

SUPPORTING A PROPOSED EAU CLAIRE – BLACK RIVER FALLS-TOMAH AMTRAK SHUTTLE CONNECTION

WHEREAS, Passenger rail service, as part of an integrated multimodal transportation system, is increasingly being recognized as a critical choice for small, medium and large communities to provide reasonably priced, safe, accessible transportation to compliment other modes of transportation and for communities to be economically competitive and to be attractive to skilled talent; and,

WHEREAS, the West Central Wisconsin business community sees the value of passenger rail service as critical to efficient travel for employees, and allows for productive use of time during travel, and increases the attractiveness of West Central Wisconsin as a business location and tourism destination; and,

WHEREAS, since 1999 the West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition has worked to obtain passenger rail service for area communities including Hudson/River Falls, Baldwin, Menomonie and Eau Claire/Chippewa Falls and is currently developing a public-private partnership to establish an initial corridor between St. Paul and Eau Claire with future extension eastward to Milwaukee and Chicago; and,

WHEREAS, both the Wisconsin and Minnesota state rail plans include the West Central Wisconsin corridor in long-range plans for passenger rail service; and,

WHEREAS, Tomah currently has passenger rail service with the Amtrak Empire Builder train once daily in each direction on a route linking Tomah to the Wisconsin communities of La Crosse, Wisconsin Dells, Portage, Columbus and Milwaukee, as well as Chicago, Winona, Red Wing and Minneapolis-St. Paul in neighboring states. The Amtrak Empire Builder provides direct rail service from Tomah to 45 cities and towns all the way to the Pacific Northwest, and connections to more than 400 domestic and Canadian destinations; and,

WHEREAS, residents and visitors of West Central Wisconsin drive to Tomah to access the Empire Builder and the Amtrak national network because there is no direct dedicated shuttle connection from West Central Wisconsin and no intercity public bus service from Black River Falls to Tomah; and,

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, like 17 other U.S. states, has an operating contract with Amtrak to supplement service along the existing Chicago to Milwaukee route with 14 additional train departures, six days per week, 12 on Sunday, because travel utility and demand is best served with multiple frequencies (departures and arrivals) each day providing competitive travel service that prompts motorists to opt not to drive and expanding the existing transportation network between Milwaukee and Chicago; and,

WHEREAS, the departments of transportation for the states of Wisconsin and Minnesota are working with Amtrak on the Twin Cities Milwaukee Chicago (TCMC) project to consider adding a second daily route between St. Paul, Milwaukee and Chicago to serve the additional demand for passenger rail transportation in the corridor. With the implementation of this service there exists the opportunity to expand its usefulness by connecting communities via dedicated shuttle service; and,

WHEREAS, the inclusion of a direct shuttle service between the Chippewa Valley (including downtown Eau Claire), Black River Falls and the Tomah Amtrak Station in the TCMC project would significantly enhance the utility of these rail improvements for West Central Wisconsin, and would open up travel opportunities for residents and visitors and provide improved mobility for students and seniors to connect with Milwaukee/Chicago through Tomah, and who don't want to drive the 80 miles to access the service; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Eau Claire is constructing a new Transit Center in downtown Eau Claire. Connecting the shuttle service to the new Transit Center would be beneficial to travelers as it provides access to the national intercity rail network; and,

WHEREAS, the United States Federal government has appropriated approximately \$1.4 billion for rail-specific, competitive grants, that are available to states to implement passenger rail improvement projects; and,

WHEREAS, Eau Claire County and the communities in West Central Wisconsin are looking towards the benefits made possible by a better connected, more functional transportation network that includes more frequent passenger train departures, such as are being experienced by communities in 28 different Amtrak-state partnered passenger rail corridors that exist across the U.S.; and,

WHEREAS, implementation of a shuttle service to Tomah would be a step towards and be complementary to the future implementation of direct passenger rail service to West Central Wisconsin.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED; THAT Eau Claire County Board of Supervisors requests the State of Wisconsin work with the West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition, Amtrak, the Canadian Pacific Railroad, Minnesota Department of Transportation and other communities along the route to implement one additional passenger train service each day between Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul, via Tomah, and to include dedicated shuttle service between Tomah, Black River Falls and Eau Claire to meet the arrivals and departures of both the new train and the Empire Builder.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the County Clerk is directed to send a copy of this resolution to the state legislators and the county clerks who represent the West Central Wisconsin including Eau Claire, Chippewa, Dunn, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Jackson, and Monroe counties.

ADOPTED: May 5, 2020

Janet K. Loomis  
County Clerk

STATE OF WISCONSIN

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COUNTY OF EAU CLAIRE

I, Janet K. Loomis, County Clerk in and for said county, do HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted by the Eau Claire County Board of Supervisors at the meeting held on May 5, 2020.

Janet K Loomis

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County Clerk

