

Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission

Full Commission Mtg – Friday, 05 Feb. 2010 @ 10am • Dane Co. Hwy, 2302 Fish Hatchery Rd, Madison, WI

1. Karl Nilson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. Commissioners present for all or part of the meeting:

Crawford	Tom Cornford		X
	Rocky Rocksvold		X
	Vacant		
Dane	Gene Gray	Treasurer	X
	Jim Haefs-Fleming		X
	Forrest Van Schwartz	Advocate	X
Grant	DuWayne Carlin		X
	Margaret Ruf (<i>at 10:05</i>)		X
	Robert Scallon	2nd Vice Chair	X
Iowa	Charles Anderson		
	Gerald Dorscheid	Vice Treasurer	X
	Joe Thomas		

Rock	Ben Coopman	Alternate	
	Katie Kuznacic		X
	Alan Sweeney	Secretary	X
	Terry Thomas		X
Sauk	Joel Gaalswijk		X
	Rob Sinklair		
	Frederick Halfen		X
Walworth	Larry Volz	Vice Chair	X
	Jerry Grant		X
	Richard Kuhnke		
Waukesha	Allan Polyock		X
	Karl Nilson	Chair	X
	Richard Manke		
	Fritz Ruf		X

Others present for all or part of the meeting:

Amy Seeboth (SWWRPC / WRRTC Administrator); Frank Huntington & Roger Larson (WisDOT); Alan Anderson (Pink Lady RTC); Ken Lucht (WSOR)

3. Motion accepting Seeboth's certification of Public Notice. *Dorscheid / F. Ruf -passed unanimously.*

4. Motion accepting the Agenda, prepared by Seeboth. Agenda item 17 amended to read "Crawford" instead of "Dane" County- *F. Ruf / Van Schwartz / passed unanimously.*

5. Motion approving the draft Jan. Minutes. Amended to change spelling of "sights" to "sites" in item 8 - *Gaalswijk / Cornford- passed unanimously.*

6. Public Comment – None

7. Correspondence & Communications – Seeboth shared four correspondences- a response from Secretary Busalacchi to the Commissions letter requesting additional stimulus funds be directed to Wisconsin rail projects; notification that Allan Polyock of Walworth County, has been reappointed; notice of tax exempt status in Illinois; and she reported on a non-compliance letter the Commission received from Illinois- in err, the State had sent a letter intended for a non-WRRTC parcel. Nilson shared a notice he had received inviting attendance to a railroad meeting in Sauk County.

REPORTS & COMMISSION BUSINESS

8. Wisconsin & Southern Railroad's Report on Operations – Ken Lucht, WSOR, reported on the following:

- *Monthly Maintenance Activities* – Lucht reported that WSOR is involved in winter maintenance right now. They are still brush cutting (on the line from Madison to Reedsburg right now). They also had to schedule immediate repairs to a bridge on the Watertown Subdivision in Madison- the repairs took a couple of weeks but are now finished.
- *2009 & 2010 Capital Projects*– For 2009, WSOR was approved for four project applications to WisDOT, these projects were in Madison to Milton, Milwaukee to Slinger, Sheboygan County, and Janesville and Monroe. WisDOT 2010 Grant Applications were due on February 1st. WSOR applied for funds to extend the mainline track 5.1 miles west of Badger Ethanol on the Monroe Subdivision, funds for the remainder of Madison welded

rail project, funds to install 1.5 miles of continuous welded rail in Waukesha, and funds to complete phase 1 of a tie project on the Northern Subdivision.

- *Business Development* – A number of businesses are increasing their service via WSOR, some are using transloading. A new business prospect for WSOR is the proposed biofuel / natural gas energy plant on the UW-Madison campus. The biomass has yet to be sourced, the UW is talking with the agricultural industry to find a producer(s). They have a few sites they are looking at on the Watertown Sub by Marshall and Waterloo, also by Muscoda and Prairie du Chien and in Sauk County. They plan on having the biomass in big round bales or square blocks.
- *Other Continuing Issues / Topics*: Lucht said that all the Commissioners should have received an invitation to WSOR's 2010 Annual State of Railroad Address.

9. WRRTC Financial Report (*moved to after Item 13*) – Jim Matzinger, Dane County CPA / WRRTC Accountant distributed copies of the Treasurer's Report and provided an overview. He also provided each county with one copy of the annual WRRTC 2010 billings. He also mailed a copy of this to the clerks of each county.

- **Motion approving Treasurer's Report for Jan., as presented** – *Sweeney / F. Ruf - passed unanimously.*
- **No Bills**

10. WRRTC Administrator's Report – Amy Seeboth, SWWRPC Transportation Planner circulated copies of the January usage report for the Commission's website www.wrrtc.org. She also requested that the Commission consider quarterly billings of equal amounts from SWWRPC to total the contract amount; this billing system would be smoother and more efficient for SWWRPC HR.

- **Motion approving quarterly billings of equal amounts from SWWRPC's Staff Services Agreement, not to exceed the contract amount-** *Van Schwartz / M. Ruf – passed unanimously*

Seeboth also updated the Commission on the Draft Economic Feasibility Study of Freight Rail Restoration recently released by WisDOT. That study is available on the PRTC website: <http://www.swwrpc.org/transportation/PRTC.php>. Several Commissioners requested Seeboth mail them print copy of this report. Seeboth was asked to let Pat Weeden (the WRRTC website administrator) know about the PRTC and SCWRTC web addresses so that they can be added to the WRRTC website.

11. WisDOT Update – Frank Huntington from WDOT announced that applications for this year's WDOT grant and loan program were due Feb. 1st. Huntington does not have a summary of the applications yet available. Since Huntington's last update to WRRTC, Federal high speed rail funds were awarded to WDoT. These funds will help install high speed passenger rail between Milwaukee and Madison on existing track, with top speeds of 110mph. Huntington thought that if funds allocated are not enough, that WDOT may submit another application someday (the federal government will likely have other opportunities for this, he believes). Huntington believes that the existing track will be upgraded to 130 lbs, with a lot of concrete ties. Freight rail will still be able to operate along this line, at higher speed than it is now. From Watertown to Milwaukee, this project will be along Canadian Pacific rail. Eventually the State hopes to extend this high speed rail all the way to St. Paul/Minneapolis. At this time there is some funding reserved for the planning of this but nothing more.

12. Motion to amend Nov. 2009 Minutes, item #8 to read \$12 million rather than \$12 – *Kuznacic / Sweeney – passed unanimously*

13. Update on Merrimac Bridge Study in Sauk County- Van Schwartz, Lucht, Huntington, Volz, Gaalsvijk, and Halfen attended the public meeting on Jan. 25th to review the findings of a study on the structural capacity of the Merrimac Bridge in Sauk County. Van Schwartz provided the following overview of the meeting: This bridge was built in 1895, and today there are genuine concerns in Sauk County and elsewhere that this bridge will remain usable. Ayers Associates was hired to look at this bridge above and below water and report on the structural integrity of the bridge. They reported that the bridge is today, basically at the design strength it was built at in 1895, but that design strength is approx. ½ of what is required to handle today's rail.

Ayers suggested three options to address this situation: 1) Routine repairs that are needed (both above and below water). Ayers estimated this would cost about \$4.2 mil, but would extend life of bridge 25 years. 2) Reinforce bridge trusses with an additional line of steel down the middle, cost est. \$24 mil. Ayers estimates that this would extend the life of bridge 30 years, but the track would have to be closed during construction, 3) Build a new bridge, approximately 100 feet south of the existing bridge. Cost of new bridge would likely be more than \$35 - \$65mil. It would have an estimated lifetime of 75 years, and be built to current standards.

Lucht added that the study began in March of last year, the cost for which was \$100,000. Sauk County contributed \$25,000 to this. He continued to say that the first cost alternative is catching a lot of people's attention because it is the lowest cost. WSOR would have to tell their customers that they cannot haul the heavier cars. Option two only looked at super structure, but not the substructure, and WSOR doesn't believe that it would be a viable option. The new structure, does not include inflation, if permit is applied for today, it would likely not be approved for another 3-4 years, so that adds \$10million onto the bridge.

Forrest added a further complication: that the UP owns this rail line, not WDOT or WRRTC. Frank added that at this point, there are no plans for anyone to purchase the land from the UP. WSOR is leasing the land from the UP and the UP does not have the responsibility to upgrade the track or bridge. In order for the bridge to be eligible for WDOT funds, WDOT or a Commission would have to acquire the land, which adds an additional \$70-100 million onto the project.

Alan Anderson, of the Pink Lady, added that there were at least seventy people at the meeting and that a large contingency of those present seemed to want a trail. He asked what would be the cost to redo the bridge in Sauk City and not the Merrimack bridge. Van Schwartz estimated that it would probably be cheaper than \$35 million.

Lucht emphasized that bridge is in good shape if you are running light weight cars but that that the bridge is not sufficient for modern freight weight cars.

The Commission recessed for a 10 minute break, at 11:01.

14. Rail Service Issues to Sauk County –

- **Gaalsvijk moved to have the Commission support rails-to-trails conversion for trackage ROW from Sauk City to Badger Ammunition, seconded by Halfen.**

Gaalsvijk stated that the interests of the two villages (Sauk City and Prairie du Sac) is a complicated issue and he thanked Van Schwartz for an excellent report on the Ayres presentation. Gaalsvijk said this issue it is a huge problem, especially since the state doesn't own the track. He said that whatever is done, it doesn't necessary follow that the rail through the two villages and the bridge to the south must be fixed. Almost 12 years have passed since the tracks were last used. To put these tracks back in service would cost quite a lot of money. Residents are having a hard time imagining how those tracks might be used for rail. Gaalsvijk asked how everyone could take steps toward compromise and said that the Commission represents the people.

Lucht said that WSOR is opposed to rails to trails at this point. Lucht handed out a court testimony of Richard Timmons detailing how difficult it is to convert rails-to-trails land back into rails. Lucht further pointed out many of the challenges, including encroachment and political loopholes. In exchange for not building the rail, WSOR would want an alternate route. WDOT will not purchase the Reedsburg sub, and there is a very strong effort to carve up the other rail. WSOR is very supportive of sitting down with the communities and coming up with a long-term solution. Lucht said that it is only practical to look at the south side.

Van Schwartz said that both as a commissioner and personally, he opposed to rails to trails. That line is not abandoned, WSOR would have to apply for abandonment, and they clearly do not plan to, the land cannot be a rails-to-trails until abandonment is claimed. Van Schwartz discussed Dekalb, IL as an example- the local Railroad said they would love to move out of the City center if the city paid for new track on the south side of town. Van Schwartz said this situation is similar and is concerned that the communities haven't offered to pay for movement of that rail.

Volz said that he feels he is between a rock and a hard spot – he empathizes with what Gaalsvijk said, and he also has to consider the manufacturing and rail service in the rest of the county. How can they give up something, until they know they have an alternate route?

Halfen moved to amend the motion, "The Commission encourages the Villages of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac to enter into negotiations with the railroad to come up with an alternative solution should the Merrimack Bridge situation become an issue" – no second.

- **Call for the question – Cornford / Polyock - passed unanimously**
- **Roll Call Vote:**

Crawford	Tom Cornford		N
	Rocky Rocksvold		N
	Vacant		
Dane	Gene Gray	Treasurer	N
	Jim Haefs-Fleming		N
	Forrest Van Schwartz	Advocate	N
Grant	DuWayne Carlin		N
	Margaret Ruf (10:05)		N
	Robert Scallon	2nd Vice Chair	N
Iowa	Charles Anderson		
	Gerald Dorscheid	Vice Treasurer	N
	Joe Thomas		

Rock	Ben Coopman	Alternate	
	Katie Kuznacic		N
	Alan Sweeney	Secretary	N
	Terry Thomas		N
Sauk	Joel Gaalswijk		Y
	Rob Sinklair		
	Frederick Halfen		Y
	Larry Volz	Vice Chair	N
Walworth	Jerry Grant		N
	Richard Kuhnke		
	Allan Polyock		N
Waukesha	Karl Nilson	Chair	N
	Richard Manke		
	Fritz Ruf		N

- **A motion was made resolving that the Commission encourage the Villages (Sauk City and Prairie du Sac), WSOR and other interested parties to get together and look at alternative routes– Halfen / Gaalswijk – passed unanimously**

Anderson (Pink Lady) mentioned that Sauk County officials were already tasked with and Huntington added that this Commission will be invited to that effort. Nilson said that every Commission member will be notified and invited to this event.

Lucht adjourned at 11:49

- 15. Jefferson County RTC Membership-** Seeboth wrote Jefferson County in December asking that they consider, again, joining the WRRTC. She has not yet received a response from the County. The Commission asked that Seeboth write the County again, including more specific information about who the customers are and what sort of employee base and tax base they provide the County.
- 16. UW Power Plan use of rail Right of Way –** Huntington handed out prints of map and project timeline for the proposed UW-Madison Power Plant upgrades. The plant intends to run on biofuels, which will require a great increase in rail service to UW-Madison (possibly 30 cars/day). WDOT is working with the University, City and WSOR to develop the necessary changes to accommodate this new service. The Commission is being asked to approve changes to their corridor, including reconfiguring existing tracks and the installation of several new side tracks between the power plant and Washington Ave., and the removal of the tracks between Brooks and Charter Streets on the former ICG corridor to allow for the placement of a driveway, a fire lane and truck scale on the corridor south of the power plant. . The changes will not negatively affect train operations and, WSOR supports the project and the changes. Some extra width property is being transferred to the UW, but none of the corridor property will be sold. Permits will be granted by WDOT to the UW to allow completion of the work. The permits will provide that the improvements will be removed if necessary to allow for future rail use of the corridor. There will be about two blocks of the former ICG corridor between Charter and Randall Streets that will not be needed by the UW and currently have tracks in place. This portion of the corridor will be isolated because of this project. The management of this property still needs to be discussed with the UW and WSOR. Commissioners questioned why they should allow the UW to take out the tracks and not require them to reinstall them at their cost when needed. Huntington said he doesn't see it happening that way. The project is expected to create significant benefits for the railroad. He said that he will, however, take these concerns back with him to WDOT.

- **Motion that WRRTC approve the changes to tracks and use of the corridor outlined by WDOT to accommodate the UW-Madison Power Plant with the caveat that it can be returned to railroad whenever needed – Sweeney / T. Thomas – passed unanimously**

(Later in the meeting Huntington added that he would structure any agreements so that if and when the tracks are reinstalled the cost would be assumed by WDOT, the UW and/or WSOR. The commission would not be required to participate in the cost of reinstalling the tracks that are being removed.)

17. Crawford and Walworth County Reps on WRRTC Executive Committee- Seeboth explained that in 2009 elections somehow Crawford and Walworth Counties did not have any representatives appointed to the Executive Committee. Because Kuhnke of Walworth County was not present, the Commission decided to hold off on a decision on that County until the next meeting.

- **Motion appointing Tom Cornford to the WRRTC Executive Committee- Kuznacic / Volz – passed unanimously**

18. Motion adjourning the meeting at 12:17 p.m. - Scallon / Cornford - passed unanimously.

Polyock added that his son works for MoreAgri Grains a company which recently began rail service with WSOR. Polyock thanked everyone at WDOT and WSOR that was a part of the process, on behalf of his son. Polyock said that it was a great experience.