



City of Racine, Wisconsin AGENDA BRIEFING MEMORADUM

AGENDA DATE: August 25th, 2025

SUBJECT: Communication sponsored by Mayor Mason requesting authorization for the Mayor and City Clerk to enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement pursuant to Wisconsin Stats. § 66.0301 establishing the Milwaukee-Area-Racine-Kenosha Passenger Rail Commission.

PREPARED BY: Transit & Mobility Director, Trevor Jung

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: This memorandum provides an overview of the proposed Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the City of Milwaukee, City of Racine, and City of Kenosha to establish the MARK Passenger Rail Commission. This commission will serve as a regional, collaborative body focused on advancing passenger rail service along the Milwaukee Area–Racine–Kenosha (MARK) corridor and will operate as a multijurisdictional commission under the authority of Wis. Stat. § 66.0301.

The creation of this Commission is modeled after the Chippewa–St. Croix Passenger Rail Commission, which was formed by several municipalities in western Wisconsin to collectively pursue intercity passenger rail restoration in the Eau Claire–Twin Cities corridor. Like that effort, the MARK Passenger Rail Commission will be an organized and strategic entity advocating for passenger rail investment in Southeastern Wisconsin, specifically on the Union Pacific-Kenosha Subdivision line.

The Agreement seeks to:

- Establish the MARK Passenger Rail Commission as a formal, legally recognized public entity;
- Provide a structure for regional cooperation and shared decision-making across jurisdictional boundaries;
- Enable eligibility and participation in state and federal rail programs, including the FRA's Corridor Identification and Development (CID) Program;
- Leverage grant funding, coordinate transit-oriented development, and align public and private sector interests in rail investment.

BACKGROUND: The expansion of passenger rail along the Milwaukee–Racine–Kenosha corridor presents a wide array of public and economic benefits, including:

- **Regional Economic Development:** Rail investments are proven to stimulate private investment, raise property values, and revitalize neighborhoods near stations.
- **Workforce Mobility:** Connecting communities with reliable, affordable transportation expands access to employment, especially in metropolitan hubs like Chicago and Milwaukee.
- **Tourism & Cultural Exchange:** Enhanced rail service encourages tourism and cross-regional visitation, supporting local businesses and institutions.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Passenger rail reduces vehicle miles traveled (VMT), reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Congestion Relief:** By providing an alternative to congested highways, rail improves regional mobility and quality of life.
- **Interstate Coordination:** Linking the corridor to Chicago, the Midwest's largest transportation hub, positions the region for broader connectivity to the national rail system.

- Federal and State Alignment: The project aligns with VISION 2050, the Wisconsin Rail Plan 2050, and the FRA's national goals for passenger rail expansion.

Key Features of the Agreement

Establishment of the Commission

- Initially composed of Commissioners appointed by each of the three founding cities.
- Additional Regular Members may be admitted by consent of the Founding Members.

Commission Responsibilities

- Coordinate feasibility studies, station planning, and land use alignment.
- Apply for and manage state, federal, and private funding.
- Collaborate with regional partners, including WisDOT, IDOT, host railroads, municipalities, and community organizations.
- Lead public engagement and legislative advocacy efforts.

Governance and Operations

- The Commission will adopt bylaws, elect officers, and may create advisory committees.
- Meetings will be open to the public and governed by Wisconsin Open Meetings and Public Records laws.

The establishment of the MARK Passenger Rail Commission is a foundational step toward securing a modern and efficient transportation system for Southeastern Wisconsin. By acting in a coordinated fashion modeled on initiatives such as the Chippewa–St. Croix Passenger Rail Commission, the Cities of Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha can play a leading role in connecting communities, growing the economy, and improving quality of life for residents.

BUDGETARY IMPACT: No Fiscal Impact

RECOMMENDED ACTION: To authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement pursuant to Wisconsin Stats. § 66.0301 establishing the Milwaukee-Area-Racine-Kenosha Passenger Rail Commission.