

# Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan

## OPEN HOUSE ROUND 1 SUMMARY – WILLMAR, MN

A public open house for the Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan was held in Willmar, MN on Monday, December 8, 2014 from 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM at the MnDOT District 8 Headquarters. Materials available included Rail Plan display boards, a Rail Plan presentation, a Freight Plan station, comment forms, and project handouts. 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:

- 15 attendees signed-in
- 4 attendees filled out comment forms

### Comments

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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:** Most comments and questions revolved around freight improvements. Several respondents noted the continued importance of the proposed Willmar Wye project. Some noted concerns about recent rail congestion and the corresponding economic impact that it has had to the region. Many expressed frustration with Class I railroads' unwillingness to address local concerns.
- **Passenger Rail:** Passenger rail was a secondary priority to respondents in Willmar, but none in attendance were opposed to statewide development. The passenger rail comments received were focused on developing high speed rail from the Twin Cities to Chicago, and the possibility of a second daily Amtrak route on the current Empire Builder alignment. Those that desired HSR to Chicago encouraged the state to keep pursuing federal funding for the project.
- **General:** Other comments received included suggestions to allow heavier loads for trucks on rural MN highways to relieve pressure on freight rail. Participants complimented short line railroads in the area. Respondents also asked questions about extending crew hours, funding for rail inspection, and training of local emergency response teams for worst case rail scenarios.