
Sponsor: Public Works

Meeting Date: 3/18/2025

Title: 2025 Funding Commitment to the Great River Rail Commission

File Number: 2025-056

Background and Rationale:

The Great River Rail Commission (Commission) is a joint powers board established under Minnesota Statutes, Section 471.59. Member parties on the Commission include the regional railroad authorities from Ramsey County, Goodhue County, Wabasha County, Washington County and Winona County, the La Crosse Area Planning Committee, the cities of Cottage Grove, Goodview, Hastings, Lake City, Newport, Red Wing, Saint Charles, Saint Paul, Saint Paul Park, Utica, Wabasha and Winona, and Wacouta Township.

The *Borealis* is a daily round-trip passenger train service between Union Depot in Saint Paul and Chicago Union Station that began revenue service on May 21, 2024. The *Borealis* service is operated by Amtrak and serves 13 cities in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois.

The Commission actively supported the development of the *Borealis* service by using its communication resources to inform the public of the benefits of increased passenger rail service and activate support for the *Borealis*. The Commission successfully lobbied state legislators to provide \$10 million as Minnesota's share to match a federal grant secured by the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Transportation for track and signal improvements. The Commission also provided an opportunity for public engagement at their regular meetings during the development of the *Borealis* service.

Pursuant to the members' Joint Powers Agreement (JPA), the five regional railroad authorities and the La Crosse Area Planning Committee are financial parties, responsible for payment of annual dues that fund the Commission's annual work plan. The dues are based on a formula established in the JPA that includes population, existing passenger rail route mileage and station stops within the jurisdiction of each financial party and a base amount shared equally among all financial parties.

The Commission considered two revenue options and adopted a 2025 Work Plan and Budget of \$40,000 on September 5, 2024. Within the Commission's final adopted budget, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority's 2025 funding commitment was identified as \$16,400.

More information on the Great River Rail Commission can be found at:

<https://www.greatriverrail.org/>

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority resolved to:

1. Accept the Great River Rail Commission's 2025 Work Plan and Budget.
2. Approve the payment of \$16,400 to the Great River Rail Commission as the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority funding commitment to the Great River Rail Commission 2025 Work Plan and Budget.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Xiong, seconded by Commissioner Moran.
Motion passed.

Aye: - 7: Jebens-Singh, McGuire, McMurtrey, Miller, Moran, Ortega, and Xiong

By: 

Jason Yang, Interim Chief Clerk - County
Board