

## **Amtrak Routes Possible Through Iowa City**

Taking a trip to Chicago may soon be a lot easier for eastern Iowans. Amtrak just completed feasibility studies on a commuter rail system from Iowa City to the Quad Cities and another from there to Chicago.

Trains already frequent Iowa City, but they're for moving cargo. A new study shows these tracks could have people riding the rails in the near future. The study looked at ridership forecasts to operate at 40 miles per hour, 60 mph and 79 mph. Amtrak suggests the latter.

"I think it makes the service drive time competitive if you run passenger trains at that speed and I think it would be a wise decision to move forward with that recommendation," said Amtrak Senior Director of Government Affairs Ray Lang.

People could get on and off at any of the seven stops along the way. Each city would be responsible for maintaining a depot. Iowa City already has one and the owners are ready. The depot wouldn't just be a place for people to get on and off. It would kind of become a gateway to Iowa City, which would also allow for some more economic development in this area.

"Blocks away from that depot we have the Court Street transportation center, ample parking there. We're building another parking structure on the south side of Iowa City," said Iowa City Mayor Regina Bailey.

She thinks it's a win-win for Iowa City.

"We bike, we walk, we have vehicles, we use public transportation. This is just another aspect of that transportation system that's so important to Iowa City citizens," she said.

The tracks are already in place along the route. The owner of the tracks from Iowa City into Illinois is open to sharing the line with commuters. Construction would take about two years.

Before that, Iowa and Illinois would have to come up with millions of dollars to get it done.

"There is legislation pending in Washington to provide states with capital dollars to do these kind of projects and if that legislation should pass, this becomes a very, very easy thing for the state to do," said Lang.

At top speed, a train could get people from Iowa City to Chicago in just under five hours. Driving the 222 mile trip takes 3 hours, 42 minutes.

The price for a ticket could cost anywhere between \$25 and \$70 each way, depending on travel dates.

The city of Dubuque also wants Amtrak to take a look at service to Chicago from the Key City.

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