

# Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission

*A joint Transportation  
Commission formed under  
Wisconsin Statutes 66.0301  
to advance the public  
interest by pursuing  
passenger rail service for the  
St. Croix and Chippewa  
Valley regions of Wisconsin*

## *Members*

- Dunn County
- Eau Claire County
- St. Croix County
- City of Altoona
- Village of Baldwin
- City of Eau Claire
- City of Hudson
- City of Menomonie
- City of New Richmond
- West Central Wisconsin  
Rail Coalition

## *Ex Officio Members*

- West Central Wis Regional  
Planning Commission
- Wisconsin DOT
- Minnesota DOT
- Union Pacific Railroad
- Ramsey County (MN)  
Regional Railroad Authority
- Washington County (MN)  
Regional Railroad Authority
- Chippewa Valley Technical  
College
- Northwood Technical College
- University of Wisconsin  
- Eau Claire
- University of Wisconsin  
- River Falls
- University of Wisconsin  
- Stout

## *Chair*

Jim Dunning, Eau Claire County

## *Vice Chair*

Gary Stene, Dunn County

## *Secretary*

Grethen Yonko, City of  
Menomonie

## *Administrative/Fiscal Agent*

Eau Claire County, WI  
c/o County Administrator  
721 Oxford Ave.  
Eau Claire, WI 54703  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – October 31, 2024

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## **Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission selects HDR Engineering, Inc., to lead scoping for the Eau Claire to Twin Cities Passenger Rail Project.**

EAU CLAIRE, WI – The Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission is pleased to announce the selection of a consultant team led by HDR Engineering, Inc. and including HNTB Corp., to complete Step 1 for the Eau Claire-Twin Cities Passenger Rail Project. This crucial scoping phase will provide a roadmap for the region to begin rail planning activities and establish the scope of work, schedule and budget for the Eau Claire-Twin Cities Passenger Rail Project.

This Scoping work is the first phase in the Corridor Identification and Development Program (CID) established by the US Department of Transportation’s Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), with funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, to identify and develop new and expanded passenger rail corridors across the country.

Earlier this year, the FRA awarded a grant of up to \$500,000 to the Commission to support scoping for the new service. Eau Claire County, a member of the Commission, serves as its administrative and fiscal agent, and in that capacity will receive and administer the award. This award marks a major milestone in restoring intercity passenger rail service between Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, via Menomonie, Baldwin, Hudson, and Washington County, MN.

HDR, a national leader in rail corridor planning and development for the FRA, and HNTB, were selected through a competitive request for proposals process to lead the scoping effort. The firms have a long history of collaboration on passenger rail projects and are working together on several FRA Corridor ID projects, including the Wisconsin Department of Transportation’s Milwaukee-Madison-Eau Claire-Twin Cities Corridor and the Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago Second Round Trip studies. Those studies are complementary to the Eau Claire-Twin Cities corridor planning.

The FRA has also pledged additional non-competitive funding through the Corridor ID Program for subsequent planning and design phases. This future funding, along with state and locally sourced funds, will enable regional authorities, in collaboration with states, local communities, and Tribal governments, to complete the service development plan and necessary environmental and engineering studies required to bring the project to fruition.

“After many years of strong community interest, this is a critical first step in bringing passenger trains to enhance the economy of our region,” noted Scott Rogers, a Commission member who has been designated as its project committee lead. “The commitment of federal funding to a pipeline leading

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to the creation of new corridors was always the missing element to move things forward.” Rogers is also chair of the West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition, a community group that has advocated for train service for the region, and is Vice President Governmental Affairs at the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce.

The proposed Eau Claire-Twin Cities Passenger Rail Corridor will enhance transportation options for underserved communities and rural areas, connect growing population centers to jobs, healthcare, education, and tourism, support station-area development, and reduce road congestion. Additionally, the corridor will serve regional travel needs, providing residents of West Central Wisconsin and the Twin Cities metropolitan area with greater access to critical services and opportunities.

The Commission’s application also specifically seeks to establish a competitive process for selecting a train operator; pilot a direct access model negotiated track access agreement with Union Pacific, the host railroad; consider zero-emission equipment; and ensure sufficient train frequency to provide travel convenience and activity to support transportation-oriented economic development in station communities.

### About the Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission

The Chippewa-St. Croix Rail Commission was established in 2021 by three counties and six municipalities under Wisconsin statutes. Its purpose is to advance the public interest by pursuing the implementation of passenger rail service and other public transportation improvements to serve the St. Croix Valley and the Chippewa Valley. Members include Dunn, Eau Claire, and St. Croix Counties; the municipalities of Altoona, Baldwin, Eau Claire, Hudson, Menomonie, and New Richmond; and the West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition. Ex-officio stakeholder members include the Union Pacific Railroad, West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, UW-Eau Claire, UW-River Falls, UW-Stout, Chippewa Valley Technical College, and Northwood Technical College.

### About the West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition

The West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition is a non-profit research and advocacy organization formed in 1999 by area business and education leaders to provide awareness and support for developing passenger rail service through West Central Wisconsin as part of a regional strategy to support sustainable, long-term economic growth. For more information, visit [www.westwisconsinrail.org](http://www.westwisconsinrail.org).

