

## **Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 Public Involvement Plan**

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Public Involvement Plan for the Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 provides the strategies that will be used to involve the public in long-range rail planning process.

Rail Plan 2050 will set Wisconsin's priorities for passenger rail, commuter rail, freight rail and rail crossing safety for the next 30 years. The Rail Plan will outline rail data conditions and trends, existing and possible future service levels, and commodity freight movements. Rail-related policies will be developed, and rail-related improvements or plans will be identified. WisDOT will complete an environmental justice analysis and consider environmental issues throughout the planning process. A System-plan Environmental Evaluation (SEE) may be completed if major or substantial changes to WisDOT's policies or resources would result from the Rail Plan's implementation. If a SEE is written, it will be included directly in the Rail Plan.

This PIP provides the big picture of what strategies will be used to involve the public during the long-range plan writing process.

WisDOT sought feedback on the draft PIP. The 45-day comment period was July 15 through August 28, 2020. Rail Plan 2050 PIP comments have been addressed in the final PIP. The final Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 Public Involvement Plan has been posted on the Rail Plan webpage. The Rail Plan website is available at:

[WisconsinDOT.gov/RailPlan2050](https://wisconsinDOT.gov/RailPlan2050).

## Public Involvement Plan

Public involvement will be encouraged throughout the planning process. The Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 will generally follow the same steps as WisDOT's other multimodal long-range transportation plans. Plan phases include:

- Plan Kick-off
- Pre-draft Plan Phase
- Draft Plan Phase
- Final Draft Plan Phase
- Plan Adoption

Each phase has its own public involvement activities. Individuals, organizations, businesses and local governments all will have an opportunity to impact the plan. It is expected that public involvement will occur formally for 18-months; from about July 2020 to January 2022.

It is expected public involvement for the Rail Plan will be affected by the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic is anticipated to continue during significant portions of the plan's public involvement activities. WisDOT is committed to holding meetings for the Rail Plan in a safe way. The meetings will either be conducted online or a mix of on-line and in-person, as the public health situation permits. No matter the format, the public will have ample opportunities to interact with planning staff, receive information, and submit comments.

WisDOT will develop a distribution list to be used during the Rail Plan. WisDOT will use the list to send out plan information such as online meeting notifications and availability of the Draft Rail Plan. The distribution list will contain partners in local government, rail transit commissions, the freight industry, passenger rail, commuter rail, environmental resource agencies, environmental justice organizations and anyone who provides their contact information during the planning process.

WisDOT will review and consider all comments throughout the planning process. This approach allows WisDOT to reflect on and balance a variety of stakeholder needs and interests in its policies.

### **Plan Kick-off**

Plan kick-off has two main involvement opportunities; publishing the Notice of Intent and the draft Public Involvement Plan. This phase occurs during the months of July to August 2020.

1. **Notice of Intent:** WisDOT's first official announcement of the Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 involved publishing a Notice of Intent (NOI). The NOI was published in the state paper of record, on the WisDOT website, using social media, and by sending out an email to the Rail Plan distribution list. The NOI gives a general

idea about the Rail Plan contents and the planning process. Any comments received were used to help make decisions on the plan.

The NOI was posted at [WisconsinDOT.gov/RailPlan2050](https://www.wisconsin.gov/RailPlan2050) for a 30-day comment period ending on July 31, 2020. It was published in the Wisconsin State Journal on July 2, 2020. Social media posts (on WisDOT's Facebook page) also announced the NOI.

2. **The Final Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 Public Involvement Plan (PIP):** The final public involvement plan (this document), contains the strategies WisDOT will use to involve the public during Rail Plan development and will be posted on the Rail Plan 2050 webpage ([WisconsinDOT.gov/RailPlan2050](https://www.wisconsin.gov/RailPlan2050)). WisDOT sent a news release to alert the public about the opportunity to comment on the draft public involvement plan. The news release was posted on August 14. A notice of the draft public involvement plan also was sent to the distribution list with a 45-day public comment period. This final PIP has been posted on the Rail Plan webpage after the public comments were considered. After the consideration of comments, two minor changes were made. The more inclusive term “regional and county economic development organizations” replaced the term “chambers of commerce.” Text was also changed to clarify that WisDOT intends to hold a public hearing during the final plan phase should a SEE be done with the Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050.

### **Pre-Draft Plan Phase**

During the pre-draft plan phase, public involvement is focused on stakeholder information sharing. This phase will occur from September to December 2020.

1. **Environmental Resource Agency Outreach:** Outreach with state and federal government environmental resource agencies begins early to coordinate long-range plans. Agencies, such as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service, have developed their own plans to protect and improve Wisconsin's natural world. WisDOT will meet and discuss how these plans might interact with ideas being looked at for freight, passenger and commuter rail service and rail crossing safety.
2. **Groups Representing Environmental Justice and Title VI Communities:** Environmental justice and Title VI, are terms from federal regulations referring to the need to include the concerns of all people in planning and policy development. Specific efforts are made to involve groups representing racial minorities, people with disabilities, seniors, people who are not fluent in English, and people with low incomes for their perspectives.
3. **Industry Stakeholders:** WisDOT will reach out to companies and organizations involved in freight rail, passenger rail, commuter rail and rail crossing safety. This includes businesses and industries that rely on rail transportation for the movement of goods and supplies. WisDOT will reach out to general business interests through organizations such as Wisconsin Economic Development

Corporation, regional or county economic development organizations and Amtrak.

4. **Local and State Governments, including those with special responsibility for rail.** WisDOT will reach out to its local government partners directly or through groups such as the Wisconsin Towns Association, the Wisconsin Counties Association, rail transit commissions, metropolitan planning organizations, regional planning organizations, commuter rail providers (ex. Metra) and similar groups. WisDOT also will work with its transportation partners in the adjacent states of Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois.
5. **Consultation with Tribal Nations in Wisconsin:** WisDOT will consult with Tribal Nations directly and through established groups such as the Inter-Tribal Task Force. WisDOT may ask to present at existing regular meetings of these groups or tribal governments.

### **Draft Plan Phase**

The draft plan phase is designed to be the best opportunity to comment directly on the Draft Rail Plan and potential SEE. This phase is expected to occur from January 2021 to June 2021.

1. **Public Comment Period:** The Draft Rail Plan and potential SEE will be available for at least 30-days for comment. In-person or virtual meetings with the public will be held during the comment period. The comment period and meetings will be announced on the Rail Plan website, via social media, news release, and by sending out an email to the distribution list.
2. **Meetings with the Public:** WisDOT will hold 4-6 virtual or in-person meetings in different parts of the state during the comment period. At least some of these meetings will be held in communities served by passenger and commuter rail. The meetings will be announced in the same way as the public comment period. People will be able to examine materials explaining the Draft Rail Plan and potential SEE and provide comment. If the meetings are in-person, they will be in facilities accessible to people with disabilities and near transit routes if transit is available. Sign language and foreign language interpretation will be available if requested before the meetings. Meeting materials will be translated into other languages upon request.
3. **Meetings with Groups or at Conferences:** WisDOT will meet with organizations, virtually or in-person upon request to present and discuss the Draft Rail Plan. WisDOT may present at meetings or conferences, especially those related to the rail industry or passenger rail.
4. **Notice to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA):** FRA reviews the adopted Rail Plan. WisDOT will ask for FRA's feedback on the draft Rail Plan and potential SEE. WisDOT will consider any comments or feedback provided.

### **Final Plan Phase**

The final plan phase runs from approximately July 2021 to December 2021. The updated Rail Plan will be posted for final review and comment.

1. **Public Comment Period.** This is the final chance for public review and comment before the Rail Plan and potential SEE are adopted. The draft final Rail Plan and potential SEE will be available for 30-days for public comment. At least one formal public hearing will be held during the comment period if a SEE is conducted. The comment period and public hearing will be announced on the Rail Plan website, via social media, news release, and by sending an email to the distribution list.
2. **Public Hearing.** If a SEE is conducted, WisDOT will hold at least one public hearing on the draft final Rail Plan and SEE. A notice of at least 15 days will be made to advertise the public hearing. The public hearing will take place during the comment period. People will be able to provide formal statements that are recorded by a court reporter. If the hearing is held in-person, it will be in facilities accessible to people with disabilities and near transit routes, if transit is available. Sign language and foreign language interpretation will be available if requested before the hearing. Written materials will be translated into other languages upon request. If there is a public hearing, it will be announced on the Rail Plan website, via social media, news release, and by sending an email to the distribution list.

### **Plan Adoption**

Adoption of the final Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 and potential SEE will occur approximately by January 2022.

1. **Sharing the final documents.** The WisDOT Secretary is the official designated authority approving the final Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 and its associated documents. The Rail Plan, SEE (if completed), and formal adoption documents will be available on the Rail Plan website or available upon request. Stakeholders and the public will be notified of the adoption by posting on the plan website, via social media, news release and email to the distribution list.
2. **Plan submittal to FRA.** The adopted Rail Plan and SEE (if completed) will be submitted to FRA for review. WisDOT will consider any comments or feedback provided.

This Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 public involvement plan has been customized to specifically focus on rail planning for freight, long-range passenger rail, commuter rail, and rail crossing safety. This draft public involvement plan is consistent with the following sources:

- The Rail Plan is one of the modal plans addressed in the Connect 2050 Public Involvement Plan (Feb. 2020 draft) (shortened to C2050 PIP in the table below).
  - <https://wisconsin.gov/Documents/projects/multimodal/c2050-pip.pdf>
- The Rail Plan is one of the modal plans cited in WisDOT's Public Involvement Plan for State-wide Long-Range Transportation Plans (Nov.2016) (shortened to State-wide LRTP PIP in the table below).
  - <https://wisconsin.gov/Documents/projects/multimodal/state-pip.pdf>
- Trans 400 – Wisconsin's administrative rule related to environmental analysis, including for system level long-range transportation plans of all modes. Primary focus is related to the SEE in Trans 400.04, 400.06, 400.08, 400.10; 400.11, and 400.12
  - [https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin\\_code/trans/400](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/trans/400)
- Federal Railroad Administration's guidance for developing state rail plans, which includes requirements from federal law and regulation: *State Rail Plan Guidance (September 2013)* (shortened to FRA Rail Plan Guide in the table below).
  - [https://railroads.dot.gov/sites/fra.dot.gov/files/fra\\_net/3382/Final\\_State\\_Rail\\_Plan\\_Guidance\\_September\\_2013.pdf](https://railroads.dot.gov/sites/fra.dot.gov/files/fra_net/3382/Final_State_Rail_Plan_Guidance_September_2013.pdf)
- All the federal requirements for state multi-modal long-range transportation planning and related outreach. These are generally located in various sections of 23 C.F.R. § 450.208. A comprehensive listing is available in the C2050 PIP.

**Table 1: Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 Public Involvement Strategies**

This table shows each public involvement strategy listed above and the requirements it is intended to meet.

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Designed to meet requirements in...</b>
Overall: Public involvement throughout the plan process	FRA Rail Plan Guide; C2050 PIP; Statewide LRTP PIP; Trans 400; 23 C.F.R. § 450.208
Overall: Consideration of Comments	FRA Rail Plan Guide; C2050 PIP; Statewide LRTP PIP; Trans 400; 23 C.F.R. § 450.208
Overall: Distribution List Development	FRA Rail Plan Guide; C2050 PIP; Statewide LRTP PIP; 23 C.F.R. § 450.208
Notice of Intent	Trans 400
Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050 Public Participation Plan	C2050 PIP; Statewide LRTP PIP; 23 C.F.R. § 450.208
Environmental Resource Agency Outreach	FRA Rail Plan Guide; C2050 PIP; Statewide LRTP PIP; Trans 400; 23 C.F.R. § 450.208
Involvement with Groups representing Environmental Justice and Title VI communities	FRA Rail Plan Guide; C2050 PIP; Statewide LRTP PIP; 23 C.F.R. § 450.208
Involvement with Industry stakeholders, especially those in the rail industry	FRA Rail Plan Guide; C2050 PIP; Statewide LRTP PIP; 23 C.F.R. § 450.208
Involvement during the pre-draft stage with Local and adjacent state governments, including those with special responsibility for rail	FRA Rail Plan Guide; C2050 PIP; Statewide LRTP PIP; 23 C.F.R. § 450.208
Consultation with Tribal Nations	C2050 PIP; Statewide LRTP PIP; 23 C.F.R. § 450.208
Development of an outreach contact list	FRA Rail Plan Guide; C2050 PIP; Statewide LRTP PIP; 23 C.F.R. § 450.208
Rail Plan Public Comment Period for draft plan	FRA Rail Plan Guide; C2050 PIP; Statewide LRTP PIP; 23 C.F.R. § 450.208
In-person or Virtual Meetings with the public during draft plan comment period	FRA Rail Plan Guide; C2050 PIP; Statewide LRTP PIP; 23 C.F.R. § 450.208
Meetings with stakeholder groups or at conferences during draft plan comment period	FRA Rail Plan Guide; C2050 PIP; Statewide LRTP PIP; 23 C.F.R. § 450.208
Notice to the FRA of Draft Plan Comment Period and Final Plan submittal to FRA	FRA Rail Plan Guide

Consideration of Comments (during draft and final draft phase)	FRA Rail Plan Guide; C2050 PIP; State-wide LRTP PIP; Trans 400; 23 C.F.R. § 450.208
Public comment period. Draft final plan	FRA Rail Plan Guide; C2050 PIP; State-wide LRTP PIP; Trans 400; 23 C.F.R. § 450.208.
Public Hearing. Draft final plan	Statewide LRTP PIP; Trans 400
Sharing the final documents	FRA Rail Plan Guide; C2050 PIP; State-wide LRTP PIP
Plan submittal to the Federal Railroad Administration	FRA Rail Plan Guide