Midwest High Speed Rail
Case Study September 29th, 2004
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Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI)

Began in 1996 among 9 Midwest states:
- Indiana
- Illinois
- Iowa
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- Nebraska
- Ohio
- Wisconsin
General Data

- Trains will operate at speeds up to 110mph
- Will convert 3000 miles of existing rail
- Fares estimated to be 50% higher than existing Amtrak fares
- Feeder bus system will help increase accessibility
- Estimated cost: $4.1 billion
Goals for High Speed Rail

• Shorter travel times
• More frequent train trips
• Increased connections between urban and rural communities
• Improved reliability
Route to the Twin Cities

Chicago to Twin Cities
• Intermediate stops – Milwaukee, Madison, LaCrosse
• Chicago terminal – Chicago Union Station
• Twin Cities terminal – St Paul Union Station
• Possible continuation of service to Minneapolis downtown station
  Mpls station is proposed for Rapid Park area joined with the Northstar Commuter Rail station
Bus Connections
Coach bus service to smaller cities to bring riders to the stations

Cities proposed to be served by bus

- Mankato
- Duluth-Superior
- Eau Claire
- Rhinelander
- Wausau
- Escanaba
Twin Cities Transit connections

• St Paul Union Station
  • Metro Transit
  • Central LRT
  • Red Rock Commuter Rail

• Minneapolis
  • Hiawatha LRT
  • Metro Transit
  • Southwest LRT
  • Northstar Commuter Rail

• Currently in Service
• Proposed Service
Wisconsin Transit connections

Madison
Metro Transit System

Milwaukee
Milwaukee County Transit

LaCrosse
LaCrosse Transit
Chicago Transit connections

Chicago Union Station
• Metra
• CTA Subway
• CTA Bus
• Walking distance to the Loop
• Possible shuttles to
  • Olgivie Station
  • Randolph St Station
  • LaSalle St Station
Comparison

- Midwest Regional Rail Initiative
- Amtrak Cascade (Northwest Passenger System)
- Differences and Similarities
Differences

• Cascades owned by Amtrak
  – Scheduling
  – Ticket Sales
  – Promotion
  – Infrastructure
  – Track usage
Differences cont.

• Stops/Stations
  – Cascades many stops
  – Major cities in Midwest plan.

• Tracks
  – Cascades has one route
  – Midwest is a network connecting distribution of cities
Similarities

- Funding
  - State and local funding
    - State DOT
      - Major improvement to tracks and highway overpasses paid for by DOT and Federal Grants
      - Midwest deciding board would probably have representatives from each state DOT and also city reps locations of stations.
  - Ticket Sales
    - Midwest System claims to be able to pay for system costs with ticket sales.
Similarieties cont.

- Track
  - Cascades improving tracks for 110mph service by 2015
  - Midwest has similar plan
    • Upgrade existing track.
Conclusions

- Overall both systems very similar
- Differences in Midwest makes it more challenging to design and initiate.
- Cascade a successful system that could be modeled after.
Advantages

- Cleaner Environment
- Efficiency
- Economic benefits of station revitalization
- Fills “too short to fly, too long to drive” transportation gap
Cleaner Environment

• Less air pollution
• Better fuel efficiency
  – Chicago-St. Louis corridor could save 6.5 million gallons of fuel in 2010
Efficiency

• Lower construction cost
  – Upgraded track is 6-7 times cheaper than building highway

• Better land use
  – Rail requires 10% the amount of land as Interstate highways
Economic Benefits of Station Revitalization

• Increased passenger volumes
• Increased employment
• Slow growth of auto congestion
• Increased property values near revitalized stations
Fills Transportation Gap

• Can be faster than flying for trips of a few hundred miles
• Safer and more productive than driving for mid-distance trips
Disadvantages

• Unclear where cost burden will fall
• High user costs
• Projections vs. reality
Who Will Pay?

• Supporters claim that ticket sales will cover operating and maintenance costs
• Current rail network (Amtrak) loses $20 per ticket
High User Costs

- Estimated St. Paul to Madison one-way fare is $83
- Plane fare for the same distance, round-trip, is often as low as $120
- Those accustomed to driving may not be willing to pay that much for added convenience or productivity
**Proponents**

- City and County governments along proposed routes
- Railroad, transit, and other non-profit groups
- Newspapers (including Star Tribune)
- Chambers of Commerce
- Environmental Associations
Opponents

• Some citizens concerned about noise, safety, and property values

• Congressman Ray LaHood of IL
“a Midwest rail passenger system offers the highest level of economic benefit associated with rail investment anywhere in the U.S. except for Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor ”

http://www.dot.state.mn.us/passengerrail/onepagers/midwest.html#mwmap
Questions for Discussion

• Who is the target rider?
• Who do you think are the opponents of this project?
• Where should the high speed train stop in the Midwest?
• Would it be positive or negative to design for higher speeds?
• Should government intervene to help a declining transportation mode?