



Legislation Text

File #: 231075, Version: 0

231075
ORIGINAL

ALD. BAUMAN

Resolution confirming support for Federal Investment in the Development and Construction of a Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Regional Rail Line.

The City of Racine has received \$5 million in funds to support the development of the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) Regional Rail Line. The City of Racine is currently beginning the study process to determine the full scope of the project. This resolution directs City staff and the Mayor's Office to coordinate and cooperate with the City of Racine and other partners in pursuing the development of the KRM Line. This resolution does not commit City of Milwaukee fiscal resources to the effort.

WHEREAS, the City of Racine received \$5 million in funds as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022, signed into law by the President on March 9, 2022, to advance the long planned and desired "Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) Regional Rail Corridor," which the City of Milwaukee has consistently supported and worked in partnership to realize; and

WHEREAS, VISION 2050, the long-range land use and transportation plan for Southeastern Wisconsin, recommends developing four commuter rail corridors in the Region connecting in downtown Milwaukee at the Milwaukee Intermodal Station, including the KRM regional rail corridor, that would be key elements of a planned, expanded regional transit system; and

WHEREAS, the three urban centers that would be served by a KRM regional rail service-Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee-exhibit a development pattern that is largely shaped by pre-automobile transportation; and

WHEREAS, a KRM regional rail service would provide travel times that would be competitive with auto travel and that would be unaffected by highway congestion; and

WHEREAS, a KRM regional rail service would improve mobility, increase transit use, enhance access to employment and education, and contribute to desirable economic and community development in the Counties of Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin's most densely populated area that is home to approximately 1.3 million residents, or about 22% of Wisconsin's population; and

WHEREAS, the City of Milwaukee is located in the 3rd largest economic region in the United States and 10th largest economic region in the world, illustrating a need for high-quality regional transportation connections to an area with a GDP of over \$830 billion; and

WHEREAS, Milwaukee's Intermodal Station hosts Amtrak's Hiawatha and Empire Builder services and would have the capacity to host a KRM regional rail service; and

WHEREAS, downtown Milwaukee, home to over 83,000 jobs and the largest central business district in Wisconsin, would directly benefit from access to these jobs provided by convenient and reliable KRM regional rail service and from increased potential for attracting new employers; and

WHEREAS, downtown Milwaukee is known internationally for its numerous festivals, including Summerfest, the world's largest annual music festival, and a KRM regional rail service would provide a new and desirable means of accessing the Summerfest grounds, relieving traffic congestion before and after events and reducing demand for parking; and

WHEREAS, downtown Milwaukee hosts a wide variety of cultural and arts events at public and private theaters and concert halls that would be accessible from the Intermodal Station; and

WHEREAS, downtown Milwaukee is the home of the World Champion Milwaukee Bucks and regularly hosts national sporting events such as NCAA basketball tournament games, and a KRM regional rail service would provide greater access to games and other events at Fiserv Forum; and

WHEREAS, downtown Milwaukee will host the 2024 Republican National Convention and will regularly host similar major conventions and events in the future at Fiserv Forum and Wisconsin Center District facilities such as the Baird Center, and a KRM regional rail service would provide convenient and reliable access to these events; and

WHEREAS, Milwaukee is home to Marquette University, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the Milwaukee School of Engineering, and the Milwaukee Area Technical College, and a KRM regional rail service would provide a convenient and reliable travel option for the tens of thousands of students attending these schools; and

WHEREAS, Milwaukee's The Hop streetcar directly serves the Intermodal Station and allows for transfers from regional trains to destinations in downtown; and

WHEREAS, the Milwaukee County Transit System provides connections from the Intermodal Station and downtown streets out across the county, including the new CONNECT 1 bus rapid transit line providing a convenient and fast connection between downtown and the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center; and

WHEREAS, downtown Milwaukee has a growing population of residents that will generate trips to and from Racine and Kenosha Counties for employment and other purposes, providing crucial balance for trains running in both directions along a KRM regional rail line; and

WHEREAS, downtown Milwaukee has professional services, including medical offices, that would benefit from a new mode of access for patrons and customers, particularly for those who cannot or choose not to drive; and

WHEREAS, downtown Milwaukee would benefit from more pedestrians on city streets, who arrive without automobiles, to create a more vibrant street life and support small storefront businesses, especially along paths to the Intermodal Station; and

WHEREAS, new regional rail service from the south on the KRM line, and from the north and west on other potential regional rail lines, would solidify downtown Milwaukee as the most transit-accessible destination in Southeastern Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, a KRM regional rail service would provide connections in Kenosha with Metra's UP-North line, giving travelers from the Milwaukee metro area an option to travel conveniently and reliably to and from Chicago and other major destinations in Northeastern Illinois; and

WHEREAS, a KRM regional rail service would provide a shuttle bus connection with Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport, giving travelers in Southeastern Wisconsin and Northeastern Illinois an option to easily access a variety of non-stop commercial flights to and from domestic and international destinations; and

WHEREAS, ridership on Amtrak's Hiawatha service operating between Milwaukee and Chicago more than doubled between 1997 and 2019 in response to increased daily roundtrips, track and station improvements, and acquisition of new train equipment sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), making the Hiawatha the busiest Amtrak route in the Midwest and illustrating a proven regional demand for passenger rail use in Southeastern Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, a KRM regional rail service would provide connections in Milwaukee to an expanded intercity passenger rail system planned by WisDOT that would include service to Madison, La Crosse, Eau Claire, the Twin Cities, the Fox Valley, and Green Bay, giving travelers and visitors an option to travel conveniently and reliably to and from major destinations in Wisconsin and Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, increased transit access and regional rail connectivity is critical in addressing Southeastern Wisconsin's stark disparities in socioeconomic measures between Black, Latino, and white residents such as household income, education attainment, unemployment rates, and homeownership; and

WHEREAS, the proportion of households without access to an automobile in the cities of Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee is twice the regional average; and

WHEREAS, enhanced passenger rail service would help combat unemployment and lower income levels in the cities of Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee that are higher than the regional average; and

WHEREAS, regional connectivity is critical for economic growth and competitiveness in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce, promoting tourism, and creating a vibrant business community; and

WHEREAS, a KRM regional rail service would support, and assist in providing, thousands of jobs in Southeastern Wisconsin through transit-oriented development, and it would connect Milwaukee workers to over seven million jobs within the Milwaukee-Chicago metropolitan region; and

WHEREAS, the Biden-Harris Administration announced a federal goal of 50% reduction in economy-wide net greenhouse gas emissions by 2030; and

WHEREAS, according to the United States Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration, public transportation reduces greenhouse gas emissions by "providing a low emissions alternative to driving and facilitating compact land use"; and

WHEREAS, a KRM regional rail service would contribute to economic growth, environmental stewardship, and racial equity in Southeastern Wisconsin;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Milwaukee officially supports the development and construction of the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Regional Rail Line; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Office of the Mayor and other relevant departments participate in efforts related to the development and construction of the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Regional Rail Line.

Department of Public Works
Infrastructure Services Division
KEVIN J. MUHS / C. Murphy

November 10, 2023