



ISSUE 2

CHICAGO-MILWAUKEE HIAWATHA SERVICE
INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL PROJECT

Questions & Answers

The purpose and need to expand and improve the Hiawatha Service

Does the Hiawatha Service ridership justify this project?

Yes, absolutely. Looking at trends, Hiawatha Service ridership has nearly doubled after the service increased to seven daily round trips, growing from 423,500 riders in 2001 to 819,125 riders in 2013—a 93% increase. Ridership has been increasing by an average of 5.9% per year—tracking with population growth in the corridor. Instances of seating capacity issues on Hiawatha Service trains continue to grow, and the proposed additional frequencies would mitigate these existing capacity issues and accommodate the forecasted increase in ridership.

Despite continued low gas prices, ridership saw a definitive jump in recent months. Most recently, federal fiscal year (October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2016) ridership increased 1.1% from the previous federal fiscal year. There is a diverse group of users of the service, which includes major industries in southeast Wisconsin and northern Illinois, with at least one major corporation providing dedicated shuttles to Hiawatha Service stations. As a result, large companies, business groups, and other stakeholders are increasingly identifying the need for additional service in the corridor to support major employers in the region and bolster the region's economic competitiveness.

It is important to note that this study is looking at longer-term solutions to meet transportation demand in the southeast Wisconsin/northern Illinois region, versus addressing the short-term need of accommodating existing ridership.

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Regarding capacity, there seems to be a lot of trains going by that aren't full right now. Isn't adding another car during peak times a way to reduce ridership pressure?

WisDOT and IDOT have looked at adding coaches on all trains as a means of addressing near- and over-capacity conditions. This poses a significant cost since increasing to a seven-car train requires the addition of a conductor, additional maintenance cost, additional fuel cost, and additional capitalized maintenance, with no increase in service level. Therefore, all trains, even off-peak trains, have to be sized for peak period passenger loads.

Regarding off-peak trains that have lower numbers of riders, the Hiawatha Service does not have the option to adjust the number of coaches on a given train to accommodate anticipated ridership on that train. It is not possible to add or remove cars due to the tight turnaround times in the schedule. However, even if an off-peak train operates at, for example, 40% of seating capacity, it still has 162 passengers on board.

However, overall growth in ridership has resulted in increasing occurrences of near-capacity (when seats are 90 percent or more filled) and over-capacity conditions (when the number of on-board riders exceeds the number of seats). This occurs most frequently on trains 330, 332, 337 and 339, which operate during peak travel time periods, generally considered to be between 6 and 9 a.m. and 4 and 7 p.m.

What about incorporating a reservation system to manage seating capacity?

Moving to reserved ticketing would not meet the stated purpose of addressing existing and future demand; without other service improvements, reserved ticketing essentially freezes ridership levels. Moving to reserved ticketing would ease over-capacity conditions on peak trains. If reserved ticketing were implemented, ridership growth would be restricted by limiting the number of passengers allowed on trains (some passengers may be turned away). Currently, with unreserved ticketing, no passengers are turned away from the Hiawatha Service trains, and passengers have the flexibility of choosing any train schedule with their ticket.

What is the business case for these improvements? Has a cost-benefit analysis been done?

A cost benefit analysis is being completed as part of the Service Development Plan, which will be released after the Final Environmental Assessment (EA) is completed.

In addition, market studies have been performed on the Hiawatha Service. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the University Transportation Center for Mobility at the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) conducted an on-board survey of existing passengers in 2011. The resulting report, *Intercity Passenger Rail: Implications for Urban, Regional, and National Mobility*¹, found that, on average, passengers 'strongly agreed' that they would be encouraged to ride the Hiawatha Service more often if additional daily departures and arrivals were provided. Specifically, passengers agreed that additional early and late evening departures from Chicago and an additional morning departure from Milwaukee were attractive schedule additions.

A-20 Holding Track Project: Addressing noise, vibration, air quality, and other environmental and health concerns of nearby residential areas

Will the A-20 project result in increased freight traffic?

No. The proposed Chicago-Milwaukee Intercity Passenger Rail project does not increase the amount of freight traffic operating in the corridor.

Will the A-20 project increase the risk of another derailment?

There is no greater risk of derailment due to the construction of the A-20 project. FRA's safety regulations do not permit the construction of projects that create safety risks. Additionally, any infrastructure constructed as part of the A-20 project would be designed to FRA's safety standards.

Will the A-20 project make air quality worse in Glenview?

The increase in emissions due to idling freight trains would be minimal. Within the Chicago-Milwaukee corridor, new locomotives are proposed to be used. These locomotives are significantly more fuel efficient and produce fewer emissions than the existing Amtrak equipment. Even with the increase in frequencies, air quality for the 10 round trip service would improve over existing (2016) conditions.

Would the parked freight trains block Techny Road?

No. The proposed length of new track would accommodate a 10,000 foot freight train completely off the mainlines and not block any grade crossings. The intent of the A-20 project is to move trains off the mainlines and prevent the blockage of grade crossings. It would be unacceptable for a train to hold for any extended period of time across Techny Road.

What about the impacts of noise and vibration? Does the A-20 project have the potential to worsen outdoor noise or create cracks in homes from idling freight trains?

The A-20 project does not change the number of freight trains operating on the Union Pacific line and there would be no severe noise and vibration impacts to the community adjacent to the UP based on FRA/FTA noise assessment criteria.

Noise generated from idling locomotives would create minimal additional noise. Homes adjacent to the tracks are located a sufficient distance (between 100 and 200 feet) from the locomotive that they would not be severely impacted.

Noise generated from trains traveling over the new crossovers would also create minimal additional noise, but homes adjacent to the tracks are located a sufficient distance from the railroad switch that they would not be impacted severely.



Will the A-20 Project impact property values?

Because the A-20 project is proposed to be constructed within existing rail right-of-way, the construction of the project is not anticipated to depress values of properties adjacent to the rail line, as property values already take into consideration of being located next to railroad right-of-way. The project team understands that this is a concern for many residents and businesses adjacent to the corridor.

The overall program of investment projects would have a beneficial contribution to cumulative impacts along the corridor by reducing idling times and improving overall air quality. The project would also provide benefits to the communities along the entire corridor. The growth in the corridor would likely result in an increase in property values, economic vitality, and population density. Benefits also include: improved level and quality of passenger rail service (mobility) for everyone including the elderly and people with disabilities, and reduction of congestion and travel times.

Additionally, the EA indicates that the A-20 project would not cause severe noise, vibration or air pollution, which are often factors that impact the adjacent land values of a project.

Shouldn't a more comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be prepared?

No. The infrastructure investment project at A-20 fits within a Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Categorical Exclusion. However, a more rigorous Environmental Assessment is being conducted to explore alternatives and environmental effects of the overall Chicago-Milwaukee Project. Thus far, the Project has not reached a threshold of significance for any environmental resource. If the Project reaches a threshold of significance, FRA would issue a Notice to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

FRA determined the Class of Action (i.e., Categorical Exclusion, Environmental Assessment, or Environmental Impact Statement) for this project on October 21, 2013.

If this project were under the jurisdiction of the Surface Transportation Board, it would not meet the threshold for an Environmental Impact Statement.

Is the EA ignoring long-term rail congestion issues by proposing short-term solutions such as the A-20 holding track?

No. The purpose and need of the Chicago-Milwaukee Intercity Passenger Rail project is to address existing and future demand for rail service by increasing Hiawatha Service frequencies to 10 round trips per day. The infrastructure investment projects mitigate the impact that the increase in intercity passenger rail service frequencies has on freight and commuter rail in the corridor.

Isn't the A-20 holding track project a short-term solution to address problems with antiquated interchanges that create chokepoints?

No. The Metra Fox Lake Second Track project and the Rondout Siding Extension project mitigate the bottleneck and inefficiencies at the Rondout interlocking.

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Does the A-20 project use state and federal funds to help private freight rail companies solve their network congestion issues?

No. The A-20 investment project would help ensure fluidity of mainline rail operations on the Canadian Pacific and Union Pacific mainline tracks and would mitigate the impact of the additional Hiawatha Service passenger on freight service.

The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program, a partnership between the State of Illinois, the City of Chicago, freight railroads, Metra and Amtrak, seeks to remove and reduce train congestion throughout Chicagoland, and is not associated with this project.

Why was Design Alternative Five not advanced in the EA? Isn't a freight bypass actually a better long-term solution?

The Siding Extension at A-20 Design Alternative Five proposes a freight bypass using the Union Pacific (UP) Milwaukee Subdivision from Pleasant Prairie, WI, to Glenview, IL. Theoretically, a number of Canadian Pacific trains would be able to use the UP Milwaukee Sub rather than the Canadian Pacific C&M Sub that they currently use. This Alternative did not meet the purpose and need of the project. It is not necessary for 10 round trip Hiawatha Service and did not meet the reasonableness screening because it would cost 5.5 times as much as the lowest-cost option. It would also pose environmental impacts to the communities along the 30-mile route that would need to be studied in a separate environmental document.

Other General Concerns

Will this project result in more train traffic and add to traffic congestion in busy downtown areas?

Only minimally. Three additional Amtrak Hiawatha Service round trips (six trains) per day would operate through the corridor. Typical gate closure times at the downtown Glenview grade crossings for a single passenger train operation is approximately 40 seconds. The addition of six trains operating through the two grade crossings in downtown Glenview will add about 240 seconds (4 minutes) of obstruction to roadway traffic operations. This is a very small increment to the existing gate closure time caused by Metra and Amtrak service.

Can a stop be added at Lake Forest?

The Chicago-Milwaukee Intercity Passenger Rail project does not address adding stops or changing the location of existing Amtrak stops. However, the proposed project does not preclude adding or changing stops. Those types of proposals could be addressed as separate initiatives.

How will my comments be considered and what are the next steps in the process?

All comments received by Nov. 15, 2016 will be considered prior to the final Environmental Assessment (EA) being developed and the Federal Railroad Administration's decision is finalized. All comments will be incorporated into the public record for the project.

What will the schedule be with the new trains?

PROPOSED CHICAGO MILWAUKEE EA/SDP SCHEDULE – 10 ROUND TRIPS AT 79 MPH

Train Number		327	329	331	333	335	7	337	339	341	343	345
Station	Mile	Daily										
Chicago, IL	0	06:15	08:25	09:25	10:25	13:05	14:15	15:15	17:08	18:45	20:05	22:30
Glenview, IL	17	06:37	08:47	09:47	10:47	13:32	R14:39	15:37	17:32	19:07	20:27	22:52
Sturtevant, WI	62	07:14	09:24	10:24	11:24	14:04		16:14	18:14	19:44	21:04	23:29
MARS	79	07:29	09:39	10:39	11:39	14:19		16:29	18:28	19:59	21:19	23:44
Milwaukee, WI	86	07:44	09:54	10:54	11:54	14:34	R15:55	16:44	18:45	20:16	21:34	00:01
Total Travel Time		1:29	1:29	1:29	1:29	1:29	1:40	1:29	1:37	1:31	1:29	1:31

Note: All Hiawatha Service trains operate between Chicago and Milwaukee only.

Note: Train 7 (Empire Builder) continues from Milwaukee to Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN and Seattle, WA/Portland, OR.

Train Number		328	330	332	334	336	338	8	340	342	344	346
Station	Mile	Daily										
Milwaukee, WI	0	06:15	07:25	08:10	11:03	13:00	13:56	D14:07	15:00	17:45	20:25	22:42
MARS	7	06:26	07:35	08:20	11:16	13:10	14:06		15:10	17:55	20:38	22:52
Sturtevant, WI	24	06:44	07:49	08:34	11:30	13:24	14:20		15:24	18:09	20:52	23:06
Glenview, IL	69	07:25	08:26	09:11	12:07	14:01	14:57	D15:12	16:01	18:46	21:29	23:43
Chicago, IL	86	07:57	08:59	09:39	12:35	14:29	15:29	15:55	16:29	19:14	21:57	00:11
Total Travel Time		1:42	1:34	1:29	1:32	1:29	1:33	1:48	1:29	1:29	1:32	1:29

Note: All Hiawatha Service trains operate between Chicago and Milwaukee only.

Train 8 (Empire Builder) arrives in Milwaukee from Seattle, WA/Portland, OR and Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN.

PROPOSED CHICAGO MILWAUKEE EA/SDP SCHEDULE – 10 ROUND TRIPS AT 90 MPH

Train Number		327	329	331	333	335	7	337	339	341	343	345
Station	Mile	Daily										
Chicago, IL	0	06:15	08:25	09:25	10:25	13:05	14:15	15:15	17:08	18:45	20:05	22:30
Glenview, IL	17	06:37	08:47	09:47	10:47	13:32	R14:39	15:37	17:32	19:07	20:27	22:52
Sturtevant, WI	62	07:13	09:23	10:23	11:23	14:03		16:13	18:13	19:43	21:03	23:28
MARS	79	07:27	09:37	10:37	11:37	14:17		16:27	18:26	19:57	21:17	23:42
Milwaukee, WI	86	07:42	09:52	10:52	11:52	14:32	R15:55	16:42	18:43	20:14	21:32	23:59
Total Travel Time		1:27	1:27	1:27	1:27	1:27	1:40	1:27	1:35	1:29	1:27	1:29

Note: All Hiawatha Service trains operate between Chicago and Milwaukee only.

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MARS	7	06:28	07:37	08:22	11:18	13:12	14:08		15:12	17:57	20:40	22:54
Sturtevant, WI	24	06:45	07:50	08:35	11:31	13:25	14:21		15:23	18:10	20:53	23:07
Glenview, IL	69	07:25	08:26	09:11	12:07	14:01	14:57	D15:12	16:01	18:46	21:29	23:43
Chicago, IL	86	07:57	08:59	09:39	12:35	14:29	15:29	15:55	16:29	19:14	21:57	00:11
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