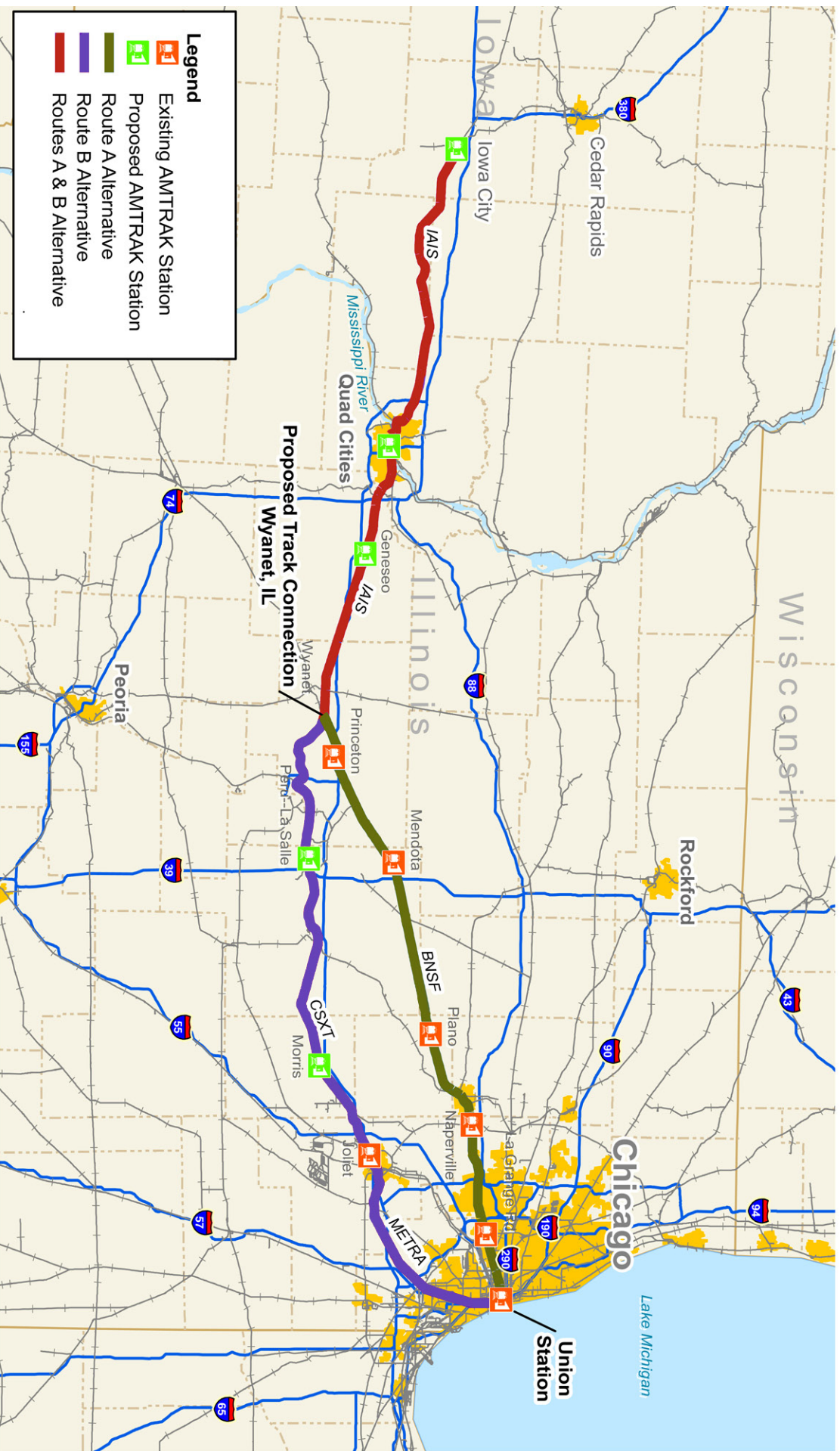


# Public Information Meeting

September 29, 2009

## Chicago to Iowa City Intercity Passenger Rail Service

# Chicago - Quad Cities - Iowa City Route Alternatives to Reestablish Service



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Environmental Assessment

The Illinois Department of Transportation (DOT) and Iowa DOT, in conjunction with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) are evaluating alternatives to reestablish passenger rail service between Chicago, Illinois, and Iowa City, Iowa, via the Quad Cities of Illinois and Iowa. The proposed passenger rail service would have two round trips per day (four passenger trains per day) from Chicago to Iowa City with a stop in the Quad Cities and other intermediate locations and would attract approximately 187,000 passengers per year. The Chicago to Iowa City passenger rail service would be part of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI), an initiative of nine Midwest states and Amtrak to establish an intercity passenger rail system in the Midwest. Chicago would be the hub of the MWRRI and a series of high speed and conventional speed rail corridors would provide land based connectivity with the major Midwest population centers. The Chicago to Iowa City passenger rail service would be one section of the Chicago to Omaha corridor and is planned for conventional speed (79 mile per hour).

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is a Tier 1 Service Level EA which addresses the service level issues that would be part of the initial operations of two round trip passenger trains per day. Future Tier 2 Project Level analyses would be prepared for specific project level activities required to implement the Chicago to Iowa City passenger rail service. These project level activities include the evaluation and selection of specific station locations and designs, identification and evaluation of specific track improvements, and evaluation of the location of specific construction activities such as sidings and new connecting track. The purpose for the proposed passenger rail service is to re-introduce passenger rail service in Iowa City and the Quad Cities to increase regional mobility, reduce roadway congestion, meet future travel demands, and provide an affordable modal option for the communities served.

In addition to the No-Build Alternative, Illinois DOT and Iowa DOT evaluated two different alternatives for providing passenger rail service from Chicago to Iowa City. Both alternatives would use a combination of existing passenger rail and freight rail alignments to provide passenger service. The Route A Alternative would connect Chicago's Union Station to Iowa City using rail lines owned by Amtrak, BNSF Railway Company (BNSF), and Iowa Interstate Railroad (IAIS). This alternative would require the construction of a new connection between the BNSF and IAIS rail lines near Wyanet, Illinois. The Route A Alternative would reestablish passenger rail service to Geneseo, Illinois; the Quad Cities (Moline, Illinois); and Iowa City, Iowa; and would provide expanded passenger service to the existing stations in La Grange Road, Naperville, Plano, Mendota, and Princeton, and Illinois. The Route B Alternative would connect Chicago's Union Station to Iowa City using tracks owned by Amtrak, Canadian National (CN), Metra, CSX Transportation (CSX), and IAIS. The Route B Alternative would not require any new connections. It would provide new passenger rail service to; Morris, LaSalle, Geneseo, Illinois; Quad Cities, Illinois; and Iowa City, Iowa; and would provide expanded passenger service to the existing station in Joliet, Illinois.

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The Route A Alternative would provide a shorter and faster route than the Route B Alternative, and because of the more competitive travel time, the Route A Alternative would attract a higher ridership than the Route B Alternative. Almost half of the Route A Alternative (110 miles out of a total of 219 miles) currently supports 79 mph intercity passenger service and would not require any improvements. Far less of the Route B Alternative (42 miles out of a total of 238 miles) currently supports passenger trains, which means that the Route B Alternative would require more improvements to the track structure and grade crossings than the Route A Alternative.

Both the Route A and Route B Alternatives would divert a substantial number of passengers from automobiles to the passenger trains, providing some congestion relief on the regional highway system. Both the Route A and Route B Alternatives would have an increase in rail traffic of four additional passenger trains per day, which would add to the existing train related noise and vibration effects. However, in several locations the track structure would be improved which would reduce the noise impact. In addition, improvements to the track in the Quad Cities area would allow for an increase in the train speed through the communities which would further reduce noise impacts. The warning systems at the at-grade crossings would be improved as needed by installing gates and flashing lights at public crossings and upgrading to constant time warning circuitry. This would allow communities to pursue quiet zones if the communities so desired. Illinois DOT and Iowa DOT selected the Route A Alternative as the preferred alternative since it requires fewer miles of track improvements, is a shorter and faster route, provides better ridership, has fewer adverse environmental impacts and provides for more environmental benefits than the Route B Alternative.

The full Environmental Assessment is available on the web at [www.chicagotoiowacity.com](http://www.chicagotoiowacity.com). The Illinois and Iowa departments of transportation are soliciting comments on the document during the comment period which ends on **October 15, 2009**. Comments may be provided to either George Weber, Bureau of Railroads Bureau Chief, Illinois Department of Transportation or Tamara Nicholson, Rail Transportation Director, Iowa Department of Transportation at the addresses below.

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