

# Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission

X-Commission Mtg – Friday, 08 Jan. 2010 @ 10am • Dane Co. Hwy, 2302 Fish Hatchery Rd, Madison, WI

1. Karl Nilson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.
2. Commissioners present for all or part of the meeting:

Crawford	Tom Cornford		X
	Rocky Rocksvold		
	Vacant		
Dane	Gene Gray	Treasurer	X
	Jim Haefs-Fleming		X
	Forrest Van Schwartz	Advocate	
Grant	DuWayne Carlin		
	Margaret Ruf		
	Robert Scallon	2nd Vice Chair	X
Iowa	Charles Anderson		
	Gerald Dorscheid	Vice Treasurer	X
	Joe Thomas		

Rock	Ben Coopman	Alternate	
	Katie Kuznacic		
	Alan Sweeney	Secretary	X
	Terry Thomas		
Sauk	Joel Gaalswijk		
	Rob Sinklair		
	Frederick Halfen		
	Larry Volz	Vice Chair	X
Walworth	Jerry Grant		
	Richard Kuhnke		X
	Allan Polyock		
Waukesha	Karl Nilson	Chair	X
	Richard Manke		
	Fritz Ruf		

**Others present for all or part of the meeting:**

Amy Seeboth (SWWRPC / WRRTC Administrator); Frank Huntington & Roger Larson (WisDOT); Virgil Kasper & Alan Anderson (Pink Lady RTC); Ken Lucht (WSOR); Renee Defabbio (Town of Muscoda)

3. Motion accepting Seeboth’s certification of Public Notice. Dorscheid / Cornford / passed unanimously.
4. Motion accepting the Agenda, prepared by Seeboth. Volz / Gray / passed unanimously.
5. Motion approving the draft Dec. Minutes. Dorscheid / Scallon / passed unanimously.
6. Public Comment – Virgil Kasper of the Pink Lady RTC introduced the Commission to Alan Anderson, Vice President of the Pink Lady. Alan was a UW-Extension Educator for Sauk County for years and helped establish the Pink Lady RTC. He has recently retired and this enabled him to join the Pink Lady as a Commissioner. Alan will likely step up to the Chair position in the RTC next year. Virgil and Alan also explained to the Commission that Pink Lady is so named for the pink quartzite that is mined near the rail and was used as the ballast for that line. If you look at the line today, it still looks pink.
7. Correspondence & Communications – Seeboth shared an article emailed by Commissioner Forrest Van Schwartz. The article was from the State Journal “Just Ask Us” column- someone had asked about the open-sided freight cars resting between McCoy Rd to Olin Ave. in Madison. The article featured an interview from Ken Lucht, WSOR.

**REPORTS & COMMISSION BUSINESS**

8. Wisconsin & Southern Railroad’s Report on Operations – Ken Lucht, WSOR, reported on the following:
  - Monthly Maintenance Activities – Lucht reported that WSOR is involved in a lot of winter maintenance right now. They are still brush cutting and also had to schedule immediate repairs to a bridge on the Watertown Subdivision in Madison- the repairs were scheduled for the week after this meeting. This Spring they will have the rail detector back out on the rail and Lucht promised that he will be sure to get rail detector reports to WRRTC for their Subdivisions.
  - 2009 & 2010 Capital Projects (& Economic Stimulus) – Lucht reported that the crossing renewals are done on the Madison Subdivision. For this year, in the next few months, WSOR hopes to order welded rail for their 2009 welded rail project, which is 14 miles. They expect to have the welded rail by August. WSOR has ordered the

ties for the Monroe Sub and hope to start laying them in late part of August. WisDOT Grant Applications are due on February 1<sup>st</sup>: WSOR plans to apply for funds to extend the mainline track 5.1 miles west of Badger Ethanol on the Monroe Subdivision, funds for the remainder of Madison welded rail project, and to install 1.5 miles of continuous welded rail in Waukesha. They also have plans to apply for funds to complete phase 1 of a tie project on the Northern Subdivision.

- *Business Development* – A number of businesses are increasing their service via WSOR, some are using transloading. A new business prospect for WSOR is the proposed bio-mass / natural gas energy plant on the UW-Madison campus. The Commission will need to be involved in this to some degree because some modifications are needed on this track. The biomass has yet to be located, the UW is talking with the agricultural industry to originate the biomass. They have a few sights they are looking at on the Watertown Sub by Marshall and Waterloo, also by Muscoda and Prairie du Chien and in Sauk County. They plan on having the biomass in big round bales or square blocks.

**9. WRRTC Financial Report** (*moved to after Item 13*) – Jim Matzinger, Dane County CPA / WRRTC Accountant distributed copies of the Treasurer’s Report and provided an overview.

- **Motion approving Treasurer’s Report for Nov. and Dec. and payment of bills as presented** - *Scallon / Sweeney-passed unanimously.*

**10. WRRTC Administrator’s Report** – Amy Seeboth, SWWRPC Transportation Planner circulated copies of the December usage report for the Commission’s website [www.wrrtc.org](http://www.wrrtc.org). She asked the Commissioners their thoughts on how much information they liked to receive prior to each meeting. The Commission responded that they liked to receive important documents in advance if they are going to be asked to make a decision on them. In general, however, they prefer to not receive materials that can be explained at the meeting. They asked Amy to use her discretion in deciding what to send to the Commissioners.

**11. WisDOT Update** – Frank Huntington from WisDOT provided an update on the proposed high speed rail from Milwaukee to Madison. WisDOT won’t know if they received Federal Stimulus Funds for this project until February or March. WisDOT has applied for approx. \$800 mil., but there is only \$8 billion available. Total final applications are worth about \$60 billion. Huntington said that he will keep the Commission as informed as he can on the project as it develops. Huntington also reported that FRIIP and FRAP applications are due February 1<sup>st</sup>. WisDOT has available \$30 mil for FRAP and \$5-10mil for the FRIIP program. A couple of other updates: this summer WisDOT acquired property through Janesville that completes an entire line segment. WisDOT has been trying to do this since the 1980’s. Another major project is the reconstruction of the line between Kohler and Plymouth. WisDOT hopes to begin some work on that project by this spring.

**12. Rail Service Issues to Sauk County** – Huntington from WisDOT brought this item up last month, asking that it be placed on the Jan. agenda so that the Commission could discuss what might happen to the newly acquired track through Badger Army Ammunition. In the next several weeks, Huntington is going to set up a meeting with all the interested parties, including the two Commissions (Pink Lady and WRRTC), so that they can talk about this. Larry Volz said that there is a meeting coming up soon (Jan. 25<sup>th</sup>) in Sauk County to discuss the Merrimac Bridge and he thinks that this new meeting should occur after that meeting. Lucht added that he is aware that the Sauk County Chair and their economic Development Committee is very interested in all of these issues and Lucht also encourages the Commission to hold back on this until after the Economic Development Committee has met and all of these issues can be discussed at once. Virgil Kasper added the Pink Lady cannot make any decisions on this issue until they know the status of the Merrimac Bridge. Alan Anderson said there is a strong interest in Sauk City for the rail to trails. Huntington express concern about delaying this conversation, he doesn’t think that WisDOT will want to wait much longer, but he thinks that waiting until after the 25<sup>th</sup> is possible.

Lucht said that he encourages WisDOT, the Commission and the Pink Lady only very carefully consider the Rails to Trails program, if at all. Lucht explained that it is rare for a railroad to be reclaimed to rail after it has been put into a trail. He asks that the Commission seriously view that as a challenge and consider alternatives. Lucht added that WSOR is not interested in talking about a trail down to Mazomanie, as WSOR actively uses the corridor south of Sauk County.

**13. Jefferson County RTC Membership**- Seeboth wrote Jefferson County last month asking that they consider, again, joining the WRRTC. She read the letter out loud to the Commission. She has not yet received a response from the

County, but only sent it two weeks earlier. The Commission asked that this item be placed again on February's agenda, and that perhaps the Commission should write the County again including more specific information about who the customers are and what sort of employee base and tax base they provide the County.

**14. OCR Rule Updates** –The Office of the Commission on Railroads is conducting a regular update of their rules and have asked the RTC's to provide any opinions on this matter. Seeboth provided each of the Commissioners with a copy of the current OCR Rules and the project Scope Statement. The OCR is holding two public meetings on this topic- one is Wed. January 20<sup>th</sup> @ 10am, another is Wed. January 27<sup>th</sup> @ 1pm. Huntington advised that this is a very regular event and that it is not important that an RTC representative attend if there are no comments. No Commissioner had any comments.

**15. Consideration of 2010 Staff Services Agreement**

- **Motion approving an agreement with SWWRPC for staff services in 2010, not to exceed \$22,550 in normal indirect expenses-** *Gray / Dorscheid – passed unanimously*

**16. Defabbio Private Crossing Request, Town of Muscoda** – The Commission received a request for a joint private crossing permit in the Town of Muscoda (for the Defabbio and Ekelberry families). The property in question had recently sold, and the prior owners (the Headings) had a private crossing permit from 1992 (this permit was not a joint permit, but the crossing has been used by both households in the past). Renee Defabbio attended on behalf of the Defabbio family, and Paula Ekelberry provided the Commission with an email informing them of their intent to share the permit and associated maintenance costs. Seeboth provided the Commissioners with an aerial photograph of the properties in question, and the location of the existing crossing. These properties and the surrounding properties are all zoned A-2 and the existing crossing is the only entry point for each of the properties. Nilson asked Defabbio if the future use of the crossing will remain residential, Defabbio replied that it would. Lucht reminded everyone that the crossing would need to be upgraded to the standard crossing plan, it currently is not up to WSOR standards. Renee Defabbio replied that they would bring the crossing up to standards.

- **Motion approving the joint private crossing permit to the Defabbio's and Ekelberry's, and requiring that the crossing be brought up to current WSOR standards, at the expense of the Defabbio's and Ekelberry's** – *Scallon / Sweeney – Passed Unanimously*

**17. Motion adjourning the meeting at 11:02 p.m.** - *Cornford / Volz - passed unanimously.*