

Amtrak outlines Chicago-to-Iowa City service plans

By Progressive Railroading.com

[Amtrak](#) recently completed a study for the Iowa Department of Transportation on the feasibility of operating passenger-rail service from the Quad Cities to Iowa City on a route originating in Chicago.

If trains operated at a maximum speed of 79 mph and made two daily round trips, Amtrak estimates annual ridership would total 187,000 passengers. Trains could make the trip between Chicago and Iowa City in just under five hours. Annual operating expenses and revenue are estimated at \$10.8 million and \$4.8 million, respectively. The states of Iowa and Illinois would share capital costs and the price tag to upgrade rail infrastructure is estimated at \$54.9 million.

The report is an addendum to one issued in December for the Illinois Department of Transportation that analyzed the feasibility of operating passenger-rail service from Chicago to the Quad Cities. Amtrak had determined the best route between the two areas would use a portion of an Iowa Interstate Railroad Ltd. (IAIS) line from the Quad Cities to a proposed connection to BNSF Railway Co. near Wyanet, Ill.

In order to serve Iowa City, Amtrak first must establish service to the Quad Cities. The addendum specifically examines the feasibility of extending service 59 miles from the Quad Cities to Iowa City via IAIS.

To advance the project, the parties must negotiate track agreements with the freight railroads, secure funding, procure rail cars and locomotives, develop stations and complete infrastructure improvements.