

All Aboard **NORTHWEST**

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August 21, 2023

TO: To the Federal Railroad Administration and Consultant Team

RE: FRA Sec. 22214 Amtrak Daily Long-Distance Service Study, Round 2 Feedback

Here is All Aboard Northwest's feedback for Round 2 of the Amtrak Daily Long-Distance Service Study. We've tried to be as succinct as possible, but please let us know if anything is unclear, or if you have any questions.

Again, we encourage the project team to re-review the "Market Opportunities for smaller MSAs" from the Round 1 Workshops and include these critical travel corridors into the conceptual enhanced network along with the largest travel flows shown.

We applaud the team's commitment and ambition to thoroughly cast a wide net and explore the full potential of long-distance passenger rail services in the 21st Century!

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Cc:
Rail Passengers Association
Transportation for America
High Speed Rail Alliance
Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact
Amtrak

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Overview

All Aboard Northwest is making recommendations based on the direct and indirect quantifiable benefits to [riders and the communities they serve](#).

Economic Benefits

Easy travel options help strengthen local economies throughout the Northwest.

- Railway Operations and Maintenance Spending on local economies.
- New Visitor Spending. On average, communities receive \$84 per day-trip visitor, and \$366 per overnight visitor, according to Experience Washington. Benefits are similar in other states.
- Induced travel that otherwise would not happen.
- Community development and property values adjacent to train stations.

Environmental Benefits

Rail is the optimal low-impact freight and passenger ground transportation option.

- Pollution control savings.
- Highway traffic fatalities avoided.
- Highway maintenance avoided.
- Saved travel cost for area residents.
- Rail does not contribute to [salmon die-off related to tires](#).

Equity Benefits

A good freight and passenger rail network contributes to high quality of life in our region for everyone.

- **Improves reach** of local services
- **Expands access** for all communities
- Serves the 30% of the population who are **non-drivers**

Our transportation decisions are often made with the assumption that everyone drives. But what about those who are too young, too old, too poor, disabled, or choose not to drive because of concerns about the future of the planet?

According to [Hedges & Company](#), an automotive marketing research firm:

The age groups with the highest percentage of adults without a driver's license are 16-19 years old (65.2%), 85 and older (39.9%) and 20 to 24 (19.2%). The lowest percentage of total licensed drivers is among 16- to 19-year-olds, where just 34.8% of the population has a driver's license....It is hard to determine exactly how many people drive in the US. On one hand, some people without a driver's license drive illegally. On the other hand, some people with a valid license don't drive and have a license for identification purposes, or they just prefer to not drive. Some people may choose to not drive due to health reasons. It's probably safe to assume that between 235 million and 240 million Americans drive.

The Census estimates the [2022 US population](#) as 332,403,650. Approximately 22.35% of that total are [children under 17](#). Hedges estimates that the number of Americans with driver's licenses is 238,183,000, and that the number of "actual" drivers is somewhat over 235,000,000.

So, depending on what numbers you pick, **the percentage of the US population that does not drive is approximately 30%**. And this population appears to be growing.

We will always need cars, especially in rural areas. But we need to ensure that our communities provide transportation access to those for whom driving is not an option.

Find the Social Optimum: A full National Network

J.P. Arduin, a father of the French TGV network, said it well: “*We are at the economic optimum when we are at the social optimum.*” From private correspondence: “*This is called 'Equilibrium Theory' and professors Maurice Allais and Edmond Malinvaud are the main writers.*” He was able to send us some source work of theirs, however it is in French.

JP went on to clarify how a well-developed system performed better than skeletal disconnected group segments; how that gave greater value to the public investment. The noted drop in performance of the National Network due to the 1979 and 1997 cuts exhibits the impact of the network effect and how various routes reinforce one another.

The existing skeletal system itself already turns away thousands of potential riders by lack of equipment and extremely-high ticket prices. Incremental costs of additional frequencies can be minimal compared to the costs of simply establishing service on certain lines. The advocacy group [Move Minnesota](#) (who were instrumental with passage of the 2023 Minnesota Transportation Budget) said it well. A “*commitment for not asking what is possible, but for what was necessary.*”([Timestamp 6:27](#)).

Expand the Vision

All Aboard Northwest supports the “Conceptual Enhanced Network” that has been developed so far. We urge the project team to expand the proposed network to be more inclusive and more ambitious and to include more route segments, international connections, and increased frequencies.

The network effect of a robust, well-connected and frequent network will help the financial performance of the system at large. The fixed costs can be offset by providing more frequencies. (i.e. providing daylight service to every stop). Persons involved with the *Coast Starlight* and *Empire Builder* service improvements years ago noted that revenues increased faster than costs. This exhibits the benefits of not only having service, but having **good** service.

While All Aboard Northwest’s work focuses on the Greater Northwest, our comments include conceptual route segments that the team should include to more fully unite the Nation and build a full, robust, passenger rail network backbone. Some of these connections were recognized in the Round 1 “Market Opportunities for Smaller MSAs,” but were not included in the Round 2 conceptual enhanced network. These are regional hubs that serve vast areas around them.

The study team should develop criteria that recognize that serving rural and tribal areas is urgently needed, and that such services, like the Empire Builder, can be very successful.

The travel demands of these routes are not the end-points to end-points or even largest metro points but for the dozens of communities along the corridor.

The following list of missing connections is not exhaustive but highlights the unmet, existing, travel needs the current conceptual enhanced network does not facilitate. We are certain that many more workshop participants and the public at large will recommend other connections that strengthen the national network.

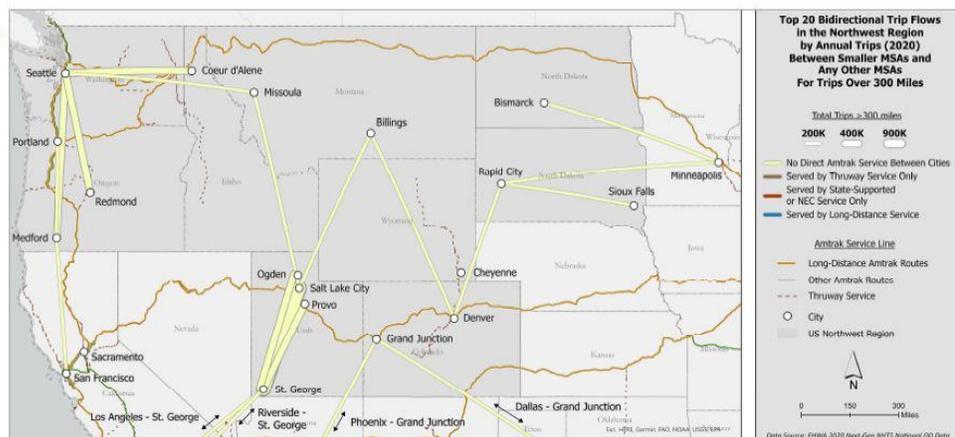
Recommended Expanded Connections

Additional Connection #1 Butte, MT to Pocatello, ID

Northwest Region – Market Opportunities for Smaller MSAs

Top 20 Trip Flows Connecting Smaller MSAs

- Trip flows between MSAs with one trip end in a smaller MSA in the Northwest
- Total trips over 300 miles across all modes
- Top flows are mostly between MSAs not directly connected by Amtrak service



May not show all Thruway Bus Services

Justification

This is a heavily used corridor, part of the [CANAMEX](#) I-15 Trade Corridor.

This connection also appeared on the Round 1 Workshops, Market Opportunities for smaller MSAs” (Missoula to Salt Lake City and Billings to Salt Lake City. These routes can combine at Butte, MT to head south and thus satisfy these unmet travel needs. This additionally would provide more north-south connectivity in the west. This connection was heavily supported in the Northwest Mural exercise.

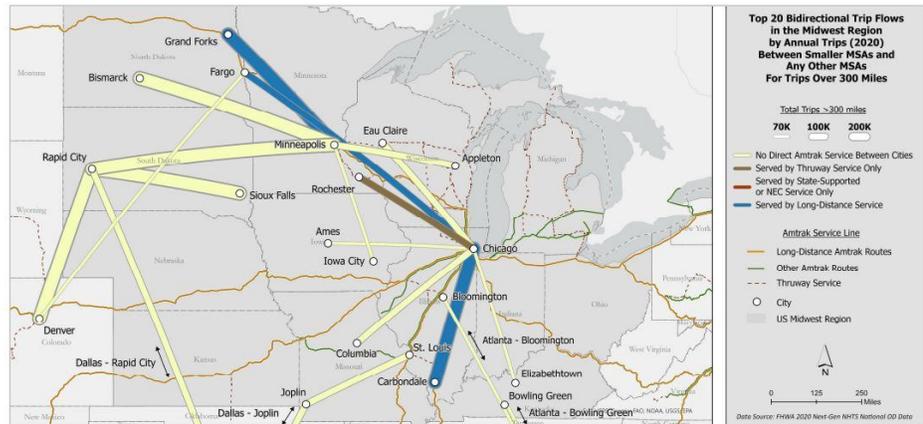
Additional Connection #2

Sioux Falls, SD to Rapid City, SD & Denver CO

Midwest Region – Market Opportunities for Smaller MSAs

Top 15 Trip Flows Connecting Smaller MSAs

- Trip flows between MSAs with one trip end in a smaller MSA in the Midwest
- Total trips over 300 miles across all modes
- Top flows are mostly between MSAs not directly connected by Amtrak service



May not show all Thruway Bus Services

Justification

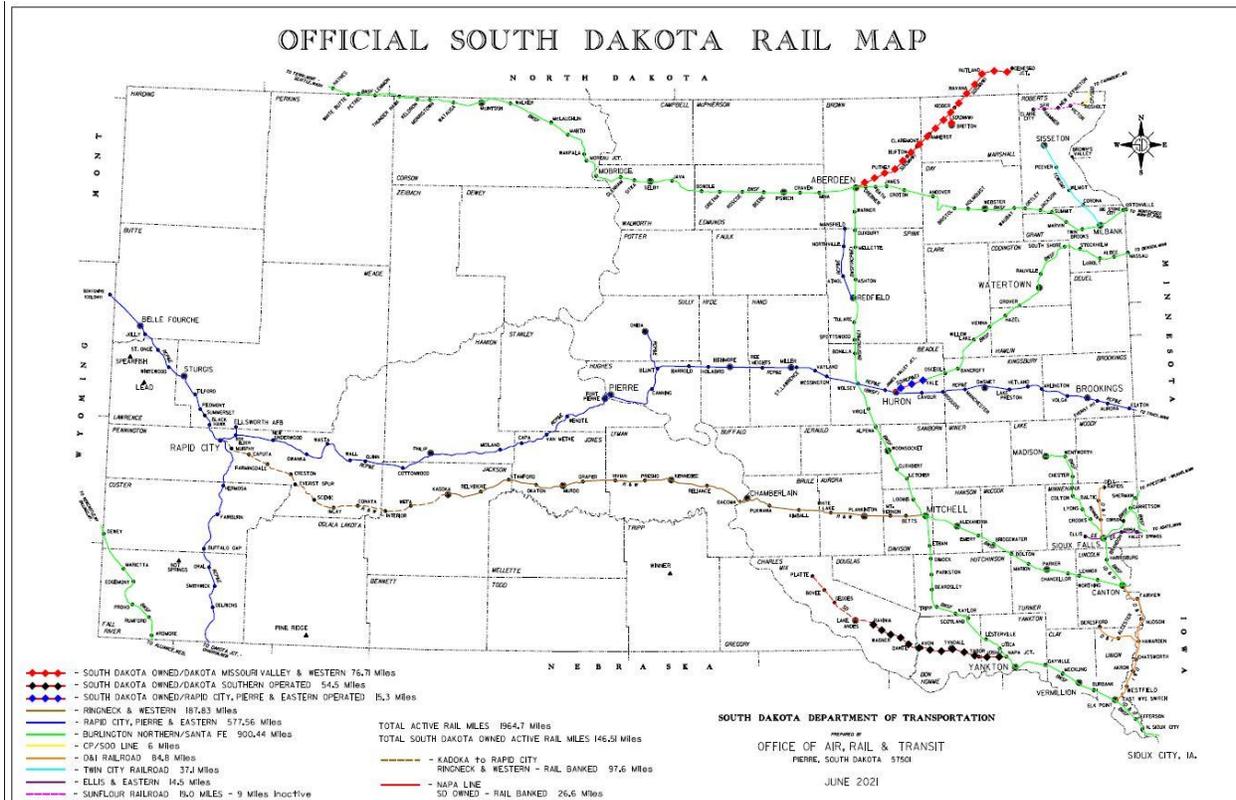
As recognized in the Round 1 workshops, this is a heavily used corridor and brings passenger rail service to Western South Dakota and closer to more disadvantaged communities than what the team is currently proposing. Rapid City has/had the distinction of being the most isolated metropolitan area in the lower 48. It is too far to expect residents from Rapid City or the surrounding area to drive to, or use a Thruway bus connection, to what is currently proposed as the conceptual enhanced network.

Distances to Rapid City, SD

- Sioux Falls, SD: 340 Miles
- Casper, WY: 250 Miles
- Dickinson, ND: 221 Miles
- Billings, MT: 316 Miles
- North Platte, NE: 309 Miles

These distances are too far to expect people in the geography of western South Dakota (yet alone those of disadvantaged communities) to use even throughway connections to access the National Network. This connection appeared on the Round 1 Workshops, “Market Opportunities for smaller MSAs” (Sioux Falls & Twin Cities to Rapid City; Rapid City to Denver, CO & Dallas, CO).

As was noted in both the Northwest and Midwest workshops, there is a continuous, legally secured, railroad ROW available from Sioux Falls to Rapid City and south to Denver. The preferred alignment for many South Dakotans would be via the Mitchell-Rapid City “Badlands Route”. This parallels I-90 and is the travel path that comes to people’s minds. We have vocal interest from [Pennington County, SD](#); [Rapid City Area MPO](#) & [The City of Sturgis, SD](#). See the South Dakota State Railroad Map here: [official South Dakota rail map](#) Alternatively, there is a route that would connect Rapid City to Pierre, the South Dakota state capitol.



Additionally the Pennington County Commissioners reiterated their interest in seeing Rapid City included on the long-distance network during their commission meeting on 8/15/2023 and have [submitted comments](#) to the Study team.

Black Hills, Stolen Lands

As was briefly noted by others in the Northwest Workshop, we fully recognize and confirm that the Black Hills region, and indeed all of western South Dakota, is land stolen from Native Americans; specifically the Sioux Nation. This has been affirmed by the 1980 US Supreme Court case, UNITED STATES V. SIOUX NATION OF INDIANS. The Sioux Nation has refused to accept monetary compensation instead requesting to regain sovereignty over the lands; or a co-management plan for certain areas of the Black Hills.

We do not know how, when, or if this will ever be definitively resolved. However, today many people, both Native and non-Native, live in this geographic area and have travel needs regionally. Regardless, we believe it is important to recognize this fact and highlight it as something the project team should be aware of. Additionally, the Black Hills is home to the Lakota Emergence story from Wind Cave.

[United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians: The Supreme Court case to buy the Black Hills | SDPB](#)

[Why the Sioux Are Refusing \\$1.3 Billion | PBS NewsHour](#)

[Encyclopedia of the Great Plains | UNITED STATES V. SIOUX NATION OF INDIANS](#)

[The Lakota Emergence Story - Wind Cave National Park \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

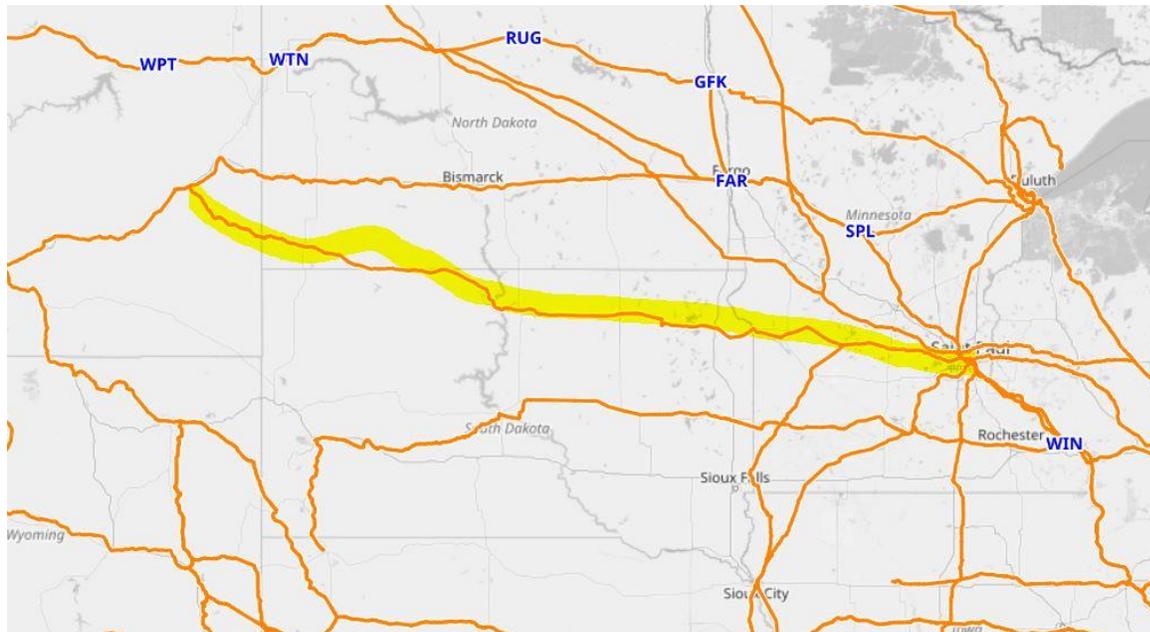
A member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe has voiced interest in the possibility of passenger rail in the region as seen in the first Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Summit in Billings, MT in August 2022.

[Greater Northwest Passenger Rail Summit Session 4 Tribal Impacts & Benefits](#) (Timestamp 26:26)

Including only Sioux Falls and not Aberdeen and Rapid City is likely to cause an adverse reaction from residents of the state. Sioux Falls is a great regional hub but does not suffice for South Dakota as a whole.

Additional Connection #3

St. Paul/Minneapolis MN to Aberdeen, SD; Mobridge, SD; & Miles City, MT



Justification

This is a heavily used US Highway 12 corridor. Similar to how the *Silver Services* (*Silver Star* and *Silver Meteor*) operate on the eastern seaboard, these twin routes (via Bismarck, ND & Aberdeen, SD) can complement each other and work in tandem in the Amtrak era. This corridor segment is particularly strong between Aberdeen, SD and the Twin Cities; perhaps even justifying supplemental state-supported service in the future.

This route would directly serve the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate and Standing Rock Sioux Tribe as well as offering closer access to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. The route via Aberdeen is closer to both Tribal Headquarters (Agency Village: 45 miles and Fort Yates: 27 miles respectively) than is the route via Bismarck.

Additionally, this through service segment between Aberdeen and Miles City, MT could provide the opportunity to serve whichever Montana communities are not chosen for rail service (Helena/Butte and Sanders/Lake Counties) for the routing via Bismarck.

This would return Amtrak service to Willmar and Benson, MN; two communities that formerly had Amtrak service (before the *Empire Builder* was rerouted through St. Cloud).

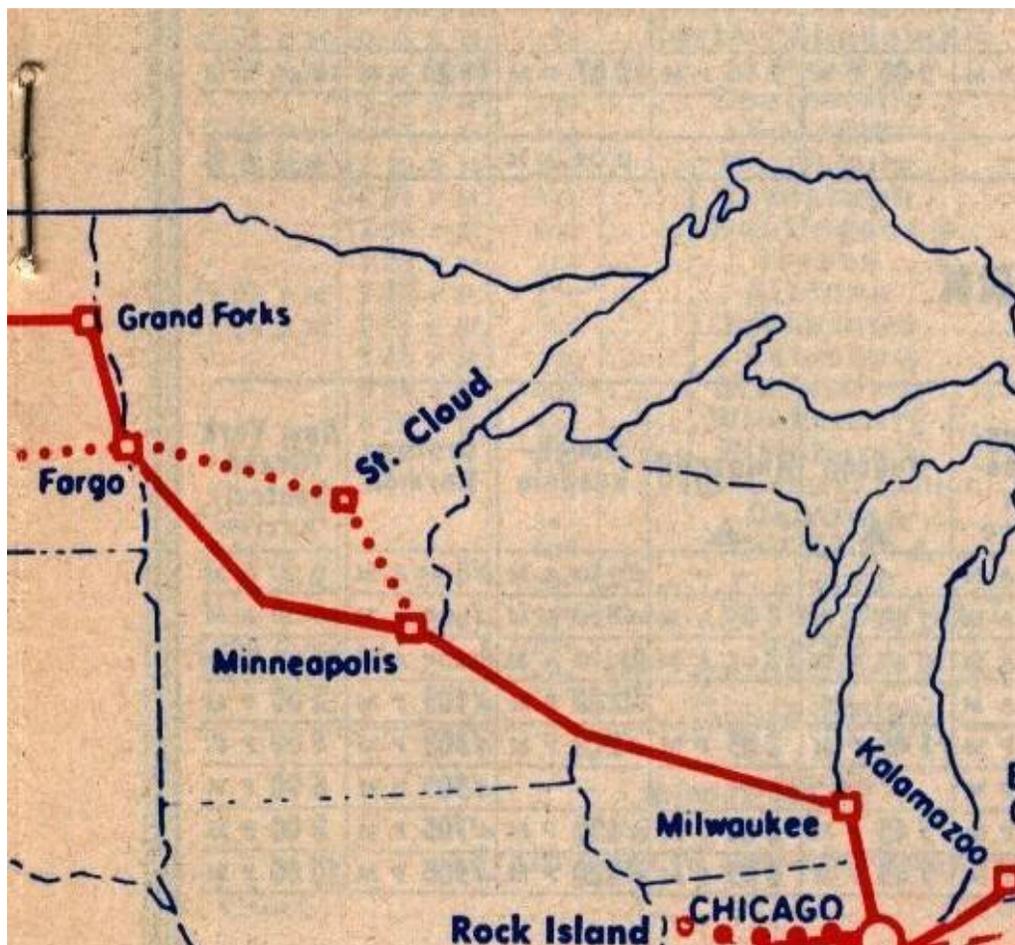
We have vocal support for passenger rail service from [Grant County Development Corporation \(SD\)](#).

Additional Connection #4

Fargo, ND to Willmar, MN; Sioux Falls, SD; Omaha, NE and beyond

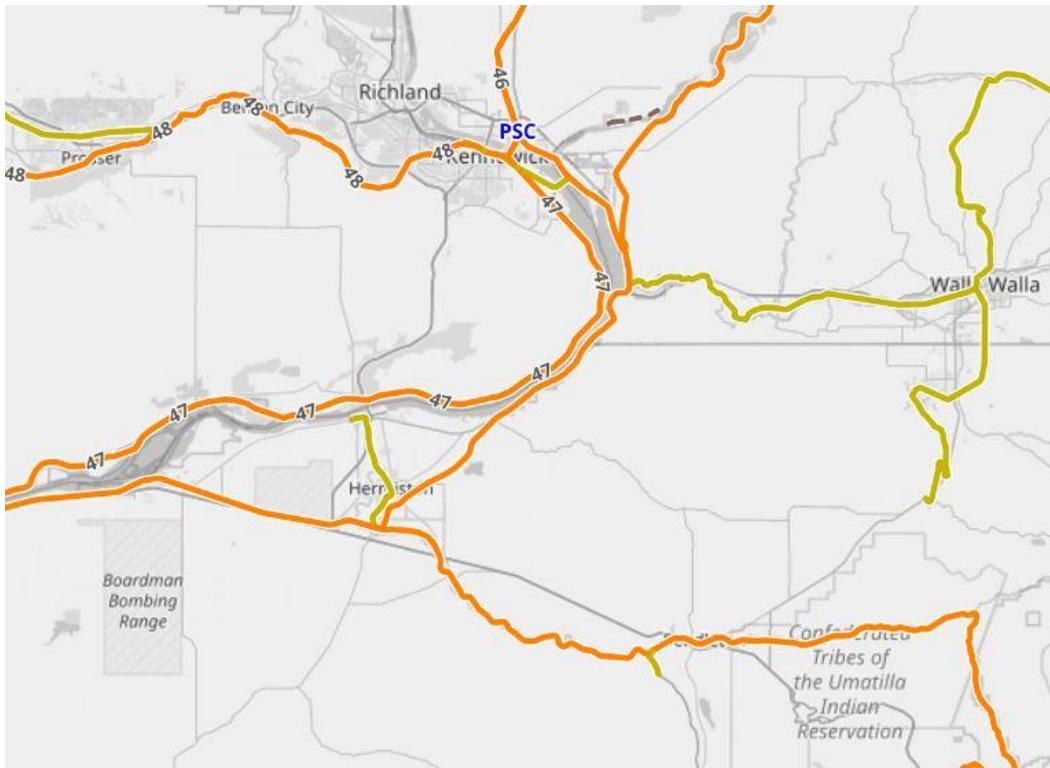
Justification

The participant from Amtrak (speaking as themselves and not as an official representative of Amtrak) made a good recommendation in the Midwest Round 2 Workshop (Cleveland). While South Dakotans would prefer a direct alignment through Brookings, Watertown and Sisseton, this alternative is a reasonable corridor for the time being. The Fargo to Willmar route would return Amtrak service to a former Amtrak-served route (the Empire Builder formerly operated over this segment).



Additionally, a Twin Cities - Willmar - Marshall - Sioux Falls route is identified in the [Minnesota State Rail Plan \(2015\)](#). The I-29 corridor is recognized as the [NAFTA Midcon Trade Corridor](#).

Additional Connection #5 Kennewick, WA to Hinkle, OR

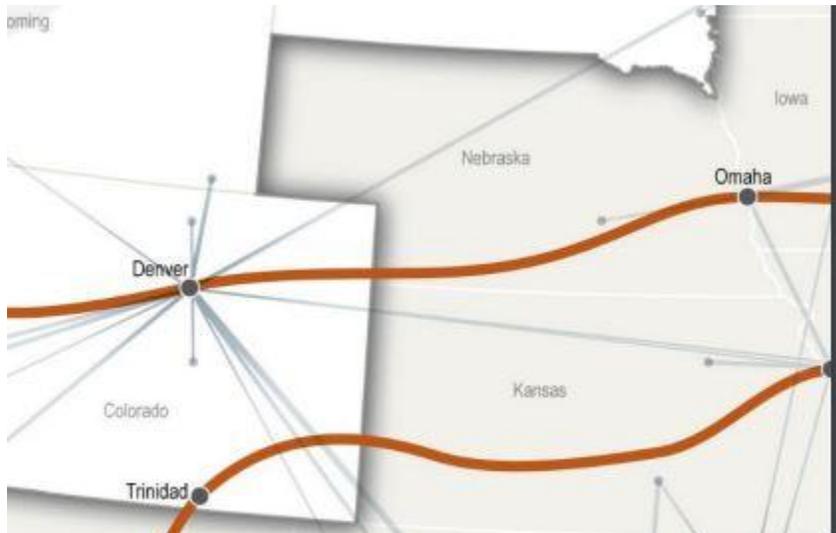


Justification

This is a short segment of live rail that would provide a direct Boise, ID to Seattle WA service via Stampede Pass (as shown above) and satisfy the travel needs as requested by our friends in Idaho. Vocal interest has been noted from Washington State, Oregon, and Idaho communities along with the City of Boise. Again, this does not usurp or take away from the alignment along the Columbia River but compliments it and reinforces the network effect.

This connection would allow for split service on the Pioneer route (similar to the Empire Builder's split service). One leg would go to Portland, and the other going to the Tri-Cities, Yakima and Seattle.

Additional Connection #6 Kansas City, KS/MO to Denver, CO



Justification

This is a heavily used corridor whose travel demand even shows up in the “largest MSAs market opportunities.” While a connection along the Southwest Chief route is desirable, it does not negate or replace the demand that there is along the I-70 corridor (Limon, Goodland, Hays, and Manhattan). There is a continuous railroad ROW available. Do not only evaluate such a route stand-alone but also how it contributes to the overall National Network. Manhattan and Lawrence, KS are large university communities drawing students from all over the region and beyond.

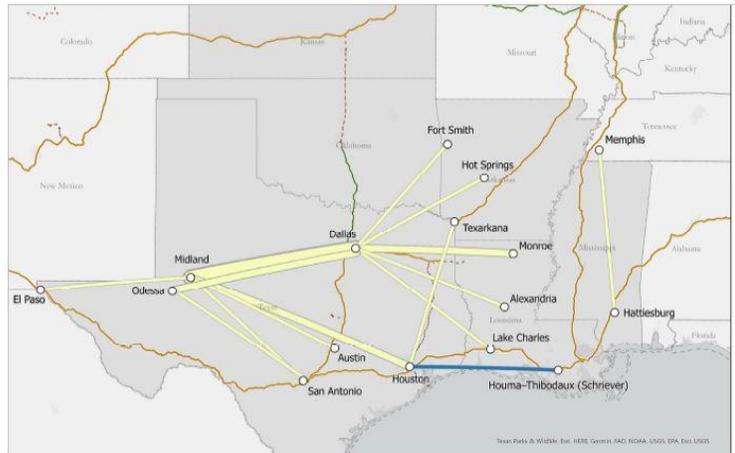
Additional Connection #7

Kansas City, MO to Shreveport & New Orleans, LA

Central Region – Market Opportunities for Smaller MSAs

Top 15 Trip Flows Connecting Smaller MSAs

- Trip flows between MSAs with one trip end in a smaller MSA in the Central Region
- Total trips over 300 miles across all modes
- Most top flows are between MSAs not directly served by Amtrak service



May not show all Thruway Bus Services

Justification

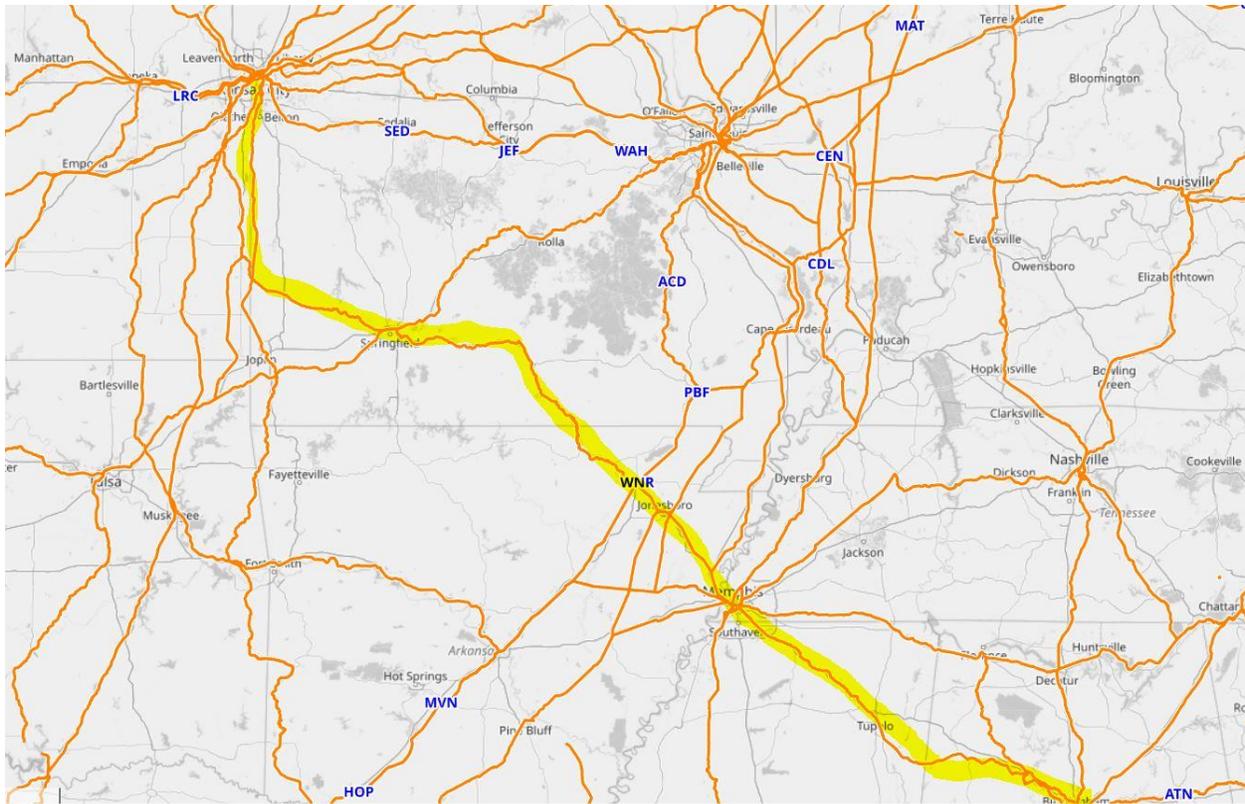
This is a heavily traveled corridor, especially when one takes into consideration the growing demand around Fayetteville, AR. Northwest Arkansas around Fayetteville is one of the fastest growing in the entire state and nation. This connection appeared, in part, on the Smaller MSA market opportunities.

This is along the route of the newly-established [Interstate-49](#) corridor being constructed. If there is enough travel and commerce demand to justify a brand-new interstate highway through the challenging terrain of the Ozarks, then there is enough justification to explore passenger rail service along this route. Such a routing would help satisfy travel demands from Fort Smith, AR and Baton Rouge, LA. Such travel demands from Shreveport, LA to New Orleans have been noted and desired by the Southern Rail Commission.

This would be a combination of the CPKC mainline and a short line that runs directly through Fayetteville, AR. We believe it is more desirable to get service to downtown Fayetteville, home of the University of Arkansas, than a stop out in Siloam Springs but will let local interests confirm or refute this.

Additional Connection #8

Kansas City, MO to Springfield, MO; Memphis, TN; & Birmingham, AL (and beyond)



Justification

Currently, the conceptual enhanced network does not readily permit travel south and east of Kansas City without going west to Tulsa and Oklahoma City, or east of St. Louis. Springfield, MO is the third largest city in Missouri and a regional hub.

MODOT highlighted the route segment from Kansas City to Springfield in their Corridor ID “[Expression of Interest](#)” and there is a continuous railroad route to Memphis, TN and beyond. This routing would open up connections through Memphis and beyond for traffic from Kansas City and north and west.

Additional Connection #9

Chicago, IL to Des Moines, IA; Lincoln, NE; North Platte, NE & Denver, CO
(and beyond?)



Justification

This is a heavily used I-80 Corridor and had been identified, in part, by the [Midwest Regional Rail Plan](#) (state-supported corridor service) as well as the travel demands highlighted by the project team.

This is a routing that could complement and reinforce “state supported” regional service from Lincoln, NE to Chicago, IL and its inclusion may actually spur on the local and state support needed to realize state-supported service. In fact, Lincoln, Nebraska would be the better conceptual termination point for any regional state-supported corridor (being the Nebraska State Capitol and home of University of Nebraska, Lincoln). We are certain that this will be a topic of discussion during the Round 3 workshops.

This does not usurp the existing travel demand along the California Zephyr route in southern Iowa. We are not in favor of discontinuing or negatively altering the routing along BNSF’s route, only adding service through the region.

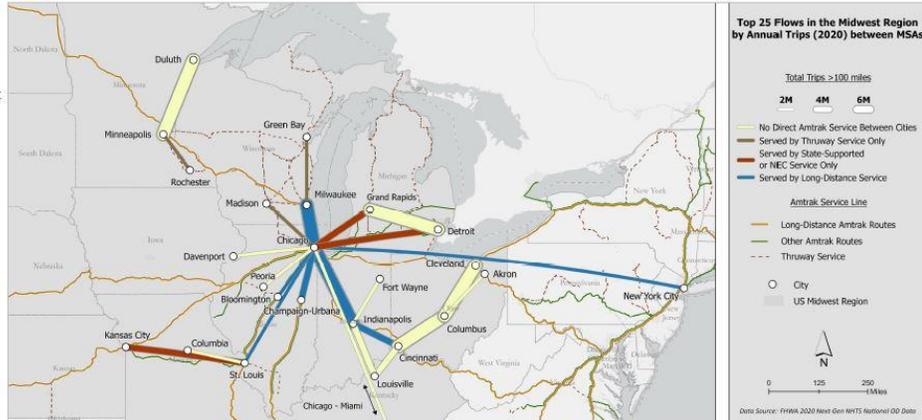
Additional Connection #10

Detroit, MI - Fort Wayne, IN - Indianapolis, IN

Midwest Region – Market Opportunities

Top 25 Trip Flows

- Trip flows with one trip end in the Midwest
- Based on Next-Gen and showing total trips over 100 miles across all modes
- Trip flow colors indicate availability of Amtrak service between MSAs

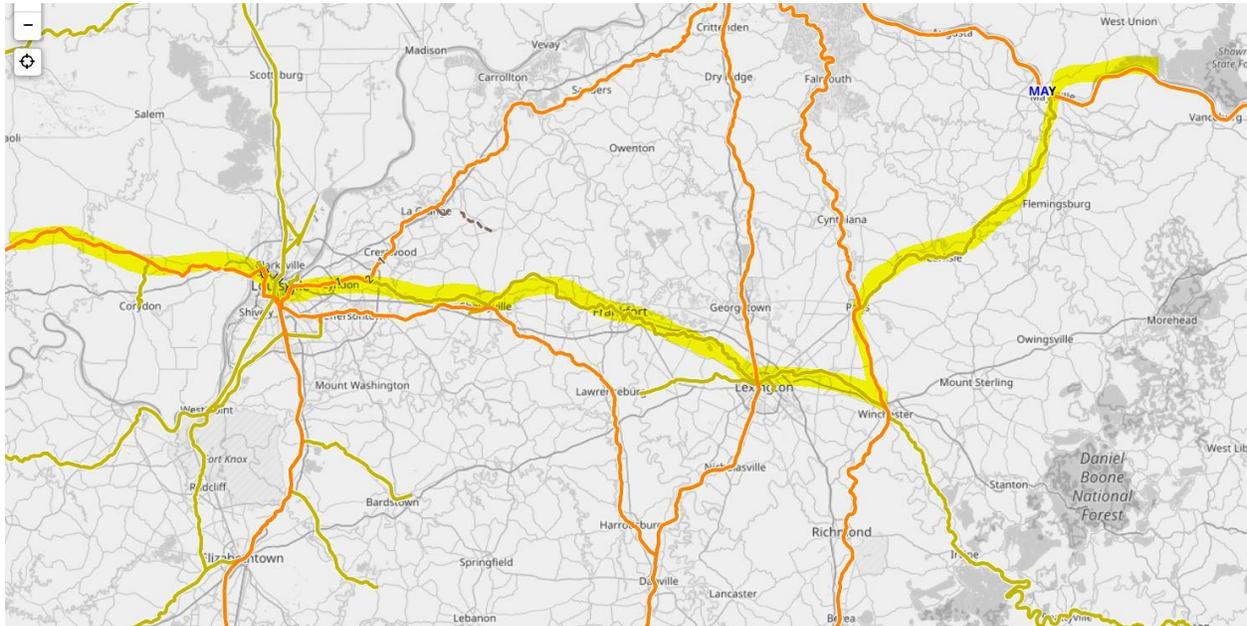


May not show all Thruway Bus Services

Justification

This heavily used corridor segment didn't make the current "enhanced network", however, Indianapolis could very well become a major transfer hub in the Nation.

Additional Connection #11 Ashland, KY to Lexington; Frankfort; Louisville, and St. Louis, MO.

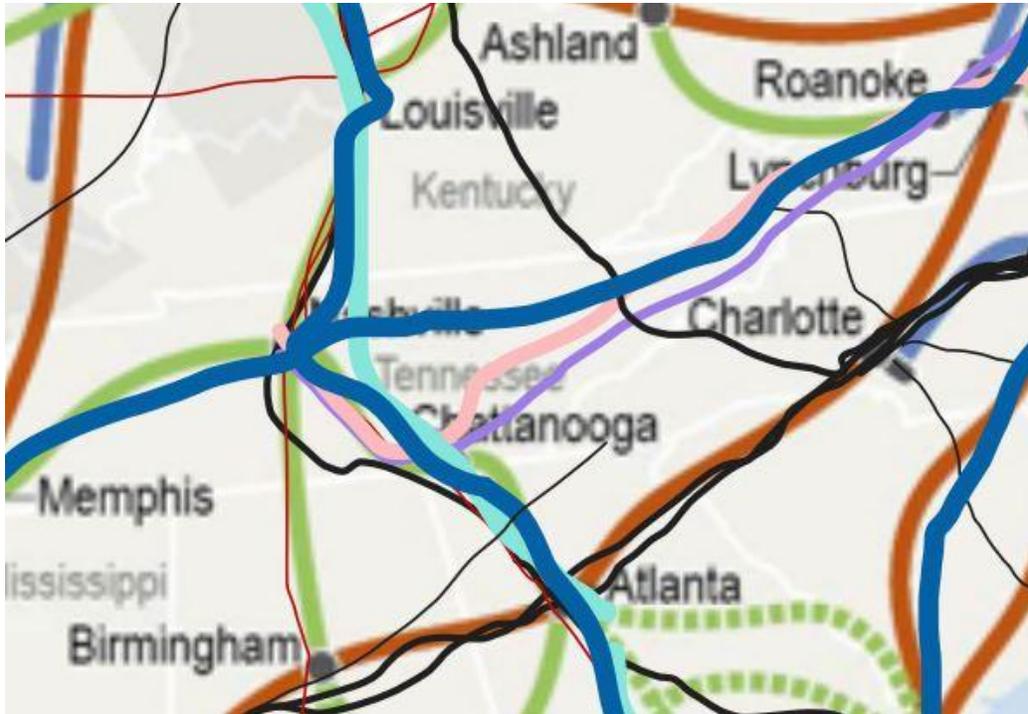


Justification

This is a heavily used corridor through northern Kentucky connecting large population centers, civic institutions, entertainment centers and commerce locations as was noted in the Round 2 Midwest Workshop (Cleveland, July 27th, 2023).

Additional Connection #12

Roanoke & Bristol, VA to Knoxville and Chattanooga, TN (with potential extension to Memphis, TN via Huntsville, AL).

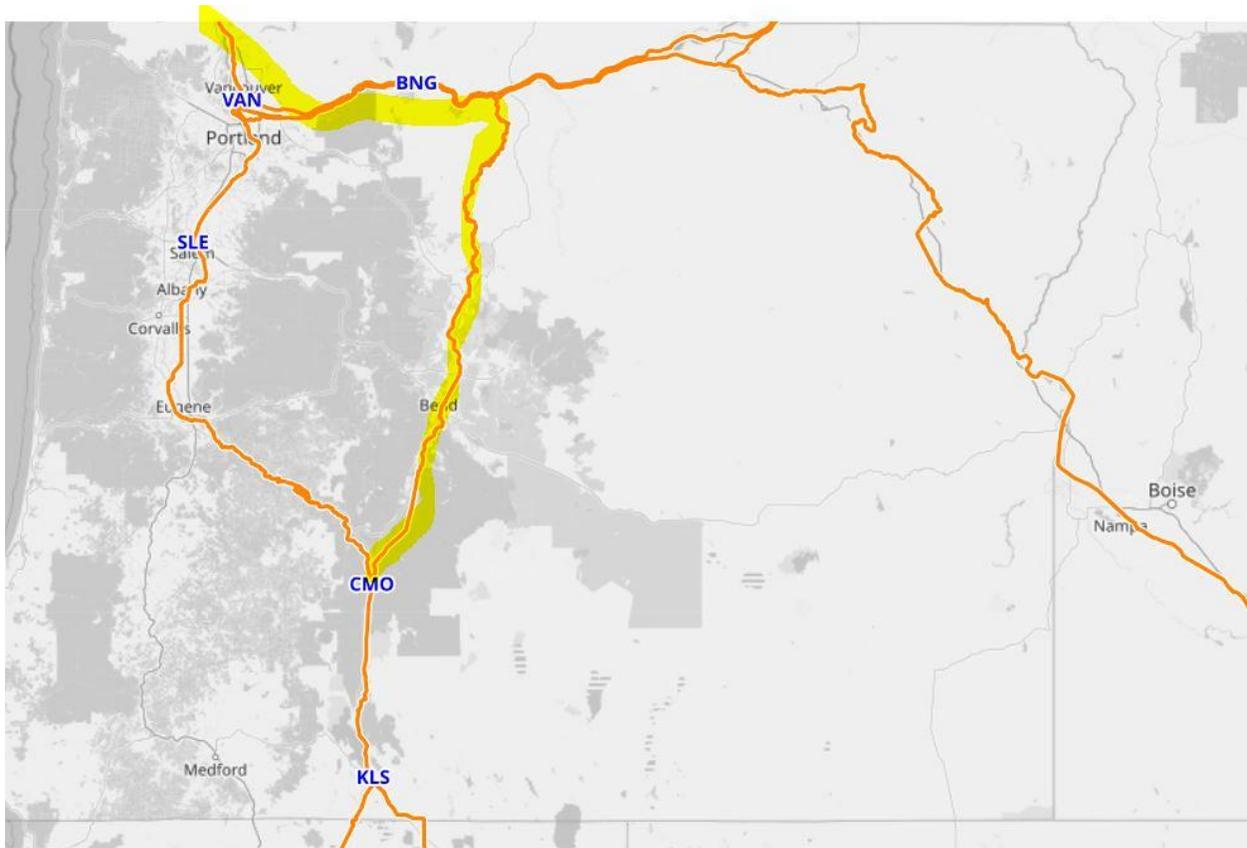


Justification

This travel corridor showed up numerous times on the SE Mural exercise as well as being listed in the [Southeast Regional Rail Plan](#).

Additional Connection #13

Chemult, OR to Bend, OR; Redmond, OR; and The Dalles, OR



Justification

This is a heavily used corridor through central Oregon, divided from the Willamette Valley by the Cascade mountain range. Bend is a regional hub for the surrounding region and a connection from Redmond to Seattle was identified in the Round 1 Workshop exercise. This connection could be a run complimentary to the Coast Starlight but running via this connection.

Additional Connection #14

Traverse City, MI to Ann Arbor, MI; Detroit, MI & beyond



Route concept map taken from the groundworkcenter.org

Justification

This is a heavily used corridor through Michigan and Traverse City is a large regional hub in the northern part of the lower peninsula. [Proponents](#) have talked about and are currently working on establishing state-supported service along this Corridor. We can complement this establishment with national network long-distance service from Traverse City to Ann Arbor, Detroit and beyond.

International Connections

Even if the project team considers these in a unique category, it's important to recognise the potential of these connections and how they will enhance the domestic United States long-distance routes. As noted in numerous Workshops, nothing in the authorizing language on the study prohibits or prevents the team from exploring international connections as part of long-distance services.

AANW has had extensive, and on-going, conversations with our Canadian counterparts, including the legislative border caucuses in both countries. We believe that recognition of the need for these connections will strengthen the relationship between the US, Canada and Mexico.

These international connections may create, induce, the characteristics of a large-scale terminus hub in a smaller community (i.e. Shelby or Great Falls, MT for example), and justify extension of long-distance services completely within the United States to their locations (and thus provide a live rail connection from the Empire Builder route south to the Mexico border).

- Seattle WA to Vancouver, BC (upgraded & enhanced)
- Billings, MT to Calgary & Edmonton, AB
- Winnipeg, MB to Fargo, ND & Twin Cities, MN
- Detroit, MI to Windsor, ON and beyond
- Port Huron, MI to Sarnia, ON and beyond
- Burlington, VT to Montreal, QC
- New York City, NY to Montreal, QC (upgraded & enhanced)
- Montreal, QC to Boston, MA
- Boston to Bangor, ME & Halifax, NS
- San Antonio, TX to Monterrey, Mexico
- San Diego, CA To Tijuana, Mexico and beyond
- Phoenix, AZ to Nogales & Hermosillo, Mexico
- El Paso, TX to Ciudad Juárez & Chihuahua, Mexico

Connections to Rural and Urban Transit and to Services for the Disabled

Connections to local transit organizations are exceedingly important, including the smaller organizations represented by the [Community Transportation Association of America](#). Conversations with the [Disability Mobility Initiative](#) and their coalition partners will also assist in understanding the challenges acutely felt in rural communities for transportation needs. Since we have had conversations with members of their teams, we would be happy to make the introductions. It's not just for the Greater Northwest, but for all rural and underserved communities across the nation.

These are the numerous hurdles to transportation in rural communities that can be compounded with a recurring need to travel to our major metro hubs for critical services. It may be possible for someone to get a ride to their local access point (i.e local county seat with a general hospital and implement dealerships) but not to the major metro areas for specialized medical needs. Amtrak and local transit organizations should work together to create connections between the national network passenger rail and local communities. This will allow rural transit or enhanced transit to be the “accessible point” we talked about in our Round 1 feedback.

Suggested Concept Routes

In addition to the missing connections above, we recommend exploring the following routes.

Chicago, IL; Milwaukee, WI; Twin Cities, MN; Bismarck, ND; Billings, MT; Missoula, MT; Sandpoint, ID; Pasco, WA; Yakima, WA; Seattle, WA

Chicago, IL; Milwaukee, WI; Eau Claire, WI; Twin Cities, MN; Willmar, MN; Aberdeen, SD; Mobridge, SD; Miles City, MT; Billings, MT; Missoula, MT; Sandpoint, ID; Spokane, WA; Yakima, WA; Seattle, WA

Twin Cities, MN; Mankato, MN; Sioux Falls, SD; Mitchell, SD; Rapid City, SD; Crawford, NE; Alliance, NE; Stirling, CO; Fort Morgan, CO; Denver, CO

Chicago, IL to Denver, CO along the Zephyr, Greeley, CO; Cheyenne, WY; Rock Springs, WY; Ogden, UT; Pocatello, UT; Boise, ID; Pendleton, OR; Portland, OR (and split at Pendleton, OR to Yakima, WA & Seattle, WA).

Seattle, WA; Boise, ID; Pocatello, ID; Salt Lake City, UT; Las Vegas, NV; Los Angeles, CA

Spokane, WA; Missoula, MT; Butte, MT; Idaho Falls, ID; Salt Lake City, UT; Las Vegas, UT; Las Angeles, CA

Grand Forks, ND; Fargo, ND; Willmar, MN; Sioux Falls, SD; Sioux City, IA; Omaha, NE; St. Joseph, MO; Kansas City, MO; Jolin, MO, Fayetteville, AR; Texarkana, AR/TX; Shreveport, LA; Baton Rouge, LA; New Orleans, LA

Chicago, IL; Davenport, IA; Des Moines, IA; Omaha, NE; Lincoln, NE; North Platte, NE; Stirling, CO; Fort Morgan, CO; Denver, CO

Duluth, MN; Twin Cities, MN; Des Moines, IA; Kansas City, MO; Topeka, KS; Whitta, KS; Oklahoma City, OK; Ft. Worth, TX; Dallas, TX (and San Antonio, TX?)

Denver, CO; Pueblo, CO; La Junta, CO; Las Animas, CO; Springfield, CO; Amarillo, TX; Ft. Worth/Dallas, TX; Shreveport, LA; New Orleans, LA

Shelby, MT; Great Falls, MT; Billings, MT; Sheridan, WY; Gillette, WY; Wheatland, WY; Cheyenne, WY; Denver, CO; Trinidad, CO; Albuquerque, NM; El Paso, TX

Shelby, MT; Great Falls, MT; Billings, MT; Greybull, WY; Thermopolis, WY; Casper, WY; Cheyenne, WY; Greeley, CO; Denver, CO; Pueblo, CO; Springfield, CO; Amarillo, TX; Fort Worth, TX; Dallas, TX

Seattle, WA; Spokane, WA; Missoula, MT; Butte, MT; Idaho Falls, ID; Pocatello, ID; Salt Lake City, UT; Provo, UT; Grand Junction, CO; Denver, CO.

Great Falls, MT; Helena, MT; Butte, MT; Idaho Falls, ID; Salt Lake City, UT, Las Vegas, NV; Los Angeles, CA

Detroit, MI; Fort Wayne, IN; Indianapolis, IN; Terre Haute, IN; St. Louis, MO; Kansas City, MO; Manhattan, KS; Hays, KS; Limon, CO; Denver, CO

St. Louis, MO; Springfield, MO; Joplin, MO; Tulsa, OK; Oklahoma City, OK; Ft Worth/Dallas, TX; Midland, TX; El Paso, TX; Phoenix, AZ; Los Angeles, CA

Kansas City, MO; Joplin, MO; Springfield, MO; Memphis, TN; Tupelo, MS; Birmingham, AL; Montgomery, AL; Dothan, AL, Tallahassee, FL; Jacksonville, FL; Miami, FL

Chicago - Indianapolis - Louisville, KY; Nashville, TN; Chattanooga, TN; Atlanta, GA; Savannah, GA; Jacksonville, FL; Miami, FL

Cleveland, OH; Columbus, OH; Cincinnati, OH; Louisville, KY; Nashville, TN; Memphis, TN; Marshall, TX; Ft Worth, TX; San Antonio, TX

Cleveland, OH; Columbus, OH; Cincinnati, OH; Louisville, KY; Nashville, TN; Birmingham, AL; Montgomery, AL; Mobile, AL; New Orleans, LA

New Orleans, LA; Mobile, AL; Tallahassee, FL; Jacksonville, FL; Miami, FL

New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Harrisburg, PA; Pittsburgh, PA; Columbus, OH; Cincinnati, OH; Louisville, KY; Princeton, IN; St. Louis, MO; Kansas City, MO

Washington, DC; Roanoke, VA; Bristol, VA/TN; Knoxville, TN; Chattanooga, TN; Nashville, TN; Memphis, TN; Little Rock, AR; Dallas, TX

Chicago, IL to Memphis, TN; Birmingham, AL; Montgomery, AL; Dothan, AL, Tallahassee, FL; Jacksonville, FL; Miami, FL

Washington DC; Roanoke, VA; Christiansburg, VA; Bluefield, WV; Williamson, WV; Cattlesburg, WV; Ashland, KY; Cincinnati, OH; Indianapolis, IN; Chicago, IL

Washington, DC; Cumberland, MD; Clarksburg, WV; Petersburg, WV; Point Pleasant, WV; Huntinton,WV; Ashland, KY; Maysville, KY; Lexington, KY; Frankfort, KY; Louisville, KY; Princeton, IN; St. Louis, MO

Traverse City, MI; Ann Arbor, MI; Detroit, MI; Toledo, OH; Cleveland, OH; Pittsburg, PA; Washington, DC

Marquette, MI; Escanaba, MI; Green Bay, WI; Milwaukee, WI; Chicago, IL; Springfield, IL; St. Louis, MO; Dallas, TX

Other Recommendations

Graphics

Potential additional graphics to create and show besides what we noted in our [Round 1 feedback](#).

Amish, Mennonite & Hutterite Communities

Show an overlay of the full proposed long-distance services on a map showing Amish, Mennonite, & Hutterite communities. These communities, especially Amish and Mennonite, have been noted frequent travelers on long-distance services. AANW has heard of growing communities of these groups in our Greater Northwest region; we hope they are included in considerations as well.

Requested But Unconnected Communities

The Project team outlined that there were over 1000 comments and many more requests for communities to be “on the map.” What other communities (besides Rapid City, SD for example) were requested to be connected via long-distance services that the project team was unable to find routings to serve? Please list all of these, at least to the invited stakeholders, in case we can help identify viable routings that the project team is unaware of (as was the case with Rapid City).

Military Bases, Training Bases, & Support Communities

As noted in numerous workshops, we suggest the team identify all public military bases, training bases, and support communities and identify if proposed long-distance routes could serve them. The training bases especially may be good generators of ridership. These services may help travel of service personnel on leave, civilian contractors, and their families to these installations of national importance. Again, we suggest that the project team consult the Railroads for National Defense office.

Phasing, Prioritization, Implementation & Funding

We have numerous ideas but will save them for Round 3 comments. Please let us know if you would like our reflections before then.

Links & Resources

We here provide a list of resources that may be helpful.

Smart Growth America's Best Practices in Rural Mobility

We suggest that the project team thoroughly review this recent report by Smart Growth America. Again the value of these long-distance services isn't for the largest communities that can be served, but for the smallest of ones that can reasonably be served between the larger metro areas.

<https://smartgrowthamerica.org/rural-roadmap/>

https://smartgrowthamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/SGA-Rural-Transportation-Field-Scan_Final_7.27.pdf

Previous Comments

[AASHTO CORT Workshop Response \(September 2022\)](#)

[Long-Distance Study Round 1 Feedback \(February 2023\)](#)

Disabilities and Rural Transit

[Making Travel More Equitable for People with Disabilities | National Academies](#)

[South Dakota Transit Provider Working With Local Health System to Transport Discharged Patients - National Center for Mobility Management](#)

Wyoming Petition

Proponents in south central Wyoming, on their own volition, started this petition.

<https://www.change.org/p/amtrak-bring-passenger-rail-amtrak-to-the-wyoming-i-80-corridor>
#thatsWY!

North Dakota Main Streets Initiative

[Main Street ND](#)

Professor Ben Winchester, Middle of Everywhere, University of Minnesota Extension,

[Living in the Middle of Everywhere - McLeod for Tomorrow](#)

<https://www.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/Living%20in%20ND/Main%20Street%20ND/Community%20Chats/2023.06.13.%20Resident%20Recruitment.%20ND%20Main%20Street.pdf>

Conclusions

Many of the communities with the most to gain from passenger rail services may not be loud advocates at present. Many are skeptical, having lost service in the Amtrak era, or never have yet had Amtrak service. Studies that recommended services which did not materialize underscored this skepticism.

Nevertheless, AANW is convinced from our outreach activities (such as our [Train Treks](#)) that there is strong interest in passenger rail services in rural and underserved communities.

This interest is bipartisan, which is significant given the country's political divides. And it comes against the backdrop of the recent [Montana court case](#) stating that youth "have a "fundamental constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment".

For insights into the Greater Northwest, we recommend Kathleen Norris' book *Dakota, A Spiritual Geography*. The opening few chapters and first half of the book give an insight to the people and a mindset that can be found throughout much of the expansive western United States. Additionally, we recommend Senator Jon Tester's book: *Grounded* to gain insights from the sponsor of the legislation you are now diligently working to fulfill.

We applaud the wide-ranging and holistic approach the project team is taking.

It is time for an ambitious, inclusive vision; one that gets all states on-board with National Network service. The team's final report should outline the coverage and frequency needed to promote utilization and financial performance of the National Network. There are notable gaps in the proposed enhanced network, where there are existing railroad ROWs available today that can be used to fulfill those travel needs.

As the team takes our and the other suggested route recommendations and develops them through the iterative process in the coming months, we are available to provide supplemental information or make relevant connections with other groups and individuals.

At the end of the day, we're all in this together. We all have Congressmen, Congresswomen, and US Senators we should get "on-board" with passenger rail expansion!

We look forward to January and final route recommendations.

Thank you,

Dan Bilka
AANW President
August, 2023