements (replacing rail and ties, minor curve realignments)</li> </ul>
MKE-Cut Off CTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Installation of Equipment Designed to Promote Transportation Communication (signalization, train control system, radio tower, communications systems equipment)</li> <li>Track improvements (improving/ replacing interlockings, installation of ancillary equipment)</li> </ul>

A simple FRA worksheet is completed for each project to demonstrate that it does not have a significant effect on the environment. This worksheet is incorporated into the EA within the chapter on Environmental Resources for the Improvement Projects.

#### 4.3 Service Development Plan Overview

The Service Development Plan includes the following chapters:

1. Purpose and Need
2. Service Rationale
3. Identification of Alternatives
4. Planning Methodology
5. Demand and Revenue Forecasts
6. Operations Modeling
7. Station and Access Analysis
8. Conceptual Engineering and Capital Programming
9. Operating and Maintenance Costs and Capital Replacement Forecast
10. Public Benefits Analysis

Melanie stated that several of the chapters, including the Purpose and Need and Alternatives Analysis chapters, were common to both the EA and SDP. Draft versions of these chapters have been submitted to FRA for review.

#### 4.4 Engineering Plan Overview

Engineering plans and project descriptions were provided to the meeting participants on November 20, 2014. The purpose of the plans is to inform the environmental decision making process in order to achieve a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to advance the corridor to a project ready status for final design and construction.

Project descriptions are as follows (see meeting materials for more information):

- Glenview Universal Crossover
  - Located south of Dewes Street in Glenview, IL

- Provides operational flexibility for scheduling maintenance windows
- Lake Forest Universal Crossover
  - Located north of Lake Forest Metra Station
  - Provides operational flexibility for scheduling maintenance windows
- UPRR Siding Extension at A-20 (Northbrook, IL)
  - From the west, Canadian Pacific exits the Chicago & Milwaukee (CP C&M) Subdivision at A-20 and operates on Union Pacific tracks to access its Bensenville Yard
  - CP trains will only be accepted onto UP territory if it is assured that the CP train can travel through the corridor and clear all grade crossings and the UP at Bryn Mawr
  - If CP trains are not accepted onto the UP at A-20, the CP trains are forced to hold on the CP C&M mainline north of Rondout (Green Oaks, IL) – this can significantly impact Metra, Amtrak, and CP schedules
  - The solution is to build a holding track adjacent to the UP where CP trains can hold
- Speed Increase between Rondout and A-20 (Green Oaks, IL and Northbrook, IL)
  - Located between Northbrook, IL and Green Oaks, IL; a 12 mile segment
  - plan is to increase freight speeds from 40 to 50 MPH
  - signal spacing may need to be altered to provide adequate stopping distance for freights
- Deerfield Holding Track
  - Located north of the Deerfield Metra Station
  - New siding track constructed west of Metra main tracks will allow Metra trains to short turn trains off the mainline
  - Additionally, the grade crossing warning devices at the pedestrian crossing will be upgraded
- Rondout Siding Extension/Metra Fox Lake Second Track (Green Oaks, IL)
  - Rondout is a complicated interlocking that controls movements on the CP C&M mainline, movements to and from Metra's Fox Lake subdivision, and movements to and from the EJ&E
  - Operations are impacted by the fact that the 17 mile Fox Lake Subdivision has a single track configuration
  - The solution is a 2 track connection to the Fox Lake from the C&M and CTC on Fox Lake
  - Extend the new connection track south on the C&M for 2.65 miles to create a "third track"
  - Allows for simultaneous moves between the C&M and Fox Lake subdivision at 45 MPH
- Milwaukee Airport Rail Station Second Platform
  - There is currently only one platform at MARS for passengers to load and unload for both directions of travel, which forces both north and southbound passenger trains to use the east side #1 main track, creating reliability and operational issues
  - A new platform is proposed for the west side of the station with an overhead pedestrian bridge for access
- Muskego Yard Signalization
  - CP travels through the Milwaukee Intermodal Station when connecting from points west to the C&M subdivision
  - The project will provide signalization and upgrades to two tracks through the yard to allow CP to divert some trains through the yard
  - CP has raised some concerns about the condition of several bridges within project limits. This will be discussed with CP, but at this point, the proposed plans, provided on November 20, do not include bridge replacement.
- MKE-Cut Off CTC

- The project will upgrade signals in the Milwaukee Intermodal Station and west to Cut-Off
- The segment will be integrated into the C&M CTC system to allow for communications to CP control center
- The project will improve operations within and through the station for freight and Amtrak

#### 4.5 Questions and Answers

Moses Amidei of Wadsworth stated that the Lake County Long Range Transportation Plan includes a Metra extension north beyond Rondout to the Gurnee/Wadsworth area. Mr. Amidei asked whether the Rondout/Fox Lake project would help this project be more feasible. Rich Oppenheim from Metra responded that the Rondout/Fox Lake project would neither hinder the project nor directly help it. Peter Schwartz of FRA added that Rondout is a major capacity constraint for the corridor. The primary purpose of the Fox Lake/Rondout improvement project is to mitigate the incremental impact of adding three round trips. However, any upgrade to Rondout will improve all operations through the area.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources stated that if bridge rehabilitation is included in the Muskego Yard project, hydraulics and flooding are major concerns that would need to be mitigated. Coordination with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District would be required.

Maria Lasday of Bannockburn asked whether a stop at Lake Forest is possible. Norm Carlson stated that there are two issues: there is a 3 hour gap in trains for reverse commuter purposes between Fox Lake and Deerfield; the second issue is whether a stop at Lake Forest for the Hiawatha Service is possible. Bob Kiely of Lake Forest said that he is aware that the stop in Lake Forest is not included within the Chicago-Milwaukee EA and that the project is not precluded by the EA work. He asked whether the proposed improvement projects will help Lake Forest's chance of getting a stop. Bob Moore of Quandel Consultants responded that the quantitative analysis (capacity simulation modeling) did not include the Lake Forest Stop. Therefore, the analysis does not consider the possible effects of an Amtrak stop on the system capacity. Elliot Ramos of IDOT stated that Lake Forest discussions are separate from the EA and questions should be directed to IDOT.

Mr. Amidei from Wadsworth also stated that quiet zone applications are being submitted for two crossings. One crossing is the CP C&M at IL 173. He asked whether the increase in trips will have an impact on the quiet zone. Bob Moore of Quandel responded that the study was not aware of a quiet zone application. FRA will have to address this issue.

#### 4.6 Agency Coordination/Public Involvement

This is the second agency coordination webinar for the project. The project team is requesting that the agencies review the information provided on November 20 to determine whether the agencies have concerns about possible impacts to the environment resulting from the project. WisDOT and IDOT environmental personnel, with the assistance of Quandel Consultants, will be coordinating with state agencies on impacts and mitigation. Shawn Cirton of Fish and Wildlife stated that there is not enough information provided for impacts to be determined. He said that additional coordination on wetlands is needed. The US Army Corps and Environmental Protection Agency also stated that correspondence on wetlands is needed. IDOT will coordinate with the Illinois SHPO.

Two public involvement meetings will occur after the EA has been released for public review; one in Illinois and one in Wisconsin.

### 5.0 Project Schedule

Melanie reviewed the proposed schedule with the participants as follows:

- Finalizing concept plans - Winter 2014/2015
- Environmental Documentation - Winter 2014/2015
- Receive Agency impacts/mitigation - Winter 2014/2015
- Incorporate impacts and mitigation into EA – Spring 2015
- Distribute draft EA to states and FRA for review (60 days) – Spring 2015
- Complete SDP – Spring 2015
- Incorporate comments and produce EA for signature – Spring/Summer 2015
- Distribute to public – Spring/Summer 2015 (30 day comment period)
- Public Involvement Meetings – Spring/Summer 2015 (during EA comment period)
- Incorporate public comments into FONSI – Summer 2015
- Produce FONSI – Summer 2015

The schedule will change depending on coordination with the railroads and other agency stakeholders.

## **6.0 Next Steps**

Melanie Johnson of Quandel Consultants will be contacting the federal agencies in the next few weeks to schedule meetings to further discuss the project. In the meantime, please contact her at [mjohnson@quandel.com](mailto:mjohnson@quandel.com) or at 216.378.7701 with questions or comments. All agencies should provide input on the potential corridor-wide or project-specific environmental impacts by January 15, 2015.