

Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan

OPEN HOUSE ROUND 1 SUMMARY – NORTHFIELD, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan was held in Northfield, MN on Thursday, October 16, 2014 from 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM at the Carleton College Great Hall. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, comment forms, and project handouts. The open house was advertised in the local Northfield newspaper. It directly followed a Regional Leaders Meeting concerning passenger rail between Northfield and the Twin Cities. The purpose of the open house was to introduce content and educate attendees on the MN Statewide Rail Plan and provide opportunities for participants to influence Plan development.



Open House participation included:

- 19 attendees signed-in
- 10 attendees filled out comment forms

Comments

Participants were asked to provide comments on Minnesota's rail improvement needs, passenger rail planning, and any other feedback. The following summarizes participant responses.

- **Rail Improvements:** When asked what improvements attendees recommended for Minnesota's State Rail Plan, respondents most-frequently identified passenger rail as a need. Other recommended improvements included expanding system capacity, upgrading rail for increased speed, and implementing a gas tax to fund passenger rail.
- **Passenger Rail:** Eight out of ten comment forms included support for passenger rail, making this the most-commonly heard theme at the Northfield open house. In addition, the majority of questions asked following the open house presentation pertained to passenger rail. Support was expressed for a Twin Cities – Northfield connection and a Twin Cities – Milwaukee – Chicago connection. Attendees expressed interest in forming a local coalition in support of passenger rail between Northfield and the Twin Cities. It was noted that the city of Northfield is actively working on a historic rail depot relocation project.
- **General:** Other comments received included requests to develop a rail system that supports renewable energy sources, mitigate noise impacts in Northfield by implementing quiet zones, and grant rail contracts to worker-owned cooperative businesses.