Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan

Passenger Technical Advisory Committee (PTAC)

May 28, 2009

presented by
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TKDA, Inc.

CAMBRIDGE SYSTEMATICS

Agenda

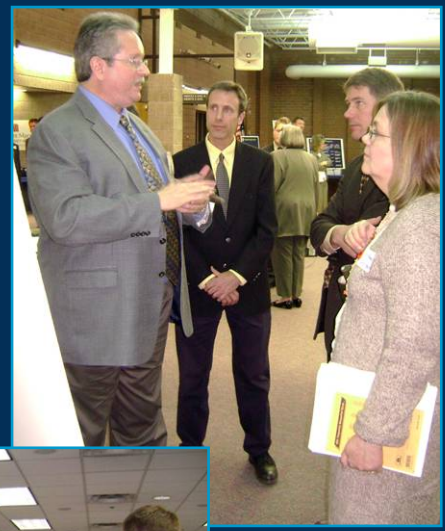
- Introductions and Opening Comments
  - Mike Schadauer, Co-Project Manager, MnDOT
- Presentation on State Rail Plan, Cambridge Systematics
  - Outreach Update, Randy Halvorson
  - Study Overview, Marc Cutler
  - Passenger Rail System, Allan Rutter
  - Next Steps, Marc Cutler
- Discussion – Randy Halvorson

Public Outreach

Randy Halvorson, Facilitator

Public Open House Meetings

- Two rounds of meetings
  - April – introduction to project
  - October – preliminary recommendations
- Locations
  - St. Cloud
  - Rochester
  - Duluth
  - Minneapolis-St. Paul
  - Red Wing
  - Mankato
  - Moorhead



Comments from Open Houses
By Theme

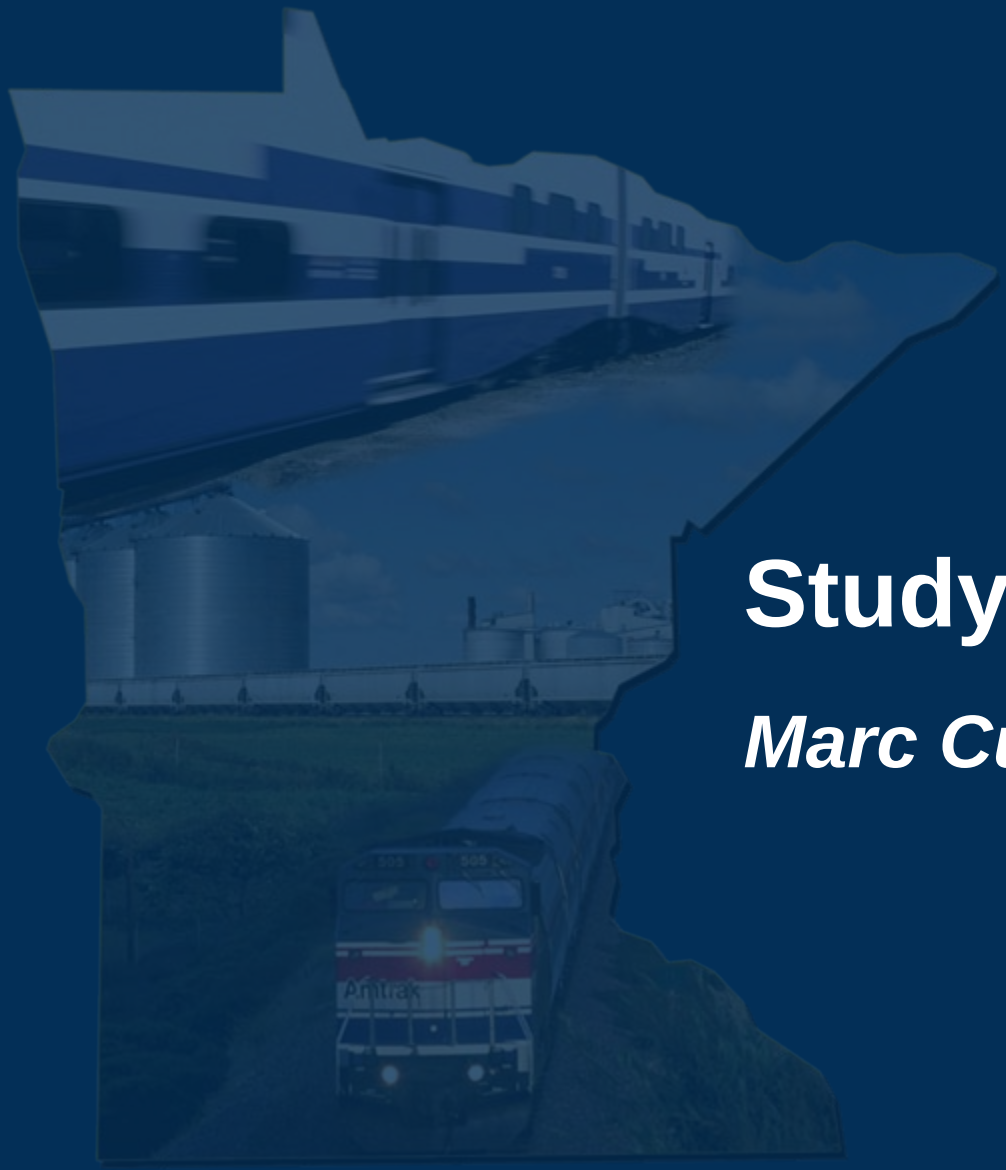
- Strong support for new passenger rail service and belief that demand will be sufficient
- New passenger rail services cannot degrade existing freight services, which need more investment
- Decisions should not only be driven by existing land use patterns, growth forecasts, or energy assumptions
- Concern about how to balance data-driven approach and inevitable political influence on ultimate decisions

Comments from Open Houses
By Location

- St. Cloud – extend Northstar; consider the relationship between freight and passenger rail
- Rochester – connect to MWRRI; move freight service out of downtown
- Duluth – dedicated alignment for Northern Lights Express; use union labor to operate
- MSP – connectivity between St. Paul and Minneapolis
- Red Wing – MWRRI should use River Route
- Mankato – passenger rail to St. Paul
- Moorhead – more investment in freight rail

Upcoming Meeting Dates

- PAC Meetings
  - August 14
  - November 13
- Freight and Passenger TAC Meetings
  - August 13
  - November 12
- Open Houses second round
  - October



Study Overview

Marc Cutler

Study Goals
Legislatively Mandated

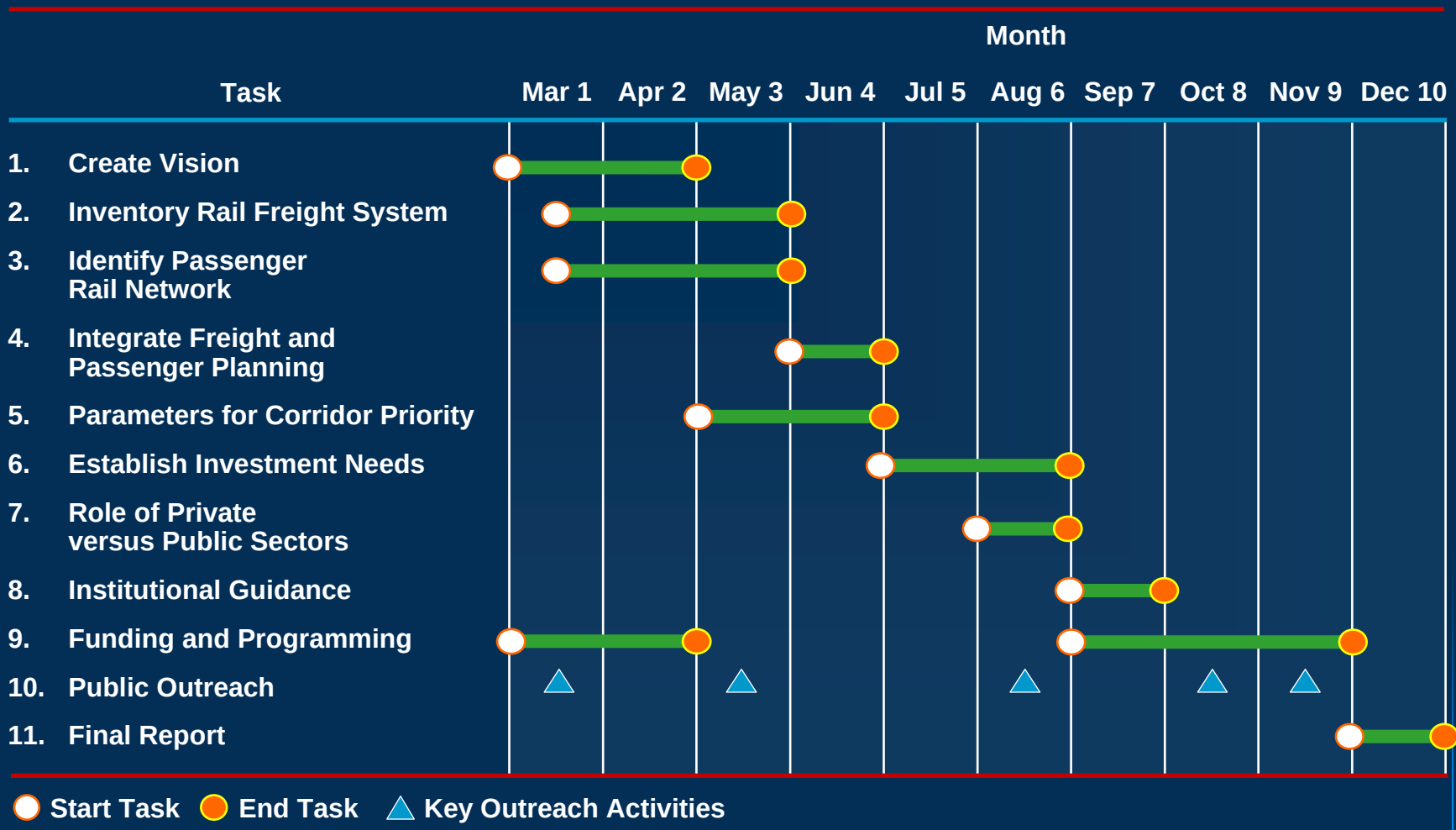
- Comprehensive look at demand for freight and passenger rail services
- Identify infrastructure and other improvements needed to expand rail service
- Explore funding options
- Recommend policy guidelines for State investment and public/private partnerships

A Strategic Overview to Help Guide Development of Individual Rail Projects

Project Phases

Project Phase	Description	Task
Phase I	Rail Vision	Task 1
Phase II	Inventory Freight System and Passenger Rail Plans	Tasks 2 and 3
Phase III	Integration of Passenger and Freight Planning, and Development of Performance Criteria	Tasks 4 and 5
Phase IV	Plan Development – Needs, Institutional Arrangements, Programs, Financing	Tasks 6-9
Continuous Public Outreach		Task 10
Final Report		Task 11

Schedule


Month
Task
Mar 1
Apr 2
May 3
Jun 4
Jul 5
Aug 6
Sep 7
Oct 8
Nov 9
Dec 10
1. Create Vision
2. Inventory Rail Freight System
3. Identify Passenger Rail Network
4. Integrate Freight and Passenger Planning
5. Parameters for Corridor Priority
6. Establish Investment Needs
7. Role of Private versus Public Sectors
8. Institutional Guidance
9. Funding and Programming
10. Public Outreach
11. Final Report
Start Task
End Task
Key Outreach Activities

Vision

Vision for Rail in Minnesota (Task 1)

Task Objective

Develop a vision for freight and passenger rail in Minnesota as part of the State's overall transportation network

Key Issues

- Meet business, community, and economic needs
- Balance the rail program with environmental, energy, greenhouse gas, development, land use, social and fiscal programs
- Allocate public and private benefits, costs, and risks
- Adjust as the system evolves

Vision
Imagining Different Futures

- **Rail Investment Strategies**
  - **Short-term (3-5 years TIP/STIP)**
  - **Mid-term (10 years CWP)**
  - **Long-term (20+ years LRTP)**
- **Growth**
  - **Distribution – metro centric or less concentrated**
  - **Amount – high versus low**
- **Fuel**
  - **Cheap and plentiful**
  - **Expensive and scarce**

Draft Vision Statement

- **Rail contributes to the long-term growth and productivity of business and industry**
- **Rail knits together Minnesota communities**
- **Rail balances the State's transportation network as an alternative to highways for freight and to highways and flying for passenger travel**
- **Rail sustains the environment by reducing fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions**
- ***Therefore, Minnesota's rail program should share the benefits, costs, and risks of its evolving rail system equitably among users, regions, and public/private sectors***

Passenger Rail System

Passenger Rail System Inventory and Forecasts (Task 3)

Task Objective

Synthesize information from existing studies to identify corridors and rail lines most likely to support effective passenger rail service

Key Issues

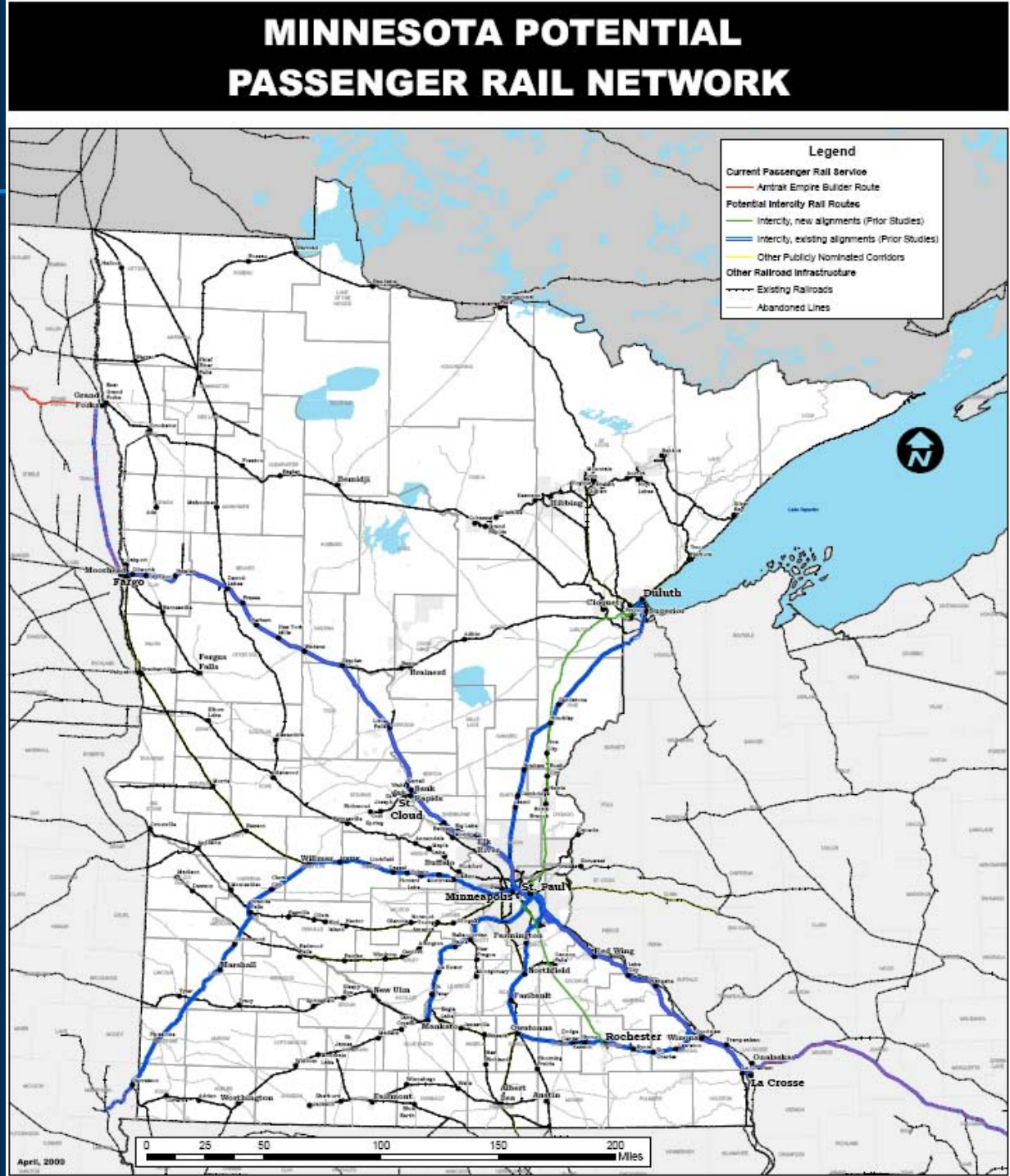
- Compile previous and ongoing reports on other relevant planning efforts
- Inventory physical characteristics on rail lines in likely passenger corridors
- Synthesize demand-related forecasts to evaluate corridors

VISION *for* HIGH-SPEED RAIL *in* AMERICA

Proposed Midwest Regional Rail System

Passenger Rail

- Existing service
- Daily Amtrak service between Chicago and Seattle/Portland
- Northstar service to start in 2009



Passenger Rail Corridors Studied

- Corridors that connect to the Twin Cities
- Some corridors begin with commuter rail studies
- Other corridors have been the subject of intercity passenger rail and high speed rail studies
- Still others have been suggested

Commuter Rail Corridors

- Twin Cities to
  - Big Lake/St. Cloud (Northstar)
  - Hastings (Red Rock)
  - Hinckley (Rush)
  - Bethel/Cambridge (Bethel)
  - Norwood-Young America
- Red Rock and Rush Lines are still under active study

Intercity Passenger Rail Corridors

- Twin Cities to
  - Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison (Midwest Regional Rail Initiative-MWRRI)
  - Duluth, Hinckley (Northern Lights Express-NLX)
  - Rochester (either directly or as route of MWRRI)

Other Passenger Rail Corridors

- Twin Cities to
  - Willmar (Little Crow), Sioux Falls, South Dakota
  - Shakopee/Mankato (Sioux Trail)
  - Des Moines, Iowa
  - Eau Claire, Wisconsin
  - Fargo, North Dakota
  - Grand Forks, North Dakota

Study Process

- Collected, reviewed existing studies
- Synthesized passenger rail forecasts
  - Created new spreadsheet tools to estimate demand
  - Used highway traffic, aviation, Amtrak, motor coach data sets
- This helps generate demand data to select intercity corridors that need further study, integration with freight rail needs

Corridors Showing Strong Demand

Corridor	Demand Profile	Implementation Issues
MWRRI through Minnesota	Strong demand from Chicago	Good track, heavy freight train volumes, multiple states

Corridors Showing Moderate Demand

Corridor	Demand Profile	Implementation Issues
St. Cloud	Moderate demand	Good track, heavy freight volumes, new commuter trains
Rochester	Moderate demand	New route to MSP, poor track – Winona, low freight volumes
Duluth (Northern Lights Express)	Moderate demand	Fair track, modest freight, poor infrastructure near Duluth
Des Moines	Moderate demand	Fair track, modest freight volumes, multiple states
Shakopee/Mankato (Sioux Trail)	Moderate demand	Fair track, modest freight volumes
Eau Claire	Moderate demand	Fair track, modest freight volumes, multiple states

Corridors Showing Modest Demand

Corridor	Demand Profile	Implementation Issues
Red Wing, Winona, La Crosse	Part of MWRRI, intrastate demand lighter	Good track, heavy freight volumes
Willmar (Little Crow)	Modest demand to West	Fair track, modest freight volumes
Sioux Falls, Omaha	Modest demand	Fair track, modest freight volumes, multiple states
Fargo, Grand Forks	Modest intrastate demand	Existing Amtrak service, heavy freight volumes, multiple states

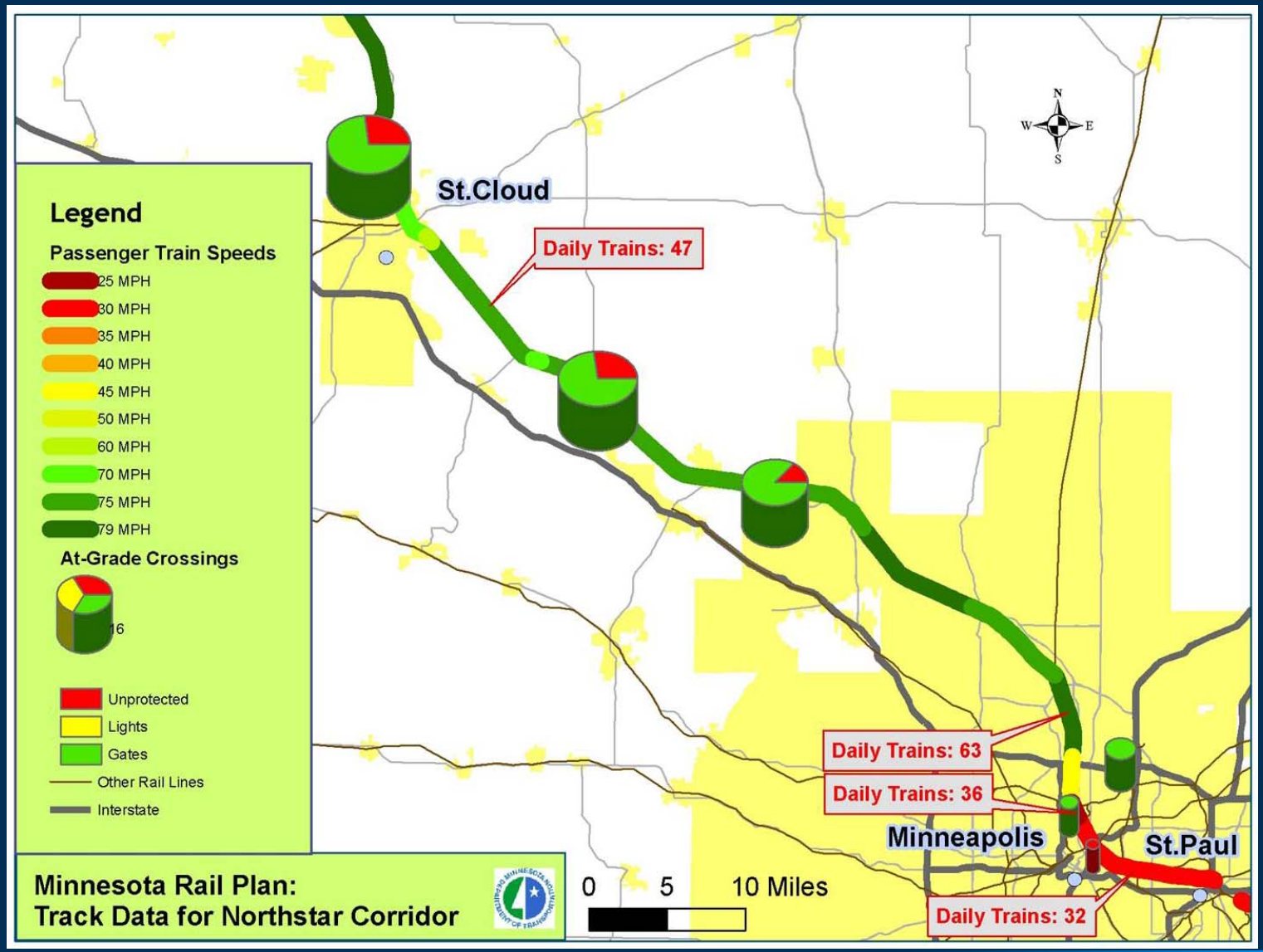
Passenger Rail Corridor Inventory Information

- Coordinating underlying freight rail line data
- Describes conditions that may affect passenger rail implementation
- Example

BNSF – Minneapolis-Willmar-Sioux Falls

Segment	Length	Train Counts	Track Speed	FRA Track Class	Grade Crossings
Wayzata1	2.78	14	10	2	3
Wayzata2	1.03	14	25	2	0
Wayzata3	84.69	14	40	3	95
Marshall1	44.54	15	49	4	70
Marshall2	35.74	14	49	4	39
Marshall3	42.32	13	49	4	69
Marshall4	2.6	12	40	4	4
Marshall5	8.71	11	45	4	12

Passenger Rail Corridor Inventory Information (continued)



Implementation Issues
Federal Funding Opportunities

- FRA funding
  - Application guidance coming mid-June
  - Three types of grants
    - Projects (ARRA)
    - Corridor planning (ARRA, PRIIA appropriations)
    - State rail planning (FY ‘09, PRIIA appropriations)
- Surface Transportation Authorization
  - Bill may have new rail title
  - High priority project applications already in
- MN needs to coordinate project advocacy, priorities

Implementation Issues
State Funding Needs – A Cautionary Tale

- 2005 HGTV Dream Home
  - Lake Tyler, Texas
  - Owners chose to live in home
  - Couldn't afford taxes, operating costs
  - Foreclosed 2007
- Lesson – don't accept "free" gifts without counting costs

Implementation Issues
State Funding Needs

- State funding will be needed to match capital costs of infrastructure, rolling stock, positive train control
  - Can be funded through bonds to match Federal funds
  - Are there limits to state debt available for matching?
  - Transportation funding has been a contentious issue in MN
- State funding will be needed for operating costs
  - Passenger rail lines rarely cover operations and maintenance costs, never mind capital costs
  - O&M costs require annual funding
  - Can state funding sources be identified, set aside?

Implementation Issues
Working with Freight Railroads

- Freight railroads own underlying rail lines, land for passenger rail routes
- Freight railroad negotiating principle
  - Uncompromised safety for passengers and freights
  - Enhanced capacity for freight services
  - No fault liability for passenger services
  - Appropriate compensation for use of tracks/ROW
- Other issues – PTC, financial participation on low volume lines and in difficult times

Next Steps

Marc Cutler

Integrate Freight and Passenger System Planning (Task 4)

Task Objective

Identify infrastructure improvements needed to provide better services and meet capacity, safety, efficiency, reliability, and mobility goals

Key Issues

- Define key network
- Estimate line capacity
- Calculate LOS
- Estimate future service demand
- Identify improvements
- Assemble and test three alternative portfolios

Identify Performance Measures (Task 5)

Task Objective

Develop performance measures that will assist in prioritizing freight and passenger rail improvements by corridor

Key Issues

- Review national and state measures
- Identify measures by stakeholder group
- Select those most appropriate to Minnesota's vision and goals

Discussion

Randy Halvorson, Facilitator

Passenger Technical Advisory Committee (PTAC)

Amtrak
Anoka County RRA
BNSF Railway
Canadian Pacific RR
Dakota County
FRA
Hennepin County
Met Council
Mid-Minnesota Development
Minnesota Commercial RR
MnDOT Districts 3, 6, Metro
MnDOT Office of Transit

Ramsey County RRA
Rochester Area
St. Louis County
St. Cloud APO
Twin Cities and Western RR
Union Pacific Railway
UTU
Washington County
WisDOT
Aaron Isaacs
Dave Simpson

Freight Technical Advisory Committee (FTAC)

- Agricultural Association
- Blandin Paper
- BNSF RR
- Canadian Pacific RR
- Cargill, Inc.
- CHS, Inc.
- FHWA
- Ford Motor Company
- FRA
- Met Council
- Midwest Shippers Association
- Minnesota Railroad Association
- Minnesota Trucking Association
- Mn Commercial RR
- MnDOT Districts 1, 7, 8
- North Dakota DOT
- NW Minnesota RDC
- Port of Duluth, MFAC
- Southwest Leadership Initiative
- TC&W, MFAC
- Twin Modal, Inc.
- UTU

Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)

- Cities and Counties
- Counties Transit Improvement Boards (CTIB)
- Environmental Organizations
- Legislators and Other Elected Officials
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Metropolitan Council
- Organized Labor
- Rail Corridor Coalitions
- Railroads
- Regional Development Commissions (RDCs)
- Regional Railroad Authorities
- Shippers
- State DOTs
- Trade Associations
- Transportation Associations, Ports, Minnesota Trade Associations