

News From.....

The Passenger Rail Working Group

Planning America's Passenger Rail Future

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Bold new vision for intercity rail service throughout America to be unveiled Plan proposes investments totaling \$357.2 billion through 2050

Washington, DC — The boldest and most visionary plan to expand passenger rail service in America in decades is being announced today. The Passenger Rail Working Group will unveil its new plan at a press conference at 10 a.m. in the Starlight Room of Union Station, where copies of the plan will be available.

The plan, called “Vision for the future: U.S. Intercity Passenger Rail Network Through 2050,” enhances America’s existing intercity passenger rail system, and builds upon the network substantially to create a national system connecting cities and towns that have not had passenger rail service for decades. The Vision Plan also recognizes the importance of the freight railroad network to the nation’s economy, and it respects the capacity growth needed for the freight lines. The passenger Vision Plan defines several levels of investment in passenger service, some compatible with freight operations, and some requiring expanded, parallel or separate tracks and facilities.

The plan will be submitted to the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission, a bipartisan organization formed last year with 12 members appointed by the president and Congressional leaders. Its mandate is to examine national surface transportation needs and mechanisms for funding these needs.

“I formed the Passenger Rail Working Group to advise the commission in response to a wide range of public testimony calling for a strong national intercity passenger rail system,” said Frank Busalacchi, a member of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission and Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. “Highway congestion is only getting worse. Airline congestion and delays are continuing to mount. Gasoline prices are continuing to rise over \$3 per gallon. We need to develop and expand our

passenger rail system, not only to provide needed mobility for our nation's travelers, but also to help the nation's environmental efforts to reduce greenhouse gases.”

The vision for passenger rail through 2050 maintains the entire existing national passenger rail system, and builds on it in major ways. Future proposed routes are contained in a map within the plan. The Vision Plan is based upon existing travel markets, but is designed as a dynamic document that can be added to or revised according to the travel markets as they develop in the future.

The passenger rail network in 2050 includes new services where the population is expected to grow significantly. Some of this service links smaller cities: like Fort Wayne with Chicago; Kansas City with Omaha; Nashville with Atlanta, Knoxville with Chattanooga.

The 2050 vision includes upgrading existing service — offering higher speeds and greater frequencies — in many rapidly growing corridors. Examples include the California Coast, Pacific Northwest, Midwest Regional, Golf Coast, Southeast, South Central, and Florida corridors. The existing Northeast Corridor would strengthen linkages with the Keystone, Empire, and Northern New England Corridors.

The plan builds upon the existing national rail passenger network by adding more frequent service, includes development of the federally designated high-speed rail corridors and makes future service extensions designed to connect population centers. The plan also quantifies potential safety, energy, environmental, congestion and mobility benefits. Many of the investments in the improved passenger rail network also will benefit the freight rail network.

The funding needs associated with the plan are estimated to be \$357.2 billion, or \$8.1 billion (in 2007 dollars) annually, through 2050. The report recommends that a new “Intercity Passenger Rail Program” be included in the next federal transportation authorization bill to address these needs, with 80 percent of the funding coming from the federal government, and 20 percent from the states.

The Passenger Rail Working Group, formed by Secretary Busalacchi to advise the Commission, is comprised of intercity passenger rail experts and transportation professionals from throughout the country and includes representatives from states, Amtrak, public interest groups and regional rail transportation authorities.

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