



Chapter 2: Development Process and Outreach

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Chapter 2: Development Process and Outreach

Introduction

Wisconsin has a long history of involvement in rail transportation, from planning and policy development to financial support. *Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030* reflects the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT's) significant investment and extensive resource commitment toward the state's rail transportation system. It is the result of a multi-year process that included the review and consideration of trends, federal actions and regional efforts affecting Wisconsin's transportation system; the adoption and incorporation of previous department planning and policy efforts; and the implementation of a concise public outreach process designed to identify statewide issues and needs, from the full range of stakeholder interests.

Trends

Several trends affect rail transportation in Wisconsin and have direct implications for rail mode policy development and implementation activities:

- Population changes
- Travel and land use pattern changes
- Modal choice
- Economic activity

[Chapter 3 Trends, in *Connections 2030*](#) highlights a series of trends impacting Wisconsin's transportation system.

Population changes

- Between 2000 and 2030, the state's population is predicted to increase by 22.0 percent.
- Between 2000 and 2030, Wisconsin's population of people 65 years and older is predicted to increase by 99.7 percent.
- Between 2000 and 2030, the average household size in Wisconsin is expected to decrease from 2.5 people (in 2000) to 2.3 people.

Travel and land use pattern changes

- Between 2007 and 2030, traffic on Wisconsin's roadways is expected to increase 34 percent.
- Total vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the state is estimated to be 80 billion miles in 2030.
- Truck VMT is expected to increase 64 percent between 2007 and 2030, while personal VMT is forecasted to increase 33 percent.
- From 1980 to 2006, the total number of roadway miles increased six percent.

- The 2000 U.S. Census revealed that the average travel time to work was 20.8 minutes for the 2.7 million people in Wisconsin's workforce.

Modal choice

- In 2010, more than 74 million trips in Wisconsin were completed using public transit.
- Ridership for Amtrak's *Hiawatha Service*, which operates between Chicago and Milwaukee, increased by 86 percent between 2000 and 2010.
- In 2007, more than 116 million pounds of cargo moved through Wisconsin's air carrier airports.

Economic activity

- The transportation system is and will continue to be vital to Wisconsin's economy.
- Low value, high volume commodities are typically transported by rail and are essential to the main industrial sectors of Wisconsin's manufacturing economy.
- Heavy machinery, auto assembly, and pulp and paper products are some of the state's key industrial sectors that are dependent upon rail to deliver high volume bulk raw commodities and finished products to domestic and foreign markets.
- Wisconsin businesses shipped more than 552 million tons of freight, valued at \$1.182 trillion in 2007.
- Wisconsin's freight railroads contributed:
 - \$392 million directly to the state's economy in 2006 through wages and retirement benefits to current and former railroad workers living in the state
 - Millions of dollars each year to the economy through investments, purchases and taxes

National/Federal Actions

The Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 and the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 were signed by President Bush in October 2008. The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act reflected some of the most aggressive language and federal requirements for states to undertake comprehensive state rail planning. The act also establishes an intercity passenger rail capital grant program for states. To qualify for new federal grants authorized through the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act, states are required to adopt a state rail plan.

These state rail plans must:

- Promote state policy involving freight and passenger rail transportation, including commuter rail operations
- Present priorities and strategies to enhance rail service in the state that benefits the public
- Serve as the basis for federal and state rail investments

State rail plans must be updated at least once every five years. *Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030* fulfills these federal requirements.

In addition to the funding under the Rail Safety Improvement Act, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, authorized in 2009, provided \$8 billion for passenger rail projects across the country.

Regional Efforts

Wisconsin, along with eight other Midwestern states and the Federal Railroad Administration, began investigating the concept of enhanced regional intercity passenger rail service in 1996 as part of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative. The goal of the initiative is to develop a passenger rail system that connects to multiple Midwest cities, and offers business and leisure travelers shorter travel times, additional train frequencies, and connections between urban centers and smaller communities. After extensive analysis, the states jointly proposed a regional intercity passenger rail system for the Midwest: the *Midwest Regional Rail System*.

Because of the department's 15 year commitment and involvement in this multi-state effort, the state's multimodal plan, *Connections 2030* and *Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030*, reflect and adopt the recommendations outlined in the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative and reflect them as part of this process.

In addition to these factors, department staff reviewed other planning-related documents developed by a range of stakeholder groups to ensure consistency between the state rail plan recommendations and those identified in each document.

Previous Department Planning and Policy Efforts

WisDOT has conducted and participated in several planning efforts that directly relate to rail transportation and the rail plan development process. These include:

- *Wisconsin Rail Issues and Opportunities Report* (2004)
- *Connections 2030* (2009)

Wisconsin Rail Issues and Opportunities Report (2004)

The *Wisconsin Rail Issues and Opportunities Report* discussed nine issues critical to Wisconsin's rail transportation future. The report documented the state's various rail system components, including the rail network, freight rail, intercity passenger rail, safety and legislative rail initiatives. The issues ranged from rail congestion and the movement of freight in Wisconsin, to safety and the transport of hazardous materials, along with rail corridor preservation. For each issue, an opportunity was defined to help WisDOT accomplish its mission of developing and maintaining a safe, efficient and balanced transportation system. The report concluded with a discussion of the emerging issues that may impact the future of Wisconsin railroads.

This early rail planning effort included a public involvement process designed to collect input from a broad based group of stakeholders including the general public, transportation interest groups, business and economic development representatives, environmental groups, community organizations, local governments, state and federal agencies, and minorities. These diverse groups of stakeholders contributed ideas that were used to shape and guide the *Wisconsin Rail Issues and Opportunities Report*, as well as the department's multimodal plan *Connections 2030*. They also were helpful in the early identification of potential issues for *Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030*.

Connections 2030

Adopted in 2009, *Connections 2030* establishes the state's multimodal transportation vision and identifies a series of policies and actions to achieve the vision. The long-range multimodal plan includes policies and actions related to freight rail, passenger rail and commuter rail. The policies and recommendations outlined in the plan were the result of an extensive outreach effort that included a telephone survey, meetings with stakeholders, targeted outreach, numerous public meetings and hearings statewide. From start to finish, over 80 meetings were held statewide. See Chapter 4: Public Involvement, of *Connections 2030* for more information.

In addition to reviewing previous department plans, staff also reviewed other state planning documents to ensure consistency with broader state and local planning recommendations.

Review and Comparison of Other Efforts that Impact Rail Planning

Wisconsin's local planning

As of January 1, 2010, all actions and decisions made by communities in Wisconsin must be consistent with an adopted local comprehensive plan (Section 66.1001, Wis. Stats.). While *Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030* does not include specific elements of individual community plans, the plan development process recognizes these efforts and incorporates community-level concerns identified during the public outreach efforts.

Community/MPO/RPC/tribal government plan review

The plan development process also included a review of rail-related recommendations developed by metropolitan planning organizations, regional planning commissions and tribal governments.

Wisconsin area commuter rail studies

WisDOT also reviewed the commuter rail recommendations released by the Dane County Transport 2020 report and the Kenosha-Milwaukee-Racine (KRM) Commuter Link Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Refer to Chapter 7: Commuter Rail, for more information.

Neighboring state rail plans

Many states have either completed or are in the process of completing state rail plans. WisDOT examined the available draft and adopted plans from neighboring states to identify actions that may affect Wisconsin. In addition, WisDOT reviewed other state rail plans to better understand how other states have developed their plans and met the state rail planning requirements identified in the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008.

Railroad business plans

Finally, WisDOT requested that each railroad operating in Wisconsin provide a copy of its most recent business plan. The intent was to gain a better understanding of current operations within the state and identify goals or challenges. WisDOT staff also met with individual railroad operators.

In addition to reviewing documents and incorporating the key factors as described previously, the rail plan development effort also includes a public outreach and participation process. This is aimed at ensuring that issues and needs identified in earlier efforts are still relevant, defining the appropriate scope of the plan, providing information to the public on the department's proposed recommendations, and obtaining feedback into the plan's content.

Rail Plan Public Outreach and Participation

A successful public involvement process informs, educates and ensures that the public has input into decisions that affect their quality of life. It provides participants with the information they need to take part in a meaningful way, and it communicates how their input influences decisions. A strong public involvement process is essential to creating a plan the public will support. WisDOT followed a balanced, three-phased plan development approach to provide the public opportunities to ask questions, review documents and offer feedback on the plan's content. The three phases included:

- Phase 1: Needs identification
- Phase 2: Draft plan review
- Phase 3: Final Plan

Phase 1: Needs identification

The outreach efforts during this phase focused on needs and issues identification. Efforts during this phase focused on sharing information on the proposed plan development, educating the public on the department's anticipated rail plan scope, and obtaining feedback on potential issues and needs to include in the draft plan for public review. To ensure that the department received the information necessary to complete the draft plan, the department:

- Published a public participation plan
- Launched a rail plan web site
- Administered a web-based questionnaire and telephone questionnaire
- Hosted a stakeholder workshop
- Conducted consultation and outreach with other key stakeholder groups

Wisconsin Rail Plan; public participation plan

To help the department organize the outreach effort, WisDOT developed a public participation plan: *Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030* Public Participation Plan. The public participation plan describes the public involvement activities WisDOT used during the development of the long-range rail plan. The plan details the goals and purpose of the outreach process as well as specifics such as type of events, locations, and the proposed development timeline. The plan also includes a defined consultation process with tribes, state and federal agencies, metropolitan planning organizations, and regional planning commissions. In addition, the public participation plan describes specific outreach activities to low income and minority populations, as well as people aged 65 years and older, and people with disabilities.

WisDOT followed the public participation requirements identified under the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). In addition, the plan was developed pursuant to the requirements of section 135 of title 23, United States Code; and considers the goals within other pertinent rail plans, including the national rail plan.

Respondents were selected using a targeted sampling strategy from areas with high proportions in each demographic group.

Approximately 50 percent of the respondents indicated living in a community that trains travel through. Of those that identified concerns, safety and noise were the most noted. The results indicate that most of the respondents across each demographic group would use passenger rail for trips over 200 miles. While respondents indicated a high level of support for expanding the state's passenger rail system, the personal importance attributed to passenger rail service was lower, this may be due, in part, to the limited service provided between Milwaukee and Chicago. Most participants, with the exception of the African American and urban low income members, indicated that they do not feel commuter rail service is very important to them personally. African American and urban low income participants indicated that they would be interested in this type of service.

Of those surveyed, lack of train service or a vehicle was generally identified as a barrier to using rail. Other barriers identified included lack of stops, lack of accommodations for people with disabilities and the general safety of train operations.

Freight rail was generally supported among those contacted; with some respondents indicating that the state should increase rail assistance so that more freight can be moved by rail.

For more information, see Appendix 2-B, *Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030* Environmental Justice Telephone Survey.

Tribal consultation

In developing the initial scope of the draft plan, department staff conducted outreach to the state's eleven tribes¹. Outreach included a presentation at the Tribal Transportation Conference held in March 2010, in Baraboo, Wisconsin. In addition, updates were provided at the Tribal Task Force meetings, and a consultation meeting was scheduled in conjunction with the normally scheduled Tribal Task Force meeting.

An executive order was issued calling for all state agencies to work cooperatively with Native American tribes on efforts that strengthen regional and statewide economies. In May 2005, WisDOT entered a first-of-its-kind Tribal Partnership Agreement with Wisconsin's 11 tribal governments that promotes communication and cooperation between the state and tribes on transportation issues. The agreement establishes a WisDOT Tribal Task Force comprised of WisDOT and tribal officials that serves as a forum to discuss transportation issues and policies impacting tribes.

The consultation meeting was held May 2010, in Keshena, Wisconsin. In addition to the sitting members of the Tribal Task Force, the tribal historic preservation officers were also invited. Representatives from six of the federally recognized tribes were in attendance, as well as department personnel from

¹ Tribes having a historic interest in Wisconsin include those currently located in the state, as well as tribes that may have lived in the state at one time.

WisDOTRegion offices. Discussion focused on several elements for WisDOT to be aware of and potentially address in the plan:

- Revitalization of rail lines from trails and the coordination expectations with the tribal governments, as well as potential negative impacts to the surrounding communities
- Abandoned rail lines and the lack of coordination or communication with the tribal governments regarding future uses of the corridors
- Cost of tickets and the likely inability of many in the lower and middle classes to be able to afford to travel by passenger rail
- Lack of freight and passenger rail service and the need for increased services in northern Wisconsin

For more information regarding the discussion, see Appendix 2-C, *Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030 Tribal Consultation Summary*. For more information see Chapter 12, Environmental Justice Analysis.

Environmental resource agency consultation

WisDOT held a consultation meeting with representatives of several environmental resource agencies. Those invited to participate are shown below; those followed by an asterisk participated in the meeting.

- *Federal Emergency Management Agency*
- *Federal Railroad Administration*
- *Federal Highway Administration*
- *Federal Transit Administration**
- *National Park Service*
- *Public Service Commission of Wisconsin**
- *US Army Corps of Engineers**
- *US Coast Guard-Eighth Coast Guard District*
- *US Department of Agriculture*
- *US Environmental Protection Agency**
- *US Fish and Wildlife Service*
- *USDA Forest Service*
- *WI Department of Administration**
- *WI Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection**
- *WI Department of Health Services**
- *WI Department of Natural Resources**
- *WI State Historical Society*

Wisconsin has 14 metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) that share responsibility for transportation planning in 17 metropolitan areas (urbanized area populations greater than 50,000). Metropolitan planning organizations are:

- Primarily comprised of local elected officials
- Local decision-making entities for transportation issues of a regional nature
- Federally designated

Wisconsin has nine regional planning commissions. All but five counties in the state (Columbia, Dodge, Jefferson, Rock, Sauk) are served by an RPC.

Regional planning commissions:

- Are formed by executive order of the governor
- Provide intergovernmental planning and coordination for the physical, social and economic development of a region
- Are primarily comprised of members typically appointed by county boards and the governor

Participants raised issues related to air quality, safety, siting of railroad facilities such as rail yards, and potential impacts to the adjacent communities. For more information on the environmental resource agency consultation, see Appendix 2-D, *Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030* Environmental Agency Consultation Summary and Chapter 11: System-Plan Environmental Evaluation.

Stakeholder workshop

In order to obtain feedback from specific rail stakeholder interests, the department hosted a workshop in Stevens Point in May 2010. Attendees included representatives from the railroad industry, environmental groups, local, state and federal government, special interests, and business and economic interests.

The participants discussed issues identified during previous public outreach activities and issues or concerns they felt were missing. Relying on the group's background and expertise, WisDOT staff worked with the participants to identify actions and opportunities to overcome the barriers and challenges of the implementation process. Refer to Appendix 2-E, *Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030* Stakeholder Workshop Summary, for more information related to the workshop.

MPO/RPC outreach

Wisconsin transportation planning is a partnership between the department, the 14 Metropolitan Planning Organizations and the eight Regional Planning Commissions. WisDOT works with these entities to ensure that statewide long range planning is consistent with urban and regional planning initiatives. Early outreach for the rail plan included briefings as part of the regularly scheduled quarterly meetings with the metropolitan planning organization and regional planning commission planning staff. In addition, updates and presentations to their committees and boards were made as requested.

Phase 2: Draft plan review

WisDOT released the final draft *Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030* and its System-plan Environmental Analysis (SEE) in November 2013. This was communicated via a legal notice and statewide news release. A public hearing was held in Madison on December 10, 2013, and the comment period remained open through December 31, 2013. The draft plan was posted on WisDOT's web site and hard copies were available for review at WisDOT Region Offices in Madison, Waukesha, La Crosse, Eau Claire, Superior, Rhinelander, Wisconsin Rapids and Green Bay, and at state depositories. During the comment period, the public had the opportunity to provide individual oral and written testimony and provide comments for the official record via mail, phone and email.

Phase 3: Final plan

Review and consideration of revisions to the draft rail plan, based on the comments received during the public comment period, are the culmination of a public involvement process that began with the development of *Connections 2030*. It continued with stakeholder feedback obtained during early development of *Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030*. More than 170 comments were submitted from 95 individuals and groups during the final comment period. The majority of these comments were general

in nature, indicating support for the plan without suggesting any major changes, or suggesting minor technical changes to the draft plan. A large majority of the comments suggesting changes reference intercity passenger rail. Other comments reference funding, economic development, and commuter rail. Based in part on this feedback, WisDOT staff made minor revisions to the draft plan to clarify wording and correct technical details. Comments suggesting the final plan be updated with more recent data were noted; these changes were not added to the final draft plan but will be considered during the development of the five-year update to *Wisconsin Rail Plan 2030*.

After final review of the remaining comments, there were several recommended revisions and changes. The revisions incorporated into the final plan are focused on two topic areas:

- Addition of language in several chapters to acknowledge increases in rail shipment of frac sand and oil and the impacts on the transportation system
- Clarification of language in Chapter 6 regarding intercity passenger rail corridors and options for intercity passenger rail service in the long-term (through the 2030 plan horizon)

Other final changes included minor editing and formatting revisions to ensure consistency and improve readability throughout the plan.