

SUPPORTING THE CREATION OF THE CHIPPEWA-ST. CROIX RAIL COMMISSION
WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES

WHEREAS, Eau Claire County has participated in efforts to expand passenger rail services into western Wisconsin and the Chippewa Valley along the I-94 corridor from St. Paul, Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, every day there are thousands of individuals who travel between the Twin Cities and the St. Croix Valley and the Chippewa Valley for purposes of commuting to work; conducting business; pursuing higher education; engaging in tourism, shopping, and recreation activities; and connecting to travel hubs for national and international travel; and

WHEREAS, both the Wisconsin State Rail Plan and the Minnesota State Rail Plan, federally mandated official transportation plans created by the respective states, include the Twin Cities-Eau Claire line as a planned future passenger rail route; and

WHEREAS, over the past several years, the West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition has worked to develop partners to create a public-private partnership to bring passenger rail service to the West Central Wisconsin area, including the Chippewa Valley and the St. Croix Valley. This coalition was initially formed out of the Momentum West economic development organization and has seen interest or involvement from the counties and municipalities in the I-94 corridor, including the counties of Eau Claire, Chippewa, Dunn, St. Croix and Pierce, and the municipalities of Hudson, Baldwin, New Richmond, River Falls, Menomonie, Eau Claire, Chippewa Falls, and Altoona; and

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Gateway Corridor Coalition, a similar predecessor initiative, was involved in the bi-state Gateway Corridor Study Alternative Analysis that showed promise for future public transportation in the Twin Cities-Eau Claire corridor; and

WHEREAS, the West Central Rail Wisconsin Coalition and its Passenger Rail Organizing Council has been working with Union Pacific Railroad, owner of the tracks, to implement passenger service, and Union Pacific Railroad has indicated that it will enter into a memorandum of understanding regarding service implementation upon satisfactory completion of an engineering study of the existing Union Pacific Railroad rail line to determine the need for capacity and capital improvements; and

WHEREAS, the continued planning and development of the rail corridor is critical to the transportation needs of the St. Croix Valley and the Chippewa Valley. It is necessary to have a multijurisdictional body independent of any one county or municipality to govern the implementation, creation, and continuation of passenger rail service through the multiple counties and municipalities that the proposed rail corridor will pass through to oversee the relationship between the private and public sector, coordinate guidelines for site selection and development of stations, apply for federal grant programs, coordinate with jurisdictions in the state of Minnesota, and coordinate with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the Federal government; and

WHEREAS, the multijurisdictional body or commission would need to be independent, but supported by the individual counties and municipalities to promote decisions that are independent and made for the best interest of the passenger rail corridor; and

1 WHEREAS, the purpose of the commission would be to advance the public interest by
2 pursuing the implementation of passenger rail service and other public transportation
3 improvements to serve the St. Croix Valley and the Chippewa Valley; and
4

5 WHEREAS, activities that the commission could participate in may include:
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- 7 • Identify the public benefits of passenger rail and other public transportation
8 improvements to connect the Chippewa/St. Croix region to the Twin Cities, as well as
9 Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago.
10
- 11 • Identify, support, and facilitate initiatives to implement passenger rail service,
12 including public-private partnerships, sponsors, operators, federal and state funding
13 opportunities, relationships among governments and stakeholders, feasibility studies,
14 and the like.
15
- 16 • Pursue opportunities for transit orientated development, value capture financing, and
17 other community-related benefits at station locations to ensure the fullest possible
18 economic benefits from service implementation.
19
- 20 • Foster cooperation among Wisconsin and Minnesota governments, agencies, and other
21 entities. Determine the long-term role of the commission, or other organization that
22 might be created to coordinate public involvement in the service, including any
23 legislative or other action that might be needed. Participate in determining the
24 appropriate project roles for this commission, state DOTs, counties and municipalities,
25 private partners and real estate developers, and advocacy or educational organizations
26 like the West Central Rail Coalition.
27
- 28 • Determine and coordinate zoning, environmental, safety, and other regulatory-related
29 requirements.
30
- 31 • Participate in current and future planning processes, including the Wisconsin and
32 Minnesota State Rail Plans, Federal Railroad Administration Midwest Corridor Study,
33 and the local MPO; and
34

35 WHEREAS, creation of a commission will require the individual counties and
36 municipalities to adopt a resolution committing to being a part of and agreeing to assist in the
37 development and creation of the commission and its by-laws, and committing to appointing the
38 appropriate individuals to serve on the commission; and
39

40 WHEREAS, initially, it would be beneficial if the counties and municipalities adopting a
41 resolution similar to this one, agreeing to participate in the creation of the Chippewa-St. Croix Rail
42 Commission, each appoint one representative to a committee to create rules and by-laws for the
43 commission and to recommend enabling resolutions and/or agreements for all participating
44 counties and municipalities. The West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition shall have at least 2
45 members appointed to the committee for the creation of the Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission;
46 and
47

1 WHEREAS, pursuant to Wisconsin Statutes Section 66.0301 "municipalities," including
2 counties, may enter into agreements for the purpose of intergovernmental cooperation, including
3 the development of joint transportation commissions.
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5 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Eau Claire County Board of
6 Supervisors supports the creation of the Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission, and agrees to
7 commit the necessary resources and individuals for the development of an intergovernmental
8 agreement and by-laws for the creation of a transportation commission that will oversee the
9 implementation, creation, and continuation of passenger rail service in the Chippewa Valley and
10 St., Croix Valley of Western Wisconsin.
11

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Eau Claire County commits to development of a
13 transportation rail commission upon the ratification of a resolution of commitment, the same or
14 similar to this resolution, by at least 8 of the 12 of the following governmental bodies: Eau Claire
15 County, Chippewa County, Dunn County, St. Croix County, and the municipalities of Eau Claire,
16 Chippewa Falls, Altoona, Menomonie, Baldwin, New Richmond, River Falls, and Hudson.
17

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the county clerk send a copy of this resolution to the
19 clerks of the afore-mentioned counties and municipalities.
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21 I hereby certify that the foregoing
22 correctly represents the action of the
23 Committee on Administration on
24 December 8, 2020 by a vote
25 of 5 for, and 0 against.
26

27 
28 Nick Smiar, Chair
29 Committee on Administration
30

31 TSJ/ljt

**APPROVED BY
CORPORATION COUNSEL
AS TO FORM**

**Reviewed by Finance Dept.
for Fiscal Impact**