



City of Racine, Wisconsin

AGENDA BRIEFING MEMORADUM

AGENDA: Finance and Personnel Committee

SUBJECT: Communication sponsored by Mayor Mason, on behalf of the Transit & Mobility Director, requesting permission to enter into an intergovernmental agreement with the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) for project management of the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) Regional Passenger Rail – Corridor Study Update, Preliminary Engineering, and Environmental Review.

PREPARED BY: Trevor Jung, Transit & Mobility Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: A partnership with the regional metropolitan planning organization is essential in order for the City of Racine to properly study the feasibility of passenger rail in the KRM corridor and develop materials necessary for federal funding.

Potential feasibility study elements may include:

- Stakeholder Engagement and Coordination
- Review of Past KRM Commuter Rail Studies
- Describe Existing and Planned Demographics, Land Use, and Travel Patterns
- Describe Existing and Planned Transportation Services and Facilities
- Review and Update of Recommended Station Locations and Station Area Plans
- Develop Commuter Rail Operating Plan
- Develop Capital Cost Estimates
- Develop Operating Cost Estimates
- Summarize Potential Commuter Rail Benefits
- Explore Potential Governance Models
- Identify Potential Funding Sources
- Summarize NEPA Process and Requirements
- Summarize FTA “New Starts” Program
- Develop NEPA Study/New Starts Application Request for Proposals

These study components, with consideration of state law and nontraditional models of governance and operational funding, are required to advance the development of passenger rail in the KRM corridor.

BACKGROUND: The KRM commuter rail line has been long planned and desired by the communities along Lake Michigan between Milwaukee and the Illinois State Line. It is one of the main commuter rail lines recommended by VISION 2050, the long-range regional land use and transportation plan prepared by the SEWRPC.

Commission staff provided support for previous KRM commuter rail planning efforts. Commission staff completed a KRM feasibility study in 1998 and an analysis of commuter rail and bus alternatives for the KRM corridor in 2003. In early 2005, SEWRPC assumed the role of lead agency, project manager, and fiscal agent for KRM technical and environmental studies, including preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement, conducted by an Intergovernmental Partnership formed that same year. Upon creation in 2009 of a permanent Southeast Regional Transit Authority (SERTA), SEWRPC provided temporary staffing support for SERTA. This included assisting with the development and submission of an application to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in 2010 requesting permission to initiate preliminary engineering under the FTA’s discretionary “New Starts” funding program. In 2011, SERTA withdrew the application in conjunction with SERTA’s dissolution.

As part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022, signed into law by the President on March 9, 2022, Congress provided \$5 million to the City of Racine for the “Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) Regional Rail Corridor, thereby reigniting the early-stage development of commuter rail in the region.

BUDGETARY IMPACT: Cost not to exceed \$830,000. Funding available in 5,000,000 in Federal Congressionally Directed Spending with no local match required.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: That the Mayor and City Clerk be granted permission to enter into an intergovernmental agreement with the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) for project management of the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Regional Passenger Rail – Corridor Study Update, Preliminary Engineering, and Environmental Review.