



Appendix D

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

MARCH 2015

Public Involvement

This Appendix includes the following documents and summaries related to public involvement in the Stat Rail Plan.

- Public Involvement Plan
- Open House #1 Summaries
- Open House #2 Summaries
- Public Hearing Transcript



Public Involvement Plan

OCTOBER 2014

CONTACT LIST

MnDOT

Dave Christianson, Project Manager

Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations

dave.christianson@state.mn.us

651-366-3710

Greg Ruhland, Marketing Coordinator

Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations

gregory.ruhland@state.mn.us

651-366-3649

Consultant Team

Andreas Aeppli, Project Manager

Cambridge Systematics, Inc.

aaeppli@camsys.com

617-234-0433

Ashley Ver Burg, Public Involvement Task Lead

Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.

ashley.verburg@kimley-horn.com

651-643-0432

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTACT LIST	I
TABLE OF CONTENTS	II
1.0 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE	1
2.0 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND INTENDED OUTCOMES.....	2
3.0 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS	3
Project Management Team	3
Rail Stakeholders.....	3
4.0 AUDIENCES	4
5.0 OUTREACH TECHNIQUES.....	5
Public Open House Meetings – Statewide.....	5
Passenger Rail Forum Meetings.....	5
CTS Freight and Logistics Symposium.....	5
Targeted Meetings.....	5
6.0 PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS	9
7.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SCHEDULE.....	10
8.0 EVALUATION OF EFFORTS.....	11

1.0 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to update the 2010 Minnesota Comprehensive Freight and Passenger Rail Plan. The 2010 Rail Plan included long-term visions, goals, and objectives, as well as a rail system assessment and inventory that are still relevant today. This update will focus on refining needs identified in the 2010 Rail Plan and developing new content to address changes that have occurred over the past five years.

In September 2012 the Minnesota GO 50-Year Vision for Transportation was adopted. This long-range transportation vision is complemented by the 20-year Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan. Together, these two documents provide direction for each of the state's modal system plans, which includes a Statewide Rail Plan. In September 2013, the Federal Railroad Administration adopted new State Rail Plan Guidance. This guidance will be used to ensure the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan update is compliant with the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008. In addition to addressing these policy changes, the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan update will take into consideration major initiatives, demand for rail service, the Minnesota passenger rail system, and financing Minnesota's rail system.

The purpose of the Public Involvement Plan is to provide an overview of the proposed public involvement strategy, including roles and responsibilities, goal and objectives, activities and outcomes. The PIP is, however, a living document. As the planning process proceeds, changes to the public involvement strategy may be made in response to changing needs, views, or priorities. Rail stakeholders will be especially important in providing insight on these items. In addition, results from the public involvement activities will be added to the document as appendices. At the end of the planning process, the PIP will serve as a full record of stakeholder and public involvement in the development of the final plan report.

2.0 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

The overall goals and objectives of the engagement process are to:

- **Create opportunities for involvement**, focusing on the specific stakeholder groups including but not limited to private industry, public agencies, advocacy organizations, local and regional officials
- **Provide opportunities for education and information** about the state's rail system to members of the general public, and solicit feedback on items of general interest
- **Use the input to identify opportunities** within the state and to guide the development of the Minnesota Department of Transportation's vision for the statewide rail system
- **Integrate and coordinate stakeholder and public involvement** with technical tasks and timelines in a meaningful way

The intended outcome is that stakeholders have actively participated in the project process and assisted MnDOT in creating an overall plan that is implementable.

3.0 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Project Management Team

The Project Management Team will comprise members from MnDOT and the Consultant Team who will guide development of the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan. The purpose of the PMT is to provide guidance and review of draft and final policies, strategies and performance metrics associated to the development of the Plan; and to facilitate coordination and partnership in implementing future rail projects. The PMT will meet six times throughout the planning process on a monthly basis. Members are expected to facilitate communication back to the groups they represent. PMT members are listed in **Table 1**.

Table 1: PMT Membership

ORGANIZATION	MEMBERSHIP
MnDOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dave Christianson• Tim Spencer• Dan Krom• Peter Dahlberg• Praveena Pidaparathi
Cambridge Systematics, Inc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Andreas Aeppli• Elaine McKenzie• Marc Cutler
Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brian Smalkoski• Ashley Ver Burg

Rail Stakeholders

Rail system stakeholders will be engaged throughout the project at key decision points to provide input on Plan development for consideration by the PMT. In lieu of traditional policy and technical committees, stakeholders will be meaningfully engaged at three points in a workshop format to:

- Remain informed of Plan progress
- Provide input on draft Plan
- Identify rail system needs to be considered

Methods used to engage stakeholders are outlined in the **Outreach Techniques** section of this PIP.

4.0 AUDIENCES

MnDOT has a long-standing commitment to public and stakeholder participation through the Hear Every Voice program. In accordance with Hear Every Voice guidance, MnDOT strives to reach underserved populations such as ethnic or racial minority groups, low wage earners, non-English speakers, elderly, youth, and persons with disabilities within any potential group audience. For purposes of this planning process, there are two main stakeholder groups.

- **Rail Stakeholders:** A key stakeholder is generally defined as a person, group, or organization with a specific interest in rail operations (i.e. financial, economic, etc.) These entities will be informed of plan progress, provide input on the draft plan, and identify rail system needs to be considered. A comprehensive list of stakeholders will be developed in coordination with MnDOT project leadership and committee members early in the planning process. Subsets of these broader stakeholder groups may be convened to discuss common issues, or in one-on-one meetings to discuss specifics or potentially sensitive information.
- **General Public:** The interest of a member of the general public may be less specific than that of a defined stakeholder, but is no less important. An average citizen with any level of interest will have the opportunity to learn about rail and why it's important, and provide input into the planning process.

It is understood that not every stakeholder or member of the general public shares the same amount of interest and commitment to the planning process, and as a result there will be varying levels of involvement. A number of outreach techniques will be used throughout plan development and are identified in the following sections.

5.0 OUTREACH TECHNIQUES

The core public outreach techniques utilized for the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan are described below. Each activity along with target audience, purpose, tools, timing, and communication method is summarized in **Table 2**.

Public Open House Meetings – Statewide

Target Audience: Rail Stakeholders, General Public

Two rounds of open houses will be held to engage the public. The first round of open houses will occur in October and November 2014 and the second round of open houses will occur in January 2015. The purpose of the first round of open houses is to introduce and educate attendees on the State Rail Plan and provide opportunities to influence plan development. Throughout the second round of events, a draft of the Plan will be shared with attendees and there will be a limited opportunity to influence the final plan. A summary of the draft plan will be made available online to the public prior to the second round of open houses. Communities will be notified by MnDOT of the rail plan and may invite the team to present in their communities. Potential locations include Rochester, Duluth, Winona, Mankato, Albert Lea, St. Cloud, Fargo/Moorhead, Eau Claire, LaCrosse, and the Twin Cities Metro.

Passenger Rail Forum Meetings

Target Audience: Rail Stakeholders

Following the adoption of the 2010 Rail Plan, Minnesota rail stakeholders remained engaged in rail planning issues through the formation of an Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation Forum. The Passenger Rail Forum meets on the first Monday of every month. For this update to the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan, the PRF will be engaged at two points in Plan development through targeted workshops. The purpose of these workshops will be to inform stakeholders of Plan progress, gain stakeholder input on the draft Plan, and gain input on rail system needs to be considered.

Workshops will aim to occur at the following PRF meetings:

- November 3, 2014
- January 5, 2015

CTS Freight and Logistics Symposium

Target Audience: Rail Stakeholders

MnDOT and the Center for Transportation Studies will hold a Freight and Logistics Symposium in December 2014. Relevant items from the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan will be presented at this event.

Targeted Meetings

Target Audience: Rail Stakeholders

Up to 6 meetings will be facilitated with individual high-level industry leaders throughout the state to discuss general industry needs and issues important to Plan development. It is anticipated that one-on-one discussion with rail

stakeholders will produce the most informative results. Targeted stakeholder meetings that have been identified include the Midwest Shippers Association, the Minnesota Regional Railroad Association, the Metropolitan Council Transportation Advisory Board, and the Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee. Additional stakeholders will be identified as the project evolves, and as needs for specific input are recognized.

Table 2: Summary of Engagement Techniques

ACTIVITY	TARGET AUDIENCE	PURPOSE	ANTICIPATED TOOLS	TIMING	LOGISTICS
Public Open Houses (Round 1)	General public and stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce/educate on State Rail Plan Provide opportunity to influence Plan development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation boards with simple text, maps, and graphics (up to 10) Summary handout (1) PowerPoint presentation 	October/November 2014	Preliminary locations include: Eau Claire, La Crosse, Winona, Rochester, Albert Lea, Mankato, St. Cloud, Duluth, Fargo, Twin Cities
Public Open Houses (Round 2)	General public and stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share draft Plan Provide limited opportunity to influence final Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation boards with simple text, maps, and graphics (up to 10) PowerPoint presentation 	January 2015	Draft plan will be made available online prior to open houses
Passenger Rail Forum Meeting (Workshop 1)	Rail stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate information gathering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agenda PowerPoint presentation Facilitated discussion 	November 2014	Coordinate agenda time with Dan Krom
Passenger Rail Forum Meeting (Workshop 2)	Rail stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Plan priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agenda PowerPoint presentation Facilitated discussion 	January 2015	Coordinate agenda time with Dan Krom
CTS Freight and Logistics Symposium	Freight and rail policy makers, industry leaders, and operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate information gathering Establish Plan priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agenda PowerPoint presentation Facilitated discussion 	December 2014	Coordinate with CTS

ACTIVITY	TARGET AUDIENCE	PURPOSE	ANTICIPATED TOOLS	TIMING	LOGISTICS
Targeted Meetings	High-level rail industry leaders and rail associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss general industry needs and issues important to Plan development • Gather data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda • Summary 	October, November, and December 2014	Potential meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midwest Shippers Association • Metropolitan Council TAB • MN Regional Railroad Association • Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee

6.0 PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS

Multiple means will be used to distribute information about the Plan and provide notice for upcoming meetings and other opportunities for input:

- **Rail Stakeholder List:** Rail stakeholders, those with specific interests and stakes in Minnesota’s economic future, will be critical partners in this planning process. Contacts are documented in an internal MnDOT Rail stakeholder list and classified into three tiers based on profile. This list is maintained by MnDOT and will be used to provide Plan updates and invitations to engage in meetings and online activities.
- **MnDOT Email List:** Notices about the planning process and opportunities for engagement will be distributed via MnDOT’s Constant Contact email list designated for “Minnesota freight, rail and waterways updates.”
- **Social Media:** Social media will be used to notice meetings and provide updates on the planning process. The project will rely on existing MnDOT social media outlets, with primary focus on the Minnesota GO Facebook page. Other outlets may include the general MnDOT YouTube channel, Facebook, and Twitter accounts. LinkedIn may also be used to target a more rail-specific audience. MnDOT staff will be responsible for posting content, in coordination with the consultant.
- **Website:** MnDOT will house and maintain a Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan website. The website will contain updates on the planning process, ways to engage and provide feedback on Plan development, and links to download draft and final Plan content.
- **Press Release:** A standard press release will be drafted and distributed by MnDOT media contacts prior to each open house and to communicate key milestones in plan development (including announcement of the final plan).

7.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SCHEDULE

The general schedule for implementing the techniques listed in **Section 5.0** is presented below in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Week by Week Meeting Schedule

	2014				2015		
	September	October	November	December	January	February	
	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23	
Rail Plan							
Coordination Call (bi-weekly)							
PMT (monthly)							
Open Houses (2 rounds x9)			Round 1		Round 2		
Stakeholder Committees/Workshops (x5)			*	*	*		
Targeted Stakeholder Meetings (x6)							
Other Committees							
Passenger Rail Forum (monthly)			*		*		
Governor's Rail Summit (December)							
CTS Freight & Logistics Symposium/Summit				*			

MN Freight
Advisory
Committee

8.0 EVALUATION OF EFFORTS

Specific techniques will be evaluated by staff periodically. Evaluation of techniques will be based on the following (example) criteria:

Quantitative:

- How many people attended events? What was the survey response rate?
- How many additional meetings (local stakeholder meetings, presentations)?
- What was the geographic representation of attendees/responses?
- How many people opened email messages?
- How many people interacted with the social media accounts?

Qualitative:

- What kind of feedback was received on the stakeholder forums/public open houses?
- Have stakeholders expressed any particular challenges regarding their participation?
- Have multiple modes/geographic areas been represented?

The qualitative measures will be summarized in meeting summaries, which will be drafted following each stakeholder forum and open house and submitted to MnDOT staff for review. The qualitative measures will be discussed at the first team meeting after the open houses or other stakeholder meetings.

Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan

OPEN HOUSE ROUND 1 SUMMARY – DULUTH, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan was held in Duluth, MN on Monday, November 17, 2014 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM at the Duluth Depot. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, comment forms, and project handouts. The open house was advertised in various local media outlets and included television coverage. The purpose of the open house was to introduce content and educate attendees on the MN Statewide Rail Plan and provide opportunities for participants to influence Plan development.



Open House participation included:

- 29 attendees signed-in
- 10 attendees filled out comment forms

Comments

Participants were asked to provide comments on Minnesota's rail improvement needs, passenger rail planning, and any other feedback. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** A variety of suggestions were mentioned by respondents to improve existing rail operations, including more double tracking at bottleneck points and increasing rail car quantities so more commodities can be transported. Safety was a major concern, and many respondents desired track improvements, better road-rail intersection safety, and new rail bypasses at busy roadways to avoid train blockages. Other recommended improvements included developing freight rail beltlines around population centers to increase speed, and building new sidings on existing lines for safety and speed purposes.
- **Passenger Rail:** Many respondents were in support of passenger rail expansion service in Minnesota and across the Midwest. In addition to questions regarding the proposed Northern Lights Express (NLX) high speed rail between Duluth and Minneapolis, respondents desired passenger rail development to Mankato, Northfield, Chicago, Des Moines, and Omaha. Several comments requested studying the feasibility to expand NLX to Thunder Bay, Ontario. Some desire to terminate NLX in Superior rather than in Duluth was raised. Some were concerned about the lack of mutual support for passenger rail with surrounding states like Wisconsin. Overall, most in attendance wanted to move the timetable for passenger rail development forward.
- **General:** A desire to establish more commuter rail and LRT in larger Minnesota cities that are not Minneapolis or St. Paul was raised. Other comments received mentioned a desire to study driver behavior during rail blockages and have BNSF logistics work more efficiently to avoid the long blockages in the first place.

Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan

OPEN HOUSE ROUND 1 SUMMARY – EAU CLAIRE, WI

A public open house for the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan was held in Eau Claire, WI on Thursday, November 6, 2014 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM at the Chippewa Valley Technical College. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, comment forms, and project handouts. Respondents were of all ages and ranged from retirees to current students. The open house was advertised in several Eau Claire news outlets, including local television coverage. The purpose of the open house was to introduce content and educate attendees on the MN Statewide Rail Plan and provide opportunities for participants to influence Plan development.



Open House participation included:

- 98 attendees signed-in
- 10 attendees filled out comment forms

Comments

Participants were asked to provide comments on Minnesota's rail improvement needs, passenger rail planning, and any other feedback. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** When asked what improvements attendees recommended for Minnesota's State Rail Plan, respondents most-frequently identified passenger rail as a need. Many respondents noted their interest to take a passenger train to the Twin Cities instead of driving to avoid parking & traffic woes. Regarding freight rail improvements, respondents desired expanding capacity for agriculture and shipping purposes, as well as adding passenger service. Several respondents raised questions regarding the large increase in freight traffic, and what MnDOT was doing to mitigate the delay issues.
- **Passenger Rail:** All ten comments received mentioned support and desire to add passenger rail service between Eau Claire and the Twin Cities. Many attendee questions were about the logistics of the potential passenger service, such as the projected cost, timeline, projected ridership, federal requirements, and MnDOT-WisDOT cooperation. A couple questions were raised in regards to cost and travel time comparisons with interstate highway travel. Several respondents also noted interest in adding passenger rail service to Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago in addition to service to the Twin Cities. Interest was also raised in extending local service to Chippewa Falls, Menomonie, and Hudson. A few questions were raised in regards to the proposed Zip Rail line from Rochester to the Twin Cities, and the costs associated with the project. Other comments received

included requests to allow roll-off bicycle access on passenger trains and to sell frequent riders passes for off-hours travel.

- **General:** The level of interest at this open house was very high in comparison to other open houses in Minnesota. Many respondents listed how many times they traveled to the Twin Cities to work, shop, or use the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. Most respondents were extremely thankful for Minnesota's engagement with west-central Wisconsin and desired an accelerated timetable for adding passenger rail service to the area from the Twin Cities.

Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan

OPEN HOUSE ROUND 1 SUMMARY – MANKATO, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan was held in Mankato, MN on Thursday, November 13, 2014 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM at the Mankato Intergovernmental Center. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, comment forms, and project handouts. The purpose of the open house was to introduce content and educate attendees on the MN Statewide Rail Plan and provide opportunities for participants to influence Plan development.



Open House participation included:

- 17 attendees signed-in
- 7 attendees filled out comment forms

Comments

Participants were asked to provide comments on Minnesota's rail improvement needs, passenger rail planning, and any other feedback. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** When asked what improvements attendees recommended for Minnesota's State Rail Plan, respondents frequently requested track safety and rail bridge improvements, examination of freight bottleneck areas, and additional crossing signage. Some respondents noted a desire to return freight movements to the original 65 mph, as well as better synchronization between Short Line railroads and Class 1 railroads. Those in attendance were also curious about how many rail cars carried silica sand or crude oil through Mankato. Other recommended improvements included disclosing freight commodity information to the towns that rail cars pass through and more rail emergency training for local fire departments.
- **Passenger Rail:** Respondents were very curious about passenger rail corridors not only to Mankato but also around the state. Questions about the proposed Zip Rail line, current Northstar commuter rail, and the Red Rock Corridor were raised in addition to questions about a planned Mankato-Twin Cities passenger rail line. Most respondents were in support of passenger rail development in the state, but some concerns were raised about the negative economic impact that would occur if the Zip Rail line did not meet ridership projections.
- **General:** Other comments received included questions about the federal funding process and how improvements are negotiated with freight rail companies. One respondent noted the importance of the private enterprise in Class 1 railroads, and suggested focusing on improving the state's short lines. A few requests were made to encourage freight companies to ship more sand and gravel, rather than oil, through the area.

Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan

OPEN HOUSE ROUND 1 SUMMARY – NORTHFIELD, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan was held in Northfield, MN on Thursday, October 16, 2014 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM at the Carleton College Great Hall. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, comment forms, and project handouts. The open house was advertised in the local Northfield newspaper. It directly followed a Regional Leaders Meeting concerning passenger rail between Northfield and the Twin Cities. The purpose of the open house was to introduce content and educate attendees on the MN Statewide Rail Plan and provide opportunities for participants to influence Plan development.



Open House participation included:

- 19 attendees signed-in
- 10 attendees filled out comment forms

Comments

Participants were asked to provide comments on Minnesota's rail improvement needs, passenger rail planning, and any other feedback. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** When asked what improvements attendees recommended for Minnesota's State Rail Plan, respondents most-frequently identified passenger rail as a need. Other recommended improvements included expanding system capacity, upgrading rail for increased speed, and implementing a gas tax to fund passenger rail.
- **Passenger Rail:** Eight out of ten comment forms included support for passenger rail, making this the most-commonly heard theme at the Northfield open house. In addition, the majority of questions asked following the open house presentation pertained to passenger rail. Support was expressed for a Twin Cities – Northfield connection and a Twin Cities – Milwaukee – Chicago connection. Attendees expressed interest in forming a local coalition in support of passenger rail between Northfield and the Twin Cities. It was noted that the city of Northfield is actively working on a historic rail depot relocation project.
- **General:** Other comments received included requests to develop a rail system that supports renewable energy sources, mitigate noise impacts in Northfield by implementing quiet zones, and grant rail contracts to worker-owned cooperative businesses.

Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan

OPEN HOUSE ROUND 1 SUMMARY – RED WING, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan was held in Red Wing, MN on Wednesday, November 12, 2014 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM at Red Wing City Hall. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, comment forms, and project handouts. The open house was advertised in local Red Wing news outlets. The purpose of the open house was to introduce content and educate attendees on the MN Statewide Rail Plan and provide opportunities for participants to influence Plan development.

Open House participation included:

- 26 attendees signed-in
- 5 attendees filled out comment forms

Comments

Participants were asked to provide comments on Minnesota's rail improvement needs, passenger rail planning, and any other feedback. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** Respondents were interested in reviewing the safety standards of existing track, as well as improving safety standards for rail cars. Concerns were raised over rail-to-truck freight transfers and oil tanker movements in small towns along the Mississippi River in southeastern Minnesota. One respondent suggested developing a new rail system to the west that could be closer to agriculture. Respondents expressed frustration with the current Amtrak delays and asked MnDOT to be more proactive in addressing those concerns. When asked what improvements attendees recommended for Minnesota's State Rail Plan, several respondents asked about MnDOT's involvement in defining abandoned rail right-of-way acquisition tactics and asked if redlines would be available to the public from the 2010 Plan. Respondents were also curious about the rail advocacy statement and the timetable for updated data for the 2015 State Rail Plan.
- **Passenger Rail:** Support for further passenger rail development was mixed, with respondents questioning capital costs and realistic ability to develop high speed rail on the tight curves along the Mississippi River corridor. Support for Zip Rail development between Rochester and the Twin Cities was also mixed, with supporters slightly outweighing opponents. Attendees desired transparency in the Zip Rail development process, and some expressed interest in stops near Cannon Falls. Widespread support was expressed in improving existing service, reducing delays, and increasing speeds on the current Amtrak Empire Builder route.
- **General:** Lake City Engineer Andru Peters displayed a three-page document at the meeting that illustrated requested changes for the State Rail Plan draft. One person in attendance was worried about the boom and bust rail cycle and its negative impact to the local towns. One respondent not in attendance cited frustration via email with the advertising efforts for the Open House.

Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan

OPEN HOUSE ROUND 1 SUMMARY – ST. CLOUD, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan was held in St. Cloud, MN on Wednesday, November 5, 2014 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM at the St. Cloud City Hall. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, an online survey, comment forms, and project handouts. The purpose of the open house was to introduce content and educate attendees on the MN Statewide Rail Plan and provide opportunities for participants to influence Plan development.



Open House participation included:

- 19 attendees signed-in
- 2 attendees filled out comment forms

Comments

Participants were asked to provide comments on Minnesota’s rail improvement needs, passenger rail planning, and any other feedback. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** One participant noted that scheduling improvements are needed to reduce train congestion. Questions were raised regarding double-tracking projects and rail car upgrades in Minnesota.
- **Passenger Rail:** Support was expressed for both passenger rail service and a Northstar expansion between St. Cloud and the Twin Cities. The question was raised as to how this would impact other modes of travel, especially air travel to and from St. Cloud.
- **General:** Other comments received included the importance of recognizing the property value and quality life impacts of rail in St. Cloud.

Questions

In addition to the written and verbal comments summarized above, participants asked questions during the Question and Answer period.

- **Are there plans to turn rail bank trails back into active rail corridors?** MnDOT is not aware of any plans to re-active rail service on any state rail bank corridors.
- **What is the status of requirements for railroads to upgrade cars transporting crude?** The United States Department of Transportation is considering rules to phase out some old tank cars hauling hazardous materials.

Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan

OPEN HOUSE ROUND 1 SUMMARY – SAINT PAUL, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan was held in Saint Paul, MN on Monday, November 10, 2014 from 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM at the State Office Building. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, comment forms, and project handouts. The open house directly followed a standing Passenger Rail Forum meeting concerning passenger rail improvements throughout Minnesota. The purpose of the open house was to introduce content and educate attendees on the MN Statewide Rail Plan and provide opportunities for participants to influence Plan development.



Open House participation included:

- 13 attendees signed-in
- 1 attendee filled out comment forms

Comments

Participants were asked to provide comments on Minnesota's rail improvement needs, passenger rail planning, and any other feedback. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** Railroad workers in attendance emphasized the importance of multimodal connections between rail and road. Respondents requested that the Freight Rail Economic Development Study be incorporated into the Minnesota State Rail Plan to advance recommendations from that report. Other suggestions included contacting farmer groups for stakeholder input and characterizing congestion issues at Hoffman junction as the number of trains traveling daily instead of the percentage of the nation's train traffic.
- **Passenger Rail:** Multiple respondents cited the importance of the East Metro Rail Capacity study and its guidance in benefiting both passenger and freight rail. In addition, many supported passenger rail service and the importance of paying attention to Baaken oil shipment congestion.
- **General:** Other comments received included compliments on the public engagement process and a question regarding data presented at the open house. The project team is in the process of updating data for the 2015 plan. Figures provided at the open house include both numbers from the 2010 plan and new data that has become available since then.

Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan

OPEN HOUSE ROUND 1 SUMMARY – MOORHEAD, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan was held in Moorhead, MN on Monday, November 24, 2014 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM at the Hjemkomst Center. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, comment forms, and project handouts. The purpose of the open house was to introduce content and educate attendees on the MN Statewide Rail Plan and provide opportunities for participants to influence Plan development.



Open House participation included:

- 14 attendees signed-in
- 3 attendees filled out comment forms

Comments

Participants were asked to provide comments on Minnesota’s rail improvement needs, passenger rail planning, and any other feedback. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** Rail safety improvement was the most commonly raised topic during the open house discussion, as well as the most frequented topic listed in comment cards. Respondents were concerned with recent increases in freight traffic and speeds in urban areas. They also were curious about the safety differences between oil shipments in freight trains and pipelines. Other comments were based on agricultural shipping, rail design standards, and track upgrade timelines.
- **Passenger Rail:** Many respondents desired more reliable Empire Builder Amtrak service in both directions and were frustrated with its current unreliable state. Some respondents requested statewide expansion of passenger rail, but most comments revolved around Amtrak viability.
- **General:** Respondents also asked questions regarding Baaken and Canadian oil shipments and their association with refineries. Several respondents were concerned with rail accidents in urban areas, and desired more involvement from rail companies & MnDOT to prevent potential disasters.

Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan

OPEN HOUSE ROUND 1 SUMMARY – WINONA, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan was held in Winona, MN on Tuesday, November 25, 2014 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM at the Winona City Hall. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, comment forms, and project handouts. The open house was advertised in several Winona news outlets and on a local radio station. The purpose of the open house was to introduce content and educate attendees on the MN Statewide Rail Plan and provide opportunities for participants to influence Plan development.

Open House participation included:

- 12 attendees signed-in
- 0 comment forms completed

Comments

Participants were asked to provide comments on Minnesota's rail improvement needs, passenger rail planning, and any other feedback. The following summarizes participant responses through the verbal conversations and question and answer at the open house.

- **Rail Improvements:** Safety and shipping capacity were frequently raised topics during the open house discussion. Several respondents listed rail safety concerns at localized grade crossings, as well as the lack of emergency vehicle access to potential rail crash sites. Regarding funding mechanisms, a few respondents suggested a diesel rail fuel tax to fund rail improvements. Other related comments and questions centered on potential CSX/CP merger, pipeline & freight oil shipping correlation, and double tracking.
- **Passenger Rail:** Various comments were raised in regards to passenger rail for both Amtrak and potential regional passenger rail development. It was noted that many students from the Chicago area take the Empire Builder to Winona for college, and bottlenecks were delaying many trains in both directions. There was a desire to build the proposed Zip Rail from St Paul to Rochester, and in the long term, extend the line to Winona and La Crosse en route to Milwaukee & Chicago. Participants were in support of increased Amtrak funding and reliability.
- **General:** Several participants cited major environmental concerns with a potential future rail accident along the Mississippi River corridor and nearby Prairie Island nuclear power plant. Other participants asked about permitting processes for rail siding additions and new rail inspector credibility.

Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan

OPEN HOUSE ROUND 1 SUMMARY – WILLMAR, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan was held in Willmar, MN on Monday, December 8, 2014 from 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM at the MnDOT District 8 Headquarters. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, comment forms, and project handouts. The purpose of the open house was to introduce content and educate attendees on the MN Statewide Rail Plan and provide opportunities for participants to influence Plan development.



Open House participation included:

- 15 attendees signed-in
- 4 attendees filled out comment forms

Comments

Participants were asked to provide comments on Minnesota's rail improvement needs, passenger rail planning, and any other feedback. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** Most comments and questions revolved around freight improvements. Several respondents noted the continued importance of the proposed Willmar Wye project. Some noted concerns about recent rail congestion and the corresponding economic impact that it has had to the region. Many expressed frustration with Class I railroads' unwillingness to address local concerns.
- **Passenger Rail:** Passenger rail was a secondary priority to respondents in Willmar, but none in attendance were opposed to statewide development. The passenger rail comments received were focused on developing high speed rail from the Twin Cities to Chicago, and the possibility of a second daily Amtrak route on the current Empire Builder alignment. Those that desired HSR to Chicago encouraged the state to keep pursuing federal funding for the project.
- **General:** Other comments received included suggestions to allow heavier loads for trucks on rural MN highways to relieve pressure on freight rail. Participants complimented short line railroads in the area. Respondents also asked questions about extending crew hours, funding for rail inspection, and training of local emergency response teams for worst case rail scenarios.

Minnesota State Rail Plan

OPEN HOUSE ROUND 2 SUMMARY

Duluth, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota State Rail Plan was held in Duluth, MN on Tuesday, February 3rd, 2015 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM at the Duluth Union Depot Great Hall. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, and comment forms. The open house was advertised in local Duluth news outlets. The purpose of the open house was primarily to share current State Rail Plan content and to present comments heard at the first Duluth Open House, as well as Open Houses around the state.

Open House participation included:

- 6 attendees signed-in
- 0 attendees filled out comment forms

COMMENTS

Participants were asked to provide comments on the current condition of the State Rail Plan, and ask questions related to rail planning efforts. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** Freight expansion and the concerns associated with those potential plans was a main topic of the night. Attendees were interested in freight rail expansion plans in the Twin Ports region and how they might assist or deteriorate conditions in the Port of Duluth area.
- **Passenger Rail:** General support for the Northern Lights Express (NLX) High Speed Rail project was demonstrated by those in attendance. Some concerns were raised in regards to performance contracts with BNSF, where NLX would operate, and cited 2014 Empire Builder delays as a reference. Respondents also requested that ultimate destinations for passenger service be shown on future maps, such as full routings to Kansas City from Duluth.
- **General:** Due to another high interest Duluth city planning meeting conflicting with the Rail Plan open house, attendance was generally thin. Although attendance was light, attendees were actively engaged in rail projects around Duluth, including the NLX line.

Eau Claire, WI

A public open house for the Minnesota State Rail Plan was held in Eau Claire, WI on Monday, February 2nd, 2015 from 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM at the CVTC Business Education Center, Room 103A. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, and comment forms. The open house was advertised in local Eau Claire news, television and radio outlets. The purpose of the open house was primarily to share current State Rail Plan content and to present comments heard at the first Eau Claire Open House, as well as Open Houses around Minnesota.

Open House participation included:

- 55 attendees signed-in
- 9 attendees filled out comment forms

COMMENTS

Participants were asked to provide comments on the current condition of the State Rail Plan, and ask questions related to rail planning efforts. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** Some concerns were raised in regards to silica sand transport on freight rail. Respondents requested that rail line infrastructure that carries hazardous material be upgraded. Others asked if freight shipments could be moved more from trucks to trains to relieve congested highways.
- **Passenger Rail:** The large majority of comments and questions asked were about passenger rail development from the Twin Cities to the Chippewa Valley Region, specifically Eau Claire. A large contingency of respondents expressed strong support for passenger rail development. The West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition, a grassroots group that supports passenger rail to the region, was present and passed out information to members of the public. Other questions raised revolved around potential public-private partnerships, privately operated trains, and how citizens can expedite the development process and express support.
- **General:** Similar to the first Open House, the respondents in Eau Claire demonstrated strong support for passenger rail development from Minneapolis/St. Paul. Some concerns were raised about using non-automobile transportation methods once rail users disembarked from the train in Minnesota. Other suggestions were made to allow roll-on-roll-off capabilities for bicycles on the trains and to sell annual off-peak passes to riders who would want to visit the Twin Cities for entertainment purposes on the weekends.

Mankato, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota State Rail Plan was held in Mankato, MN on Thursday, January 22nd, 2015 from 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM at the Mankato Intergovernmental Center. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, and comment forms. The open house was advertised in local Mankato news and radio outlets. The purpose of the open house was primarily to share current State Rail Plan content and to present comments heard at the first Mankato Open House, as well as Open Houses around the state.

Open House participation included:

- 16 attendees signed-in
- 3 attendees filled out comment forms

COMMENTS

Participants were asked to provide comments on the current condition of the State Rail Plan, and ask questions related to rail planning efforts. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** Citing the recent safety worries with oil train traffic, several comments suggested looking into improvements and mandated safety protocol near at-grade rail crossings with roadways.

- **Passenger Rail:** Several questions about passenger rail development to Mankato were asked and the timeline for that potential service. Other questions were asked about the timeline and eventual travel speed of other high speed rail alignments, as well as the “Phase” system of corridor priority. One comment suggested stopping the proposed Southwest LRT in the Twin Cities area and using state funds for greater Minnesota rail improvement projects.
- **General:** Many in attendance were thankful that railroad companies of all sizes are beginning to improve their infrastructure and rolling stock.

Northfield, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota State Rail Plan was held in Northfield, MN on Monday, February 2nd, 2015 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM at Carleton College. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, and comment forms. The open house was advertised in local Northfield news and radio outlets. The open house was held directly after a Regional Leaders Meeting that discussed passenger and general freight rail investment near and around Northfield. The purpose of the open house was primarily to share current State Rail Plan content and to present comments heard at the first Northfield Open House, as well as Open Houses around the state.

Open House participation included:

- 27 attendees signed-in
- 9 attendees filled out comment forms

COMMENTS

Participants were asked to provide comments on the current condition of the State Rail Plan, and ask questions related to rail planning efforts. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** Several comments mentioned concerns about at-grade crossings across existing tracks that split east and west Northfield, and several in attendance requested that an above grade crossing be constructed to connect the two sides of town. Some respondents also noted potential safety hazards with train blockages stopping emergency vehicles from crossing the road.
- **Passenger Rail:** The majority of comments centered around respondents’ desires to develop passenger rail service from the Twin Cities to Northfield and southward to Des Moines via Albert Lea. Public members ranging from college students to retired seniors strongly expressed their support for this rail line, and many were pleased that the route had been upgraded to Phase I status in the 2015 State Rail Plan.
- **General:** A wide range of comments were made at the Open House, but most general comments referred to the desire for passenger rail development to Northfield and improving the safety of existing freight lines. A heightened sense of rail concerns was noticeable, as several respondents did not want rail to divide the town. Other comments referred to wildlife safety near rail lines and economic benefits of rail to the area.

Red Wing, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota State Rail Plan was held in Red Wing, MN on Wednesday, January 21st, 2015 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM at Red Wing City Hall Council Chambers. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, comment forms, and project handouts. The open house was advertised in local Red Wing news outlets. The purpose of the open house was primarily to share current State Rail Plan content and to present comments heard at the first Red Wing Open House, as well as Open Houses around the state.

Open House participation included:

- 7 attendees signed-in
- 0 attendees filled out comment forms

COMMENTS

Participants were asked to provide comments on Minnesota's rail improvement needs, passenger rail planning, and any other feedback. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** Questions primarily focused on safety and Zip Rail. Two attendees noted the issue of grade crossing safety on the CP line through Lakeville, Red Wing, and Winona.
- **Passenger Rail:** Zip Rail questions included opposition and concerns about farmland.

Rochester, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota State Rail Plan was held in Rochester, MN on Thursday, February 26th, 2015 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM at the Rochester Community College Heintz Center. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, comment forms, and project handouts. The open house was advertised in local Rochester news outlets. The purpose of the open house was primarily to share current State Rail Plan content and to present comments heard at Open Houses around the state.

Open House participation included:

- 7 attendees signed-in
- 0 attendees filled out comment forms

COMMENTS

Participants were asked to provide comments on Minnesota's rail improvement needs, passenger rail planning, and any other feedback. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **General:** Question and answer continued for an extended period. It focused on grade separation spacing, intermediate stations, status of Zip Rail study and timing of implementation. Blocked crossings and grade separations, as well as future of hazmat shipments in area, were also discussed.

Saint Cloud, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota State Rail Plan was held in St. Cloud, MN on Thursday, January 29th, 2015 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM at the Mississippi Community Room in the St. Cloud Public Library. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, and comment forms. The open house was advertised in local St. Cloud news and radio outlets. The purpose of the open house was primarily to share current State Rail Plan content and to present comments heard at the first St. Cloud Open House, as well as Open Houses around the state.

Open House participation included:

- 19 attendees signed-in
- 4 attendees filled out comment forms

COMMENTS

Participants were asked to provide comments on the current condition of the State Rail Plan, and ask questions related to rail planning efforts. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Passenger Rail:** Most rail comments and questions revolved around Northstar commuter rail and its extension to St. Cloud. Comments noted a need for more Northstar publicity and more frequent service once the line is connected to St. Cloud. Several noted the need for the rail to assist the elderly to get to Minneapolis and noted that the longer it takes to implement the extension, the less number of people will ride it.

Saint Paul, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota State Rail Plan was held in St. Paul, MN on Monday, February 2nd, 2015 from 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM at the MnDOT office building. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, and comment forms. The open house was advertised around the building and via MnDOT's project website. The purpose of the open house was primarily to share current State Rail Plan content and to present comments heard at the first St. Paul Open House, as well as Open Houses around the state.

Open House participation included:

- 8 attendees signed-in
- 0 attendees filled out comment forms

COMMENTS

Participants were asked to provide comments on the current condition of the State Rail Plan, and ask questions related to rail planning efforts. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** Some concerns were raised in regards to the timeline for general rail safety improvements, and attendees requested if funding could be more readily available for critical areas.

- **Passenger Rail:** Members of the group CCARL—Citizens Concerned about Rail Line—were in attendance, and expressed their concern about the Zip Rail project to Rochester. Others also asked about the status of the Empire Builder second daily train developments, and the on-time performance of Amtrak trains through the corridor.
- **General:** Most respondent questions pertained to general topics raised in the presentation, such as rail funding mechanisms, overall rail safety, and the protocol for placing certain freight rail improvement projects in the State Rail Plan and long range funding plans. Respondents also requested that future open houses be advertised more to the general public.

Willmar, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota State Rail Plan was held in Willmar, MN on Monday, February 9th, 2015 from 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM at the MnDOT District 8 Headquarters. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, and comment forms. The open house was advertised in local Willmar news outlets. The purpose of the open house was primarily to share current State Rail Plan content and to present comments heard at the first Willmar Open House, as well as Open Houses around the state.

Open House participation included:

- 15 attendees signed-in
- 0 attendees filled out comment forms

COMMENTS

Participants were asked to provide comments on the current condition of the State Rail Plan, and ask questions related to rail planning efforts. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** The majority of the discussion pertained to freight rail improvements, as attendees continued to express safety concerns about the existing nearby lines. After some respondents were curious about the public involvement of rail improvement projects, it was expressed that the Willmar Wye is a top priority for the state. Other comments received were about the differences between Class I and short lines.
- **Passenger Rail:** Little conversation was had regarding passenger rail; however, officials from the City of Benson, MN were in attendance and expressed their desire to include the University of Minnesota – Morris as part of the passenger rail network.
- **General:** The majority of respondents were curious about the future of existing rail improvements, their funding mechanisms, and how public money is appropriated to these projects. Some were curious about Governor Dayton's transportation bill, and how some of the new funds would be appropriated to rail projects.

Winona, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota State Rail Plan was held in Winona, MN on Monday, January 26th, 2015 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM at the Winona City Hall Council Chambers. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, and comment forms. The open house was advertised in local

Winona news and radio outlets. The purpose of the open house was primarily to share current State Rail Plan content and to present comments heard at the first Winona Open House, as well as Open Houses around the state.

Open House participation included:

- 35 attendees signed-in
- 4 attendees filled out comment forms

COMMENTS

Participants were asked to provide comments on the current condition of the State Rail Plan, and ask questions related to rail planning efforts. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** Several comments were made about the inconvenience and safety concerns with freight rail traffic blocking public roads. A local police report was also displayed at the Open House explaining an incident with a railroad engineer in regards to a road blockage. Many respondents strongly suggested to upgrade some at-grade rail crossings to rail overpasses, and to generally improve safety along rail corridors. One comment suggested to give tax credits to railroad companies as incentive to improve infrastructure near population centers. Other comments received discussed a desire to cover rail cars carrying frac sand, double track rail sections in the Coulee Region, and to have freight trains pass through towns at a slower speed.
- **Passenger Rail:** Some recommendations about passenger rail coverage were made. Upgrading existing Amtrak service and expanding passenger service from Winona to Rochester were main talking points. Another respondent suggested developing a local commuter rail line from Southwestern Minnesota communities to the Twin Cities area.
- **General:** A wide range of comments were made at the Open House, but most were based on improving rail safety through the area. Some respondents suggested to forbid hazardous rail shipments from passing through the Mississippi River region, and instead build new rail infrastructure more inland. In another aspect, the positive economic impact of the rail industry was noted by some respondents, and others were pleased with the safety improvements planned by railroad companies.

Statewide Rail Plan 2015
St. Paul Public Hearing
Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2015
3:00 - 4:30 PM
Minnesota Department of Transportation, Room G13-14
395 John Ireland Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Transcription

Dave Christianson, MnDOT:

“My name is Dave Christianson. I’m the project manager for the Minnesota State Rail Plan Update that is being conducted currently. This is a formally noticed public hearing, noticed in the state register a month ago. There will not be a presentation today like there have been for the open houses, it will be strictly for testimony from anybody who wishes to lodge testimony. It will have equal weight with all the rest of the comments we have received by email, writing, and verbally at the open houses. This formal public hearing for a state plan is required by statute.

At this point our director of multimodal operations is here, Mr. Tim Henkel. Tim would you like to get up and give a few opening comments?”

Tim Henkel, MnDOT:

“I’ll pass.”

Dave Christianson:

“Then if we have no other comments, we originally set up guidelines for people who want to talk of a maximum of three minutes per person. And then if there is time left over during the hour and a half we would let people speak. I think at this point since we have three people signed up to speak, we will let all of you speak for five minutes to start. And then of course it looks there will be an automatic second round for those who wish to make longer statements for the record if you wish to do so.

So, Heather I believe you’re first on the list. You would come up and state your name and your address. The microphone is directly in front of you so just speak in your normal voice and we should be able to pick it all up.”

Heather Arndt, representing CCARL:

“Fair enough. Good afternoon, my name is Heather Arndt and do you need my full address?”

Dave Christianson:

“Yes, please.”

Heather Arndt:

“It’s 39300 County 8 Blvd., Goodhue, MN. I’m representing both myself and CCARL which is a grassroots organization of rural people in Goodhue and Dodge and Olmsted counties. So, thank you for giving us this opportunity to make some comments and I’ll do a written follow up so that way you’ve got that. There’s a couple of points that I wanted to bring up in looking through the 2015 State Rail Plan as opposed to the 2010 Rail Plan and just bring out a few things.

First of all, overall one of the things I’d like to bring up is that I think the cost projections should be updated. I understand when the 2010 was done, it was done with the best information at that time. Since that time California has moved forward, Florida has made advancements. We know that Texas and Oklahoma are both looking at high speed rail. I think the possibility of updating some of those facts and figures on Operation Maintenance Build and Transit Purchases could be available with a little research and so I think we should be able to update those figures as appropriate by some of the diligence that’s been done by some of the other states.

I like in the 2010 rail plan how there’s a list of tables and figures. I did not see that in the 2010 (I believe she meant 2014). I think adding a list of tables and figures makes it easier for the person to go through looking for specific pieces of information.

A few things that I’ve noted have to do with verbiage that I found in there. For those who don’t know me; which you do. For those who don’t know me, a lot of my focus tends to be on the Rochester to Twin Cities high speed rail proposal project. So that’s where a lot of my focus is at. Freight is not my thing; I have stayed away from the freight and the Northern Lights and all those things. So, knowing where my focus is, on page 1-4 paragraph 4: for the Minnesota Rail System’s goals, on the last paragraph of that section, it says that the conditions which exist that make it desirable for Minnesota to develop the rail plan, the first point indicates that the state’s highway system is a capacity constrained highway system. Regarding Highway 52 I would argue that point. I live on Highway 52. I don’t see where that highway system is a capacity constrained highway system. That makes this not necessarily a valid statement for all highway systems so I think there is room in there to amend the verbiage so that some may be

capacity constrained and I'm not doubting that, however that's not applicable to all and this is a generic statement that applies to all.

On page 1-5 under the passenger rail goals. The first paragraph states that the creation of a rail bus intra and inter-state, inter-city passenger rail system results in improved travel options and lower costs. The projections that have been put forth by the Ziprail personnel indicate that that cost of riding the rail is not lower than what it would be if you were going by car or by bus and so again while that may be a true statement for other aspects of the rail; it's not for this and since this is dealing with passenger rail and that's a passenger rail estimate that's been out there, I think there's room for verbiage to be amended to reflect that that might not be an accurate statement for all. And there's a point to all of this too where I'm getting on.

On page 1-5 paragraph 5, it says that advance the corridors incrementally to build ridership and system advantages, and one of the last things in there it says it could build towards is true high speed rail. However again, the Ziprail for the Rochester corridor starts off automatically at the high speed rail. It does not meet the 2015 plan goals and statements of advancing the corridors incrementally to build ridership and system advantages. So they're starting at the endpoint and again would then be contradictory to the plan. So either the plan is not right or that project is not moving along in conjunction with how the plan should be moving forward.

I notice a disconnect in table 3.7. It lists the passenger rail project earmarks; 2010 uses \$55-70 per mile the 2015 is \$37.59 with no explanation of the difference that I could see. Table 5.1; cost and cost effectiveness, table 5.2 performance measures; both of those are blank, I'm not sure how we're supposed to comment on blank tables to give you our feedback on those things.

Paragraph 83, the key needs, I can read it to you, but basically as I read it it's a hypothesis statement. It's not a factual statement. I think this should be based off of factual statement not a hypothesis based off of we would want, what they would want as opposed to what they really need. And I tie this together all these little things to say that when one plan references the other plan as a stated fact for why it should be, why it should exist and then they state each other back and forth, back and forth, I think it important that the plans are accurate instead of just this constant circular reference of I want this and I want this and somebody said I should have it. Well, I don't find that to be a valid line of logical argument. If one's going to reference the other for why they should exist, then they should both be accurate."

Nora Felton, representing CCARL:

“My name is Nora Felton. I live at 33079 County 24 Blvd, Cannon Falls. I represent myself, the farming community, Southeast Irrigators of Minnesota and CCARL. I again have my focus on what they call green, greenspace or greenway expansion of railway into what they call Ziprail to go into Rochester. My comments follow obviously pretty close to Heather’s. I guess I start out with the fact that the plan for Ziprail does not include any of the info that you call overall infrastructure ROW rolling stock or operating and maintenance cost as you promised in 3.1 of your proposed special rail and improvements investments. The Ziprail will not be 100 miles at the top speeds especially if you have a stop at U-mar Park you can cut off an extra 20 miles on that. So that, the mileage on .3.3 is incorrect. Ziprail, not only in this report, but in other documents continues to say that it will quote “provide travel options for southeast Minnesota” or that it is gonna be able to alleviate congestions quote “along the corridor” and I see that as a totally inaccurate and flawed statement because there will be no stops along the corridor and that has been said numerous times in several studies. Therefore, the 40,000 people that was used in all of Mr. Michael’s presentations is more than inflated and even the scoping document, the FSDD scoping document stated that 4,000 people and 2,000 of those just left with IBM. And then when you consider that Minnesota in the latest 2010 census has a population of only 66.6 people per square mile, even if you could count those people in along the corridor, it does not give large enough service to have a high speed rail in that area. Your draft plan has more in depth cost estimates than your draft plans for Albert Lea and some of the other phase 1 corridors on pages 3-5 through 3-8 there’s more information there about cost than anything that you have about Ziprail that’s supposed to be in advanced planning stage. I feel that’s disingenuous at best. I don’t see how you can possibly do a cost benefit analysis without any costs. The latest costs I could find on any of the old materials go back to 2009/20010 and certainly most of us can attest to the fact that we’ve had cost increase on several bases. Let’s see here. There is, I believe that there’s enough other rail projects around the country that you could use for estimating costs. For example, you could even use our own North Star and Green Line and you could correlate what your projection were in costs as to what they actually ended up with in costs. Or you could even base it on California’s high speed rail that started out at, well it ended up at being \$66.6 million per mile at this point and still growing. So that would it that Ziprail would cost closer to \$6 billion, which you could actually have about 8,000 round trips a day on Delta Airlines for the same cost. Page 3.9 speaks of improvement and maintenance costs and I know that you have several rail agencies that help with that. I was at the transportation committee meeting on February 2 and I noticed that we have 4 lines that are running already in the state of Minnesota that will need to have upkeep similar to our roads and bridges which are in steep decline. At that meeting they stated that CTIV had spent \$6.48

million just for building new lines that now the state will have to maintain. However they have not set any money aside for the operation and maintenance of those lines and so as a taxpayer I can anticipate that eventually those costs will come to bare on the overall rail plan. I would like to have it noted that despite all of the concern you had for public and public awareness, the cities of Randolph and Stanton have never been contacted which is kind of bizarre when you consider Randolph is one of the few places that has an active spur and an active industrial park.

I looked a number of places to try to figure out where you get the ridership numbers even from the older studies and I guess the one thing that I did find out is that 9 out of 10 rail projects in the country were overestimated by 106% and I know that that's gonna be the next thing that comes back is how wonderful this ridership is going to be. And the last thing I would say is that in your transportation study you referenced freight and Ziprail and I want it to be noted that under your Southeast Regional Freight Study of 2013 you do note that southeast Minnesota produces one-third of all of Minnesota's produce. As such another gentleman said not only is this prime crop land but assuming that you only build one track at the width of basically 300', that would take up 3,300 acres out of production at 200 bushels per acre which is kind of a short end of a corn crop and at \$5.00 per bushel that would be a loss per year of \$3.3 billion (her calculation is inaccurate, should be \$3.3 million) of profit to the agricultural community. So you're talking about taking out prime farmland to build a rail that doesn't connect to anything else when you could be putting your, I think your sights would better be spent on going from Duluth all the way to Chicago and go along the river route and upgrade that. I know that the cities of Red Wing, Fountain and Lake City are looking forward to that and would appreciate that. I also believe that you could go from Duluth all the way down to Kansas City through my home county of Albert Lea and both of those lines would gain you a whole lot more ridership and lot more access. So if you want to make rail more accessible to more people, that's fine. And then you can put in east/west lanes and tie the thing up so you can go from South Dakota to Wisconsin and go along Interstate 90. You got plenty of wide corridors that you can put trains in without having to go through green fields that produce the kind of crops that you can't get anywhere else in the United States. We have four canning companies and 3 seed crop producers in Dakota and Goodhue County alone. They produce, we produce a higher gross product than regular other areas in the country that only produce corn and soybeans. And once that industry leaves you'll never get it back and with all the concern about feeding the world and keeping the environment clean I don't understand why you would possibly go through one of the most productive areas of agriculture probably in the entire country. Thank you."

Heather Arndt (again representing CCARL):

“This is Heather Arndt again. One of the things I noted when I was reading through the document is all references to the Ziprail project stated as a foregone conclusion. It says tier one will do this to move them into tier two without appropriate reference to the no-build. There’s a few references to it’s still in the study phase and that may impact. However, all other references really indicate that it’s a foregone conclusion which then validates the whole circular argument. And so again I think the phrasing should be such to reflect that it is still in the project phase, it’s still in the possibility that the no-build might be the selected option. I think that it would be appropriate to make those adjustments to it.

And then technical memo number 10 is referenced on page A-4 and again that indicates that Ziprail is a for certain fact. Not as it may or may not still occur. I think that that goes back to the verbiage. The thing that concerns me is the whole non-updating of the figures for the cost estimates. I think included in the cost estimates has to be the more than just the rail line and that immediate right-of-way. I spoke with Praveena Pidaparathi the other day and she said that any changes to the highways that was the direct result of the rail line and not something that was already preplanned, would have to be covered under the cost of building the rail line. If that statement is accurate, then when cost projections are made then they also have to include projections with the high speed rail. They have to include the projections for all of the overpasses that are built, the underpasses that are built, the frontage roads that are built and so it’s more than just the right-of-way of we purchased x amount of land to do it. The costs go up significantly and I think included in the cost should be the negative economic benefits should be worked into the formula for those areas that as Nora pointed out; the farmland loss of income and the farmland loss of tax base because that is a negative impact on the counties that it would run through. So, while it’s fun to count all of the benefits that might come along to a city or to the recipient, I think the negative economic costs have to be included in the economic cost benefit analysis. So that’s kind of where I’m at on those things. Thank you.”

Nora Felton (again):

“Thank you for letting me do a little bit more. One of the issues that I have noticed is Ziprail obviously has been looked at in various forms for several years. On page 1.6 you speak of integrating your rail into the public planning process. Honestly most people only had heard that this was even thought of. In the summer of 2013 there was one meeting and last year there were three meetings 30 days before the comment period ended and before that nobody had even heard of it, oddly enough. So nobody had made us aware of that.

The other thing that I'm concerned about is your whole plan talks about trying to integrate it into the whole of the DOT, Minnesota DOT planning process to work with the local units of government so that it works into their comprehensive plans as well. Obviously that can't happen if they never heard about it. I'm especially concerned by the amount of money that has been spent on the 52 corridor and only to find out that you continued, DOT continued to put the bridge, the overpasses 15 feet too low and even if that wasn't the case they've got it with just a center support instead of two of them on either side, so you couldn't run it down the center right now if you wanted to. And if they were really thinking of integrating this as a whole system, they certainly could've thought that far in advance rather than putting in the three new bridges that we got this year and costing us millions of dollars of taxpayer money. So I don't see that the forethought has been actually put into this that the study says it has and perhaps if you were thinking of trying to integrate it in and you felt that you absolutely needed to go to Rochester before you went to Chicago or down to Des Moines and Kansas City. Perhaps you could just start by when you're doing, when you're making 52 into a limited access freeway which I think will alleviate all of your congestion options, that maybe you just start as you're putting in bridges having them ready so that maybe in 20 years you could put a commuter rail that actually would service the corridor that you say you're gonna service in all of your studies as to whose gonna get some benefits outta this. Thank you."

Dave Christianson:

"If there are no other commenters who wish to speak then, we will remain open for comments until 4:30 as scheduled. But you're all welcome to speak among yourselves or if you have any questions for any of us on staff, we're open. Thank you."