

DES MOINES AREA

MPO

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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February 6, 2009

Ms. Tammy Nicholson, Director
Office of Rail Transportation
Iowa Department of Transportation
800 Lincoln Way
Ames, IA 50010

Dear Ms. Nicholson:

SUBJECT: RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE FOR IOWA

The Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) long has supported passenger rail service in Iowa. In 2002, then MPO Chair Loretta Sieman, in a letter to Iowa's Congressional delegation, was noting:

"The Des Moines Area MPO's long history of support for improving intercity rail passenger service in Iowa . . . as part of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI). The rail corridor begins in Chicago, passes through the Quad Cities, Iowa City, Des Moines, Atlantic, and on to Council Bluffs . . . The Iowa DOT did include the central Iowa rail corridor, and that corridor did rank first in potential for future intercity rail passenger service across Iowa."

In 2005, then MPO Chair Geri Huser offered similar a letter to Iowa's Congressional delegation, echoing Chair Sieman's 2002 comments that,

"The Des Moines Area MPO promotes working towards a balanced transportation system. Rail transport should be a viable modal element to our national transportation system. Rail travel can complement highways and airports, offering a cost-effective alternative to driving or flying. Congress has long supported the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, and the Federal Aviation Administration with funding to improve those modes. Highways serve people and goods. Airports serve people and goods. Rail is no different. Congress needs to continue to fund intercity rail passenger service."

As the MPO Chair today, and a representative and currently active in the Iowa Department of Transportation's Rail Passenger Advisory Committee I have shared my view that Iowa must be postured to work with Amtrak and the State of Illinois so that when the rail passenger service funding becomes available and the State of Illinois extends Amtrak service from Chicago to the Quad Cities, that the Iowa DOT has the funding resources to implement and to ingrate the Quad Cities to Iowa City and the Iowa City to Des Moines rail passenger segments using the Iowa Interstate Railroad's rail corridor through central Iowa. We at the MPO support the Iowa Legislature establishing a sustainable funding source for rail passenger service in Iowa, and particularly support the Iowa Department of Transportation having the funding resources in hand in order to implement such service as soon as possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Ted Ohmart, Chair
Des Moines Area MPO

cc: Des Moines Area MPO Executive Committee
Tom Kane, Des Moines Area MPO Executive Director