

**RESOLUTION**

**ROCK COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

Supervisors Sutterlin, Winter and  
Zajac  
INITIATED BY



3/3/2024  
DATE DRAFTED

**Extending Authorization of the Ad Hoc Committee on Passenger Rail Development**

**WHEREAS**, the Rock County Board of Supervisors, in Resolution R-2022-82 expressed support for a Rock County Amtrak Service Connection; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Rock County Board of Supervisors, in Resolution R-2023-189 authorized an Ad Hoc Committee on Passenger Rail Development (Ad Hoc Committee) with an initial timeframe ending April 2024; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Ad Hoc Committee has met regularly since its formation, and received information from individuals and groups familiar with planning and positioning for passenger and/or commuter rail service; and,

**WHEREAS**, these representatives have provided valuable information and insights concerning the possible paths forward to establish said service in Rock County; and,

**WHEREAS**, since the formation of this Ad Hoc Committee there have been announcements of new and/or expanded regional Amtrak and Metra services throughout the region; and,

**WHEREAS**, the initial goal of the Ad Hoc Committee was to apply for a Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP) planning grant from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in spring 2024; and

**WHEREAS**, the next round and/or processes associated with the CIDP have not been determined; and,

**WHEREAS**, there are other sources of potential funding for the development of passenger and/or commuter rail planning efforts and their related implementation activities; and,

**WHEREAS**, any planning and implementation funding applications will be highly competitive and require strong support from a diverse coalition of communities, elected officials, regional stakeholders and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation; and,

**WHEREAS**, developing this support base will require a significant amount of coordination, time and financial resources; and,

**WHEREAS**, the best chance to coordinate this support and develop a successful planning grant application will require the expertise and experience of a qualified, third-party service provider(s) familiar with these types of initiatives; and,

**WHEREAS**, articulating and communicating support from the County Board of Supervisors, in an appropriate manner and time, would be an indicator to coalition members the County is committed to advancing passenger and/or commuter rail service; and,

**WHEREAS**, to capitalize on the Ad Hoc Committee's work, as well as to continually advance Rock County's passenger and/or commuter rail service planning efforts, strategic positioning will need to begin sooner than later; and

**WHEREAS**, this positioning will require a long-term commitment of County staff time and fiscal resources to facilitate and augment those efforts; and

**WHEREAS**, the Ad Hoc Committee recommends this commitment should be reflected in, and considered as part of, the 2025 County Budget.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Rock County Board of Supervisors duly assembled this 14th day of March, 2024, does hereby grant the authority of the Ad Hoc Committee on Passenger Rail Development to continue meeting and working toward advancing passenger and/or commuter rail activities in Rock County.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, County Administration and/or its designee, will be responsible for developing and implementing a communication and engagement plan, to begin the process of identifying and then facilitating a coalition of regional stakeholders, for the advancement of passenger and/or commuter rail service in Rock County.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the County's Planning, Economic and Community Development Department is authorized to continue its work with the Ad Hoc Committee, to develop an appropriate funding request for the 2025 County Budget.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, this Ad Hoc Committee shall be authorized to remain active until December 31, 2024; and after which time, the County Board of Supervisors may reauthorize the continuation of the Committee.

FISCAL NOTE:

Per County Board Rule IV-C, County Board Supervisors who are members of additional special, single purpose or ad hoc committees are eligible for per meeting allowances and mileage reimbursement. Citizen members of such committees shall be eligible for mileage reimbursement only.

Sherry Oja  
Finance Director

LEGAL NOTE:

The County Board is authorized to take this action pursuant to §§ 59.01 & 59.51, Wis. Stats., as well as Rule IV-C of the County Board Rules.

Richard Greenlee  
Corporation Counsel

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE:

The body of the resolution notes several important facts that are relevant to the Board's consideration. First, the ad hoc committee was initially created to try to meet a federal grant funding deadline in 2024, which will not be met. With the initial round of passenger rail routes in Wisconsin now identified and related federal funds likely devoted to those projects, Rock County would be engaging in a multi-year process to position itself for future funding and opportunities. Second, the resolution notes this will take a significant amount of coordination, time, and financial resources, including a long-term commitment of County staff and financial resources and third-party expertise. Third, the ad hoc committee recommends a funding commitment be considered as part of the 2025 budget process, but acknowledges that strategic positioning should begin sooner rather than later.

Given these facts, my recommendation is that if the County Board wishes to continue planning for passenger rail, it should consider not waiting until the 2025 budget process to identify and devote funding. Making this decision now would bring some certainty to this decision, so County staff do not spend the next nine months trying to support the ad hoc committee, only to have funding not approved in the 2025 budget and/or have the County Board not reauthorize the ad hoc committee. It should be noted that providing funding in 2024 will require a budget amendment and a 2/3 vote of the County Board. Given the 2025 funding challenges the County Board has already begun to identify, the County Board will have to decide now or later whether continuing to evaluate passenger rail falls within its strategic priorities.

Josh Smith

County Administrator

**Committee Action**

Planning and Development Committee

The Planning and Development Committee recommended this resolution for approval by a unanimous voice vote.