

Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission

XCom Mtg – Friday, 4 April 2008 at 10 AM | Dane Co Hwy Garage, 2302 Fish Hatchery Rd, Madison, WI

1. Karl Nilson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:03 am.
2. Roll Call (Commissioners present for all or part of the meeting):

County	Commissioner		XCom	April
Crawford	Tom	Cornford	Advocate	
	Rocky	Rocksvold		
	Vacant			
Dane	Gene	Gray	1st Treasurer	X
	Jim	Haefs-Flemming		
	Forrest	Van Schwartz	Advocate	X
Grant	Julia	Clark		
	Robert	Scallon		
	Velma	Weadge	2nd Treasurer	X
Iowa	Charles	Anderson	Advocate	X
	Ron	Berg		
	Mark	Masters		

County	Commissioner		XCom	April
Rock	Bill	Agnew	1st Treasurer	X
	Art	Phillips		
	Alan	Sweeney		
alternate	Ben	Coopman		
Sauk	Joel	Gaalswijk		
	Rob	Sinklair	2nd Treasurer	X
	Larry	Volz		x
alternate	Marcy	Huffaker		
Walworth	Jerry	Grant		
	Richard	Kuhnke	1st Vice Chair	
	Allan	Polyock		
Waukesha	Richard	Manke		
	Karl	Nilson	Chair	X
	Robert	Thelen, II		

Others present for all or part of the meeting: Joni Graves (WRRTC Administrator / Transportation Planner, SWWRPC); Jim Matzinger (WRRTC Accountant / Dane County CPA); Bill Gardner and Ken Lucht (WSOR); Frank Huntington and Roger Larson (WisDOT); Dick Goddard (Pink Lady RTC); Arlene Volz (Sauk County).

3. Motion accepting Graves' certification of Public Notice / Agnew / Van Schwartz /passed unanimously.
4. Motion approving the amended Agenda, prepared by Graves / Sinklair / Kuhnke /passed unanimously.
5. Graves said some of the recent Minutes mistakenly listed Kuhnke as "Advocate" rather than his new position as 1st Vice Chair and would be corrected; she said loose ends noted in the distributed version of the draft Minutes were clarified after getting more info from Jim Matzinger.

Motion approving Graves' draft March Minutes / Kuhnke / Van Schwartz /passed unanimously.

6. Public Comment – NA
7. **Correspondence & Communications** – Graves said WRRTC had received checks from Walworth County (\$5,603.80) and WSOR (\$12,500.00) and an invoice from CKH (-\$183.50) for the Commission's website www.wrrtc.org. Other correspondence was from Jeff Wirth, former Mazomanie Village President, who wrote asking to be removed from the Commission's mailing list, as he is no longer involved with Mazomanie politics, and concluded "Give my best to the Commission and especially Gene and Forrest."
8. **County Election Results and Retirements** – Commissioners and Graves provided post-elections updates. The Chair and thanked retiring Commissioners Bill Agnew (Rock County) and Velma Weadge (Grant County); WSOR President Bill Gardner thanked them and gave each a scale model of a WSOR locomotive as a small remembrance of their many years of service. The Commissioners reflected on their experiences on the Commission. Graves distributed cookies and photos were taken during the break.



L-R: Frank Huntington (WisDOT); Bill Gardner (WSOR); Bill Agnew (Rock Co); Velma Weadge (Grant Co); Karl Nilson, WRRTC Chair (Waukesha Co); photo by Ken Lucht.

REPORTS & COMMISSION BUSINESS

9. **Wisconsin & Southern Railroad's Report on Operations** – Ken Lucht said that over the winter WSOR had to make tremendous efforts to remove snow and ice. Use of rail fault detection equipment was halted during the winter but it is back on property now, will be used on every mile of the system, and results will be reported to the Commission. In other news, he reported on current and pending bridge projects on the Monroe, Fox Lake, and Prairie du Chien subdivisions; work that will allow WSOR to operate above 10mph on some segments currently under slow orders; and planned work to improve 30 at-grade crossings. There was some follow-up discussion regarding WSOR's ongoing efforts to work with the snowmobile clubs to help prevent some of the problems that had occurred at crossings.

In other business, Lucht said two rail inspection trips are being planned for Commissioners and proposed two dates: May 28th on the Fox Lake Sub (from Zenda to Janesville) riding on both continuous welded rail and the old jointed rail and October 10th on the Madison Sub (from Madison to Janesville).

Bill Gardner said it looks like WSOR may receive \$8M out of \$11M in available state funding for capital rehab projects, which would be \$9.2M - \$9.5M with the 20% local match. WSOR plans to install 14 miles of continuous welded rail and he said with those improvements much of the northern division (East Wisconsin Counties Rail Consortium's region) would be in pretty good shape. WSOR's goal is for the state to fund \$42M in the next biennial transportation budget, which is currently being considered by WisDOT.

10. **Discussion / possible action on revised Long-Term Capital Upgrade Plan** – *Lucht and Gardner* distributed a handout entitled "*Transporting Wisconsin by Rail – a 12-Year Plan to Invest in Wisconsin's Short-Line Rail System*" and provided an overview of the railroad's growth in customers, investment in improvements, and the plan's timeline for addressing capital needs including: a four-year plan for ties, six-year plan for bridges, and 12-year plan for installing continuous welded rail – at a cost of \$21M / year. Gardner explained that the \$42M does not include other proposals, including reinstatement of rail infrastructure and service in the Pecatonica Rail Transit Commission's region in SW Wisconsin (dubbed RR15) or the required state / local match is federal funding is secured for improvements on the WRRTC's 100-mile Prairie du Chien Sub.

The Commission took a break at 11:05 a.m. and the meeting resumed at 11:16 a.m.

- **Motion supporting WSOR's revised Long-Term Capital Upgrade Plan and authorizing a letter of support to be sent to WisDOT Secretary Busalacchi / Van Schwartz / Gray / passed unanimously.**

11. **WRRTC Financial Report** – *Jim Matzinger, Dane County CPA / WRRTC Accountant* distributed copies of the Treasurer's Report and pending bills.

- **Motion approving payment of the Commission's bills, as presented / Sinklair / Gray / passed unanimously.**
- **Motion accepting the Treasurer's Report, as presented / Van Schwartz / Sinklair / passed unanimously.**

12. **WRRTC Administrator's Report** – Graves provided an update on the appropriations proposal submitted to Senator Kohl's office for improvements to the Prairie du Chien Sub; had responded to a recent open records request and a passenger rail inquiry; attended a meeting of the Spring Green Plan Commission with Lucht; forwarded electronic copies of the Audit of the Commission's 2006 Financials to Walworth and Grant Counties; provided updated information on Commission appointee to the Commission's webmaster Pat Weeden; and gotten updates from Paul Thares, Grant County Extension, on local issues that had come before the WRRTC. She reminded Executive Committee members that the next meeting of the Full Commission had been rescheduled for June, rather than May, so more could be known about appointments. WSOR's annual presentation of its financials is also slated for the June meeting.
13. **WisDOT** – There was no report but Frank Huntington made a few comments re other items on the Agenda.
14. **Ongoing discussion regarding ownership / responsibility for maintaining timber bridges in the right-of-way and specifically bridges in the Walworth County' Towns of Linn and Darien and the Rock County Town of Bradford** (forwarded) – Huntington said the Commission has five timber structure bridges and WisDOT staff have been talking about maintenance issues related to structures in the Towns of Linn and Darien. More recently, they met regarding the structure in the Town of Bradford (in Rock County) regarding a bridge approved for complete replacement funding under the state's bridge program (which is for replacement or major rehab). He said it is a funding test case, since it would match state money with state money. Nilson asked about ownership and Huntington said they don't have clear documentation, but it is clear that it had been the railroad's responsibility in the past (prior to public ownership of the ROW and infrastructure). He said the way it would have been done then may not make sense now and that WisDOT staff would like to see the Town formally take jurisdiction if the bridge replacement uses state funds.
15. **Forwarded discussion of Sauk Co's rail access concerns including privately owned Merrimac Bridge** – There was no comment or discussion.
16. **Other Comments / Updates:**
 - Nilson thanked Commissioners for their time and thanked Velma and Bill for their service.
 - Matzinger said that with the next meeting the Commission would meet in the new room upstairs.
 - Matzinger said he had lost a staffer, was taking on more work, and is and trying to figure out whether he can continue to maintain the WRRTC's workload and, although he would continue to do the Commission's books for next few months, he will need to reassess his available staff time.
17. **Motion adjourning at 11:50 a.m. / Van Schwartz / Sinklair / passed unanimously.**