



# Wisconsin DOT Intercity Passenger Rail Update



West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition Annual Meeting  
January 21, 2025



# Agenda

- 1) Hiawatha & Borealis Services
- 2) Corridor ID Studies
- 3) Twin Cities–Milwaukee–Chicago Infrastructure Project
- 4) Hiawatha Improvement Projects
- 5) Passenger Equipment Acquisition



# Borealis Start of Service May 21, 2024

Portage





# Borealis Service Ridership, FY2025 to Date

	Passengers	CHI-MKE only	CHI-MKE %
July	21,267	5,202	24.5%
August	22,309	5,527	24.8%
September	18,685	5,658	30.3%
October	21,036	5,419	25.8%
November	19,532	5,523	28.3%
December	20,570	5,261	25.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>123,399</b>	<b>33,462</b>	<b>27.1%</b>

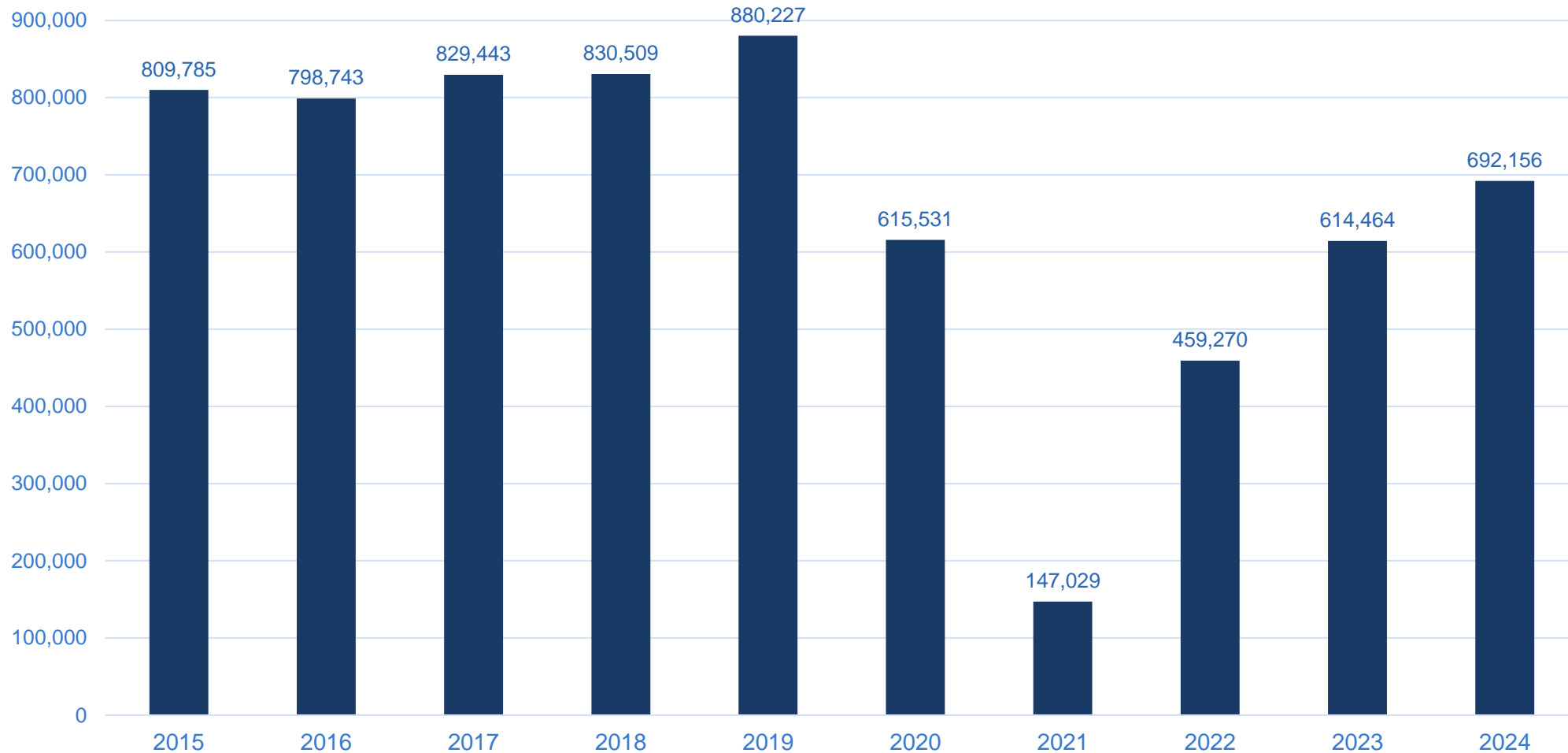
# Hiawatha Service + Chicago–Milwaukee

- State-supported route
  - Wisconsin (75%) and Illinois (25%)
- 7 Round-trips daily (Hiawatha + Borealis)
- 89-minute travel time
- FY 2019 peak ridership: 880,227 riders
- FY 2024 Chicago–Milwaukee: 692,156 (12.6% ↑)
- CY 2024 ridership: 693,133 (5.3% ↑ over CY23)





# Chicago–Milwaukee Ridership, FY 2015–2024





# Wisconsin Corridor ID Studies

## WisDOT Sponsored Corridors

1. Milwaukee to Chicago Hiawatha Corridor Service Expansion Increase frequencies from 7 to 10 daily round trips
2. Twin Cities Milwaukee Chicago – Second Round Trip Add a second daily frequency to state supported route
3. Milwaukee – Madison – Eau Claire – Twin Cities Establish new passenger rail service between Milwaukee and the Twin Cities
4. Milwaukee to Green Bay Hiawatha Service Extension Extend Hiawatha service from Milwaukee to Green Bay

## Other Sponsored Corridors

- A. Eau Claire – Twin Cities Establish new passenger rail service between Eau Claire and Twin Cities.
- B. Twin Cities – Superior, WI – Duluth, MN Minnesota DOT study for new passenger rail service

# Twin Cities–Milwaukee–Chicago Construction

- CPKC bridge over Mississippi in early 2025
- Track and crossings in La Crosse and Winona
  - Currently in Final Design
  - Final PS&E – Spring 2025
  - Construction – Spring 2026

- \$56 million estimated cost
  - \$31.8 M FRA CRISI Grant
  - \$12.4 M MnDOT
  - \$ 6.6 M WisDOT
  - \$ 5.0 M Amtrak







# Hiawatha Expansion Projects: MARS 2<sup>nd</sup> Platform

- Milwaukee Airport Rail Station (MARS) Expansion Project adds 2nd platform with overhead access and elevator towers
- \$22 million est. project cost
  - \$5.05 M FRA CRISI Grant (prior award)
  - \$15 M WisDOT
  - \$2 M Amtrak
  - Have submitted for additional FRA Grant for updates to existing platform & building
- Improves capacity, reliability, accessibility, and safety
- Construction to be completed in early 2026



# Hiawatha Expansion: Muskego Yard Bypass Project

- Freight Bypass of Milwaukee Intermodal Station through **Muskego Yard**
  - Two new mainline signalized freight through-tracks and new or upgraded bridges
  - Adds capacity at MIS for passenger trains
  - Project required for increased frequencies
- Status: Preliminary engineering complete, environmental document complete
- Final Design 2025-26; Construction 2027-29
- \$91 million estimated project cost
  - \$72.8 M FRA CRISI Grant (new award)
  - \$11.2+ M WisDOT
  - \$ 7 M Amtrak





# Hiawatha Expansion: MIS Signal Upgrade Project

- Upgrades signaling on 2 miles of track in and near Milwaukee Intermodal Station (MIS) to Centralized Train Control (CTC)
  - Benefits reliability, safety, and train speeds
  - Project required for increased frequencies
- \$5.2 million project
  - \$2.6M FRA CRISI Grant
  - \$2.6M WisDOT
- Status: Environmental complete; preliminary design refinements underway; preparing for grant agreement and final design
- Final Design 2025; Construction TBD





# Wisconsin Passenger Equipment Acquisition

- Equips Hiawatha trains with new passenger rail cars
- Consistent with all other Midwest equipment
- Six Siemens Venture coaches and three cab-coaches
- Expected in service early 2026





# Thank You

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