

Appendix 6-A: Public Benefits of Passenger Rail

Benefits of Intercity Passenger Rail

Public investment in intercity passenger rail results in numerous significant benefits to the public. To achieve the full benefits of passenger rail, passenger rail services must be well integrated with the state's multimodal transportation system. This includes close coordination and integration with intercity feeder buses, local transit service, new commuter rail services, highways, and airports.

There are both user and non-user benefits of intercity passenger rail. User benefits are those that accrue to train passengers, such as shorter travel time and increased personal productivity, improved comfort and reduced transportation cost. In addition, rail travel can provide improved service levels (frequency and travel time) compared with other existing transportation services, which can reduce pressure for expenditures on other modes and create non-user benefits (benefits to members of the general public who are not using the train). Non-user benefits include decreased congestion on other modes, accident savings in other modes, economic benefits, and environmental benefits.¹

Potential benefits (both user and non-user) of intercity passenger rail in Wisconsin are listed below.

Mobility benefits

- Improves mobility in the state and region by providing a new intercity passenger option
- Provides an alternative to congested roads, generating travel time savings especially when connecting with major urban centers
- Provides in many cases a new travel option that can help business or leisure travelers avoid highway and airport delays
- Provides a travel option for those who cannot or choose not to drive or fly, increasing their mobility; this is especially true for Wisconsin's growing elderly population who find driving increasingly problematic
- Provides an alternative that is capable of operating in inclement weather when roads are closed and airline flights are delayed or cancelled
- Offers a safe travel option that can be cost- and time-competitive with driving and flying, especially for trips between 100 and 600 miles
- Provides mobility and economic development to smaller communities with little or no access to any other public transportation

¹ *Vision for the Future: U.S. Intercity Passenger Rail Network Through 2050*. National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission, Passenger Rail Working Group. December 2007.

Economic benefits

- Reduces businesses' transportation costs
- Allows business travelers to work productively while *en route* to their destination
- Facilitates an increase in tourism travel
- Increases employment and economic activity through the construction and ongoing operations and maintenance of the expanded intercity rail system
- Improves Wisconsin's economic competitiveness and supports the growth of high-tech and service sector jobs by helping to attract new businesses and skilled young professionals

In addition, according to a 2006 economic benefit study of the Midwest Regional Rail System, implementation of the Midwest Regional Rail System provides the following economic benefits to Wisconsin:

- \$1.80 in benefits for every \$1 invested in the system
- 9,600 new, permanent jobs created
- \$173 million in additional household income
- \$704 million in property value increases as a result of new development near stations

Environmental and livability benefits

- Promotes livable communities by expanding transportation options and encouraging economic development in communities, especially near stations. These factors are important to communities in meeting their planning and smart growth goals:
 - Development near stations provides an opportunity to accommodate multiple modes of transportation, and to design areas to be pedestrian and bicycle friendly
 - Along with strong planning and community initiative, passenger rail stations can encourage a mix of housing choices and new mixed-use commercial development where destinations (offices, stores, etc.) are within walking distance of homes
 - Stations in downtown areas can act as catalysts for downtown revitalization efforts
- Provides an opportunity to change land use and travel patterns that help improve air and water quality and community aesthetics in conjunction with local land use efforts and comprehensive planning
- Provides a transportation option that is environmentally friendly and has fewer carbon dioxide emissions per passenger-mile than private auto or airlines.
- Improves energy-efficiency of personal travel
- Contributes to efforts to improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through diversion of some auto and air traffic
- Helps reduce negative impacts to individuals and the economy of disruptions in energy supply or fuel price increases

Safety and security benefits

- Provides a safer travel option. Highway crashes cause human hardship and have severe economic consequences for states and the country. Intercity passenger rail, along with buses and airlines, have much lower death rates than automobiles per passenger-mile traveled
- Provides an alternative option for emergency response and evacuation