

# Iowa Connections

*Get on Board* with  
passenger rail!



Iowa Connections



*Get on Board*

# Iowa Connections

*A visioning plan for passenger rail*



## Iowa Connections

### *A visioning plan for passenger rail*

Iowa's rail network offers a great opportunity for passenger rail service, connecting Iowa's largest urban areas to Chicago and potential other Midwest metropolitan centers. The Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT), working with the state of Illinois, Iowa cities, planning organizations and advocacy groups, has created a bold new vision called Iowa Connections.

**The vision will create a passenger rail network that connects Iowans to each other and the country, and makes Iowa a more attractive place to live, work and visit.**



Iowa Connections views passenger rail as a means to larger national and regional goals. The vision seeks to integrate passenger rail into the broader multi-modal transportation system and make it a significant contributor to improved mobility, economic competitiveness, community revitalization, and reduced fuel use and emissions. It is a vision where travel by train is comfortable, efficient and reliable and leaves a light footprint on the environmental landscape.

The vision uses an incremental approach to implementation – to increase service over time, based on market demand, operational feasibility and funding.

# Passenger rail can benefit Iowans

*“Infrastructure projects and amenities like passenger rail are an important tool as we work to recruit new businesses and employees. It is essential that our customers, dealers, employees and suppliers believe that the Quad City region is a great place to live, work, play, and raise a family.”*

*Mara Sovey, President, John Deere Foundation*



## **Passenger rail can benefit Iowans**

Iowans reap benefits in multiple ways when passenger rail is expanded.

### **Economic vitality and development strengthened with:**

- A business environment that will create and attract new jobs and retain existing jobs.
- More travel options for both business and leisure.
- Enhanced business and university recruitment.

### **Sustainable transportation alternatives result in:**

- Energy efficiency that promotes energy independence.
- Fewer greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for healthier Iowans and a better environment.

### **Quality of life is enhanced with:**

- Access to travel for those who do not or cannot drive.
- A comfortable, convenient travel option.
- Travel alternative with a sound safety record
- Improved motorist safety through safety enhancements at highway-railroad crossings

### **Efficiencies are achieved through:**

- Speedy and straightforward boarding.
- Productive travel time through use of laptops and cell phones en route.

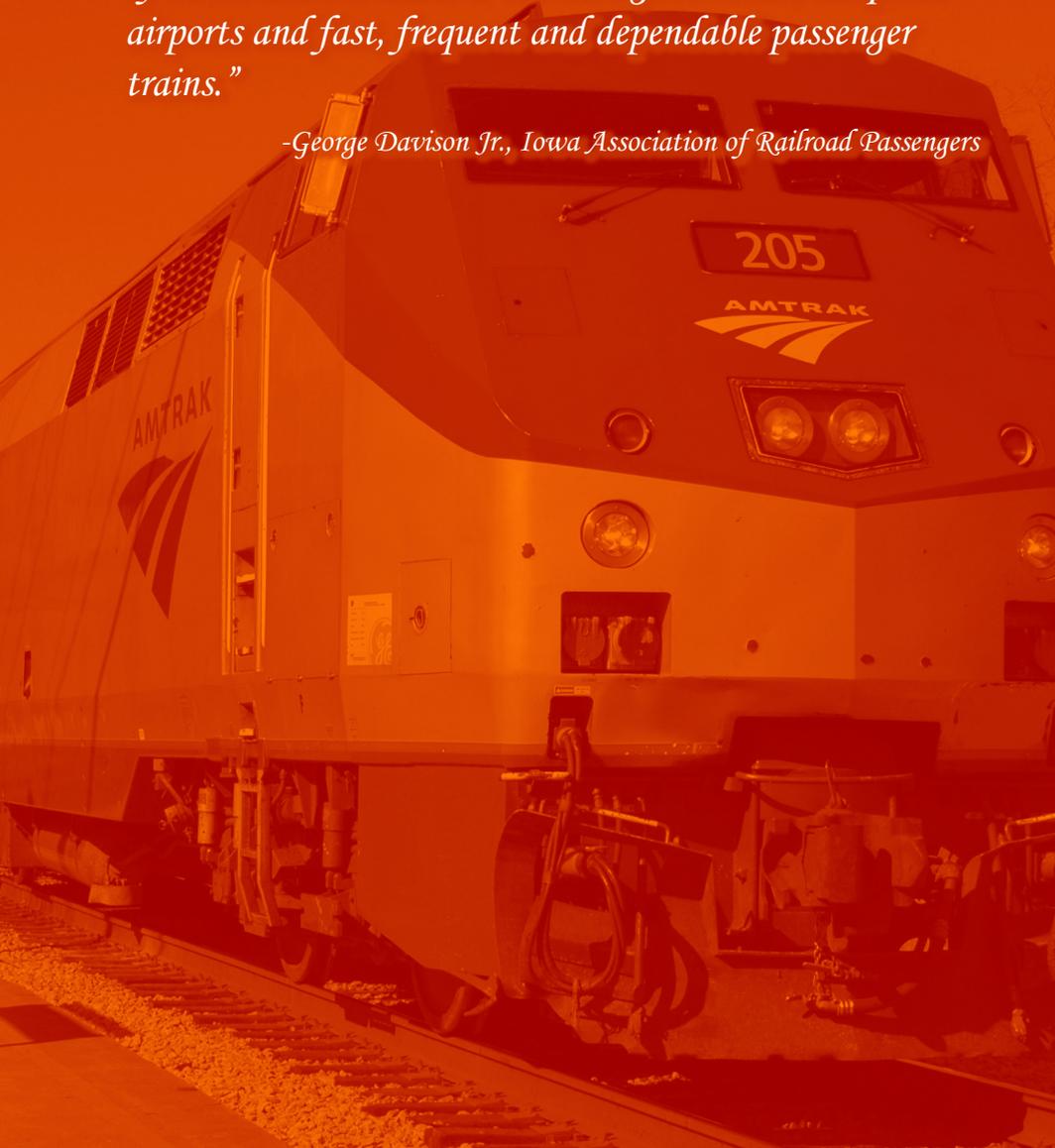
### **Freight rail enhancements benefit:**

- Better track conditions, more automated switches, and enhanced train communications which improve overall train safety.
- Maintaining track to a higher standard which preserves the capacity for future freight increases.
- Rail corridors with both freight and passenger rail capacity will encourage rail-served businesses to locate in Iowa.

# Passenger rail connections

*“We need a balanced transportation system in the state of Iowa and the nation. We need good roads, adequate airports and fast, frequent and dependable passenger trains.”*

*-George Davison Jr., Iowa Association of Railroad Passengers*



# Passenger rail connections

Iowa currently has the benefit of two national passenger rail lines that run from Chicago to the West Coast crossing the southern part of the state. However, Iowa's largest communities do not have convenient connections to passenger rail alternatives to Chicago, Omaha, Minneapolis, and Kansas City. Existing freight rail lines in Iowa make this achievable.

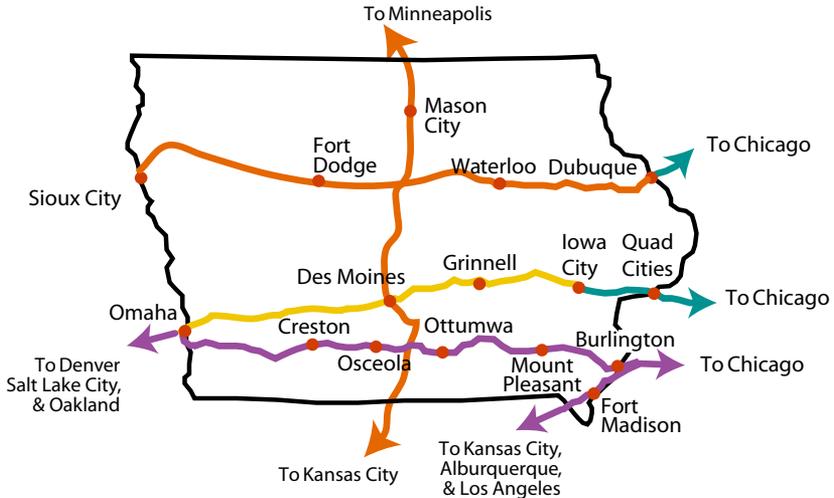
When Illinois developed a plan to bring passenger rail to Iowa's borders at the Quad Cities and Dubuque, expanded passenger rail serving more of Iowa's population became feasible.

The ultimate passenger rail network provides rail service connecting Iowans to major cities, regional destinations, and many other communities not typically served by commercial air or current passenger rail.

The immediate goal in the first phase of the vision is to achieve passenger rail service from Iowa City (via the Quad Cities) to Chicago and Dubuque to Chicago with later phases exploring further expansion.

## Passenger Rail Service in Iowa

- Existing Amtrak routes
- Planned intercity passenger rail
- Routes being studied
- Routes for future study



# Expanded passenger rail service is feasible

*“Passenger rail trains will provide fast, efficient service to Chicago for Iowans who ride them and good jobs for the Iowans who build, upgrade and maintain them.”*

*-State Senator Daryl Beall*



## Expanded passenger rail service is feasible

The creation of a federally funded passenger rail program for capital costs has made expanded passenger rail service in Iowa a reality. Federal legislation in 2008 created the High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) program - a competitive grant program to initiate or improve passenger rail routes.

When the program was announced, the Iowa DOT and Illinois Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the freight railroads that would host passenger rail routes undertook the extensive planning, environmental studies, preliminary engineering and other activities required to compete for federal funding to reinstate passenger rail service in Iowa.

On October 28, 2010, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood announced a \$230 million grant award to Iowa and Illinois for the needed capital expenditures to initiate twice-a-day passenger service on the Chicago to Iowa City route. The grant will fund infrastructure improvements, equipment, and station start-up costs for the 219-mile route which would obtain an initial maximum speed of 79 mph. The federal grant will pay nearly 80 percent of the \$310 million project, with Iowa and Illinois proportionately sharing the remaining 20 percent match.

Earlier in 2010, the two states received a \$1 million grant award for a planning study for the entire Chicago to Omaha route, which will examine the feasibility of further expansion of passenger rail in Iowa.

Illinois chose to move forward on the Chicago to Dubuque route using Illinois state funding, so progress toward initiation of that service continues under the leadership of the Illinois DOT.

The time is *now* to  
***Get on Board***



## **The time is now to *Get on Board***

Never has there been a better time to begin building Iowa's passenger rail system. Many factors are rapidly converging to make the vision feasible. Iowa and Illinois were awarded funding for passenger rail in a highly competitive grant program. Iowa and Illinois state DOT's have a common goal to make expanded passenger rail a reality. Partnerships between the states and privately run railroads are being solidified. And, there is a groundswell of support for passenger rail from individuals, communities and Iowa businesses.

Iowa and Illinois can now leverage the 80 percent federal grant funding to expand Iowa's passenger rail services.

Most states, like Iowa, plan an incremental approach to building their passenger rail systems. Those routes that receive federal funding early, like the Chicago to Iowa City route, will be positioned to receive continued future funding to complete the planned route or routes.



# Iowans *Getting on Board*



## Iowans Getting on Board

### Iowans Getting on Board

Support for passenger rail is building. National, regional, statewide and local organizations have been busy planning and advocating for expanded passenger rail.

#### The Iowa DOT:

- Successfully competed for federal funding to initiate expanded passenger rail.
- Will leverage \$230 million in federal funding to complete the Chicago to Iowa City passenger rail route
- Continues on-going discussions to forge the needed agreements with Amtrak, Illinois and the host railroads on route improvements, cost sharing, equipment, and other details.
- Facilitates a statewide Passenger Rail Advisory Committee, whose members are helping shape the vision for passenger rail service in the state and make it a reality (members are listed on page 22)
- Participates in passenger rail organizations at a national, regional and local level.
- Updated Iowa's statewide rail plan that includes passenger rail.
- Prepared a 10-Year Strategic Passenger Rail Plan to guide short term actions.

Regional and metropolitan planning organizations are including passenger rail in their future plans. Cities are identifying potential depot locations and developing plans.

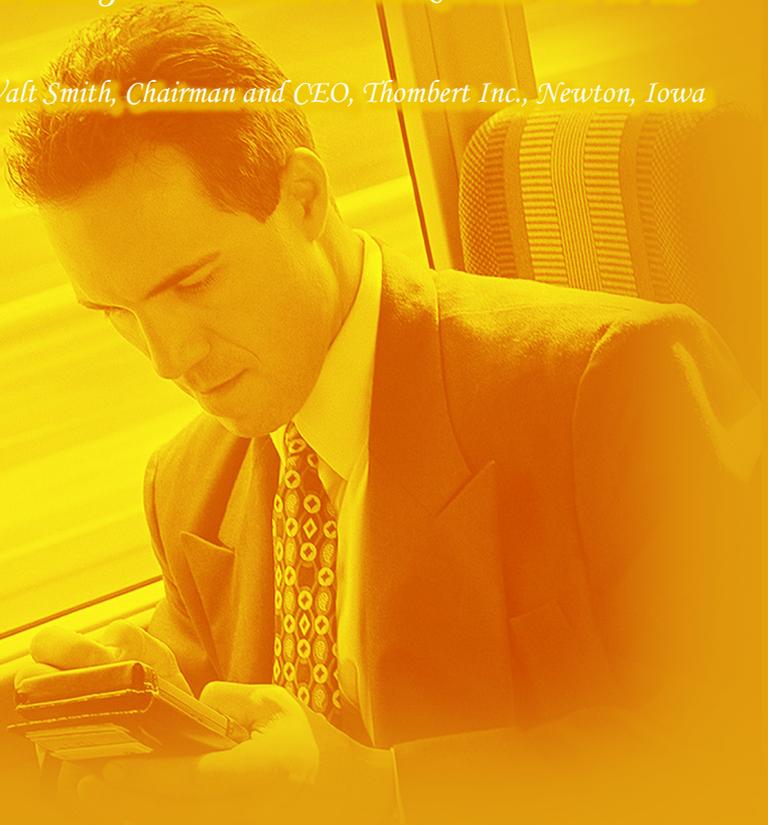
If you share the vision of expanded passenger rail in Iowa, take action today to **Get on Board!**

- Do your homework and get the facts. This brochure and the Iowa DOT's Web site are good places to start to find the information you need to be a champion for passenger rail.
- Talk to your local and state officials about expanded passenger rail service opportunities.
- Join a local or regional rail passenger advocacy group.
- Write a letter of support to your local media.

# *Getting on Board now makes sense for Iowa's economy*

*"Passenger rail is fuel efficient and it can take you to the heart of Chicago's business district. It will save 10 hours of driving time (four hours by air) each time I need to do business in Chicago. I can read or work while I'm on the train."*

*-Walt Smith, Chairman and CEO, Thombert Inc., Newton, Iowa*



## **Getting on Board now makes sense for Iowa's economy**

To support passenger rail, existing track will need improvements to support higher speeds and train signals must be upgraded to increase passenger and highway safety. Depots must be built or rehabilitated and platforms that meet current standards constructed. All of these activities will support job creation or retention by requiring the services of a variety of workers.

Businesses locate where there are transportation options that serve them best; and the additional passenger rail routes will open up new opportunities, and help attract and retain good workers in Iowa. Universities will have a similar advantage in recruitment by offering more travel options for students.

With the initiation of service to Iowa City and Dubuque, nearly twice as many Iowa employers will be located within a one hour drive of a rail station.

New commercial and residential developments are likely to spring up near passenger depots helping to reinvigorate an area or a community.

### **Projected economic benefits of the Chicago to Iowa City route:**

- **Job growth is estimated at 588 per year over the first four years during design and construction.**
- **Increase in business activity is estimated at \$25 million per year following service initiation.**
- **For every dollar of public investment, \$1.70 in public benefits will be returned through reduced costs for transportation, fuel and pollution.**

*Source: Benefit Cost Analysis of the Chicago Iowa City High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program, Prepared by HDR Consulting, August, 2010*

# *Getting on Board now* makes sense for Iowa's environment

*"A balanced, integrated, well-functioning transportation system is essential for a globally competitive economy, broadened employment opportunities, efficiency in the movement of people and goods, redundancy for security, and environmentally sound and energy smart travel."*

*-Iowa DOT Director Nancy Richardson*



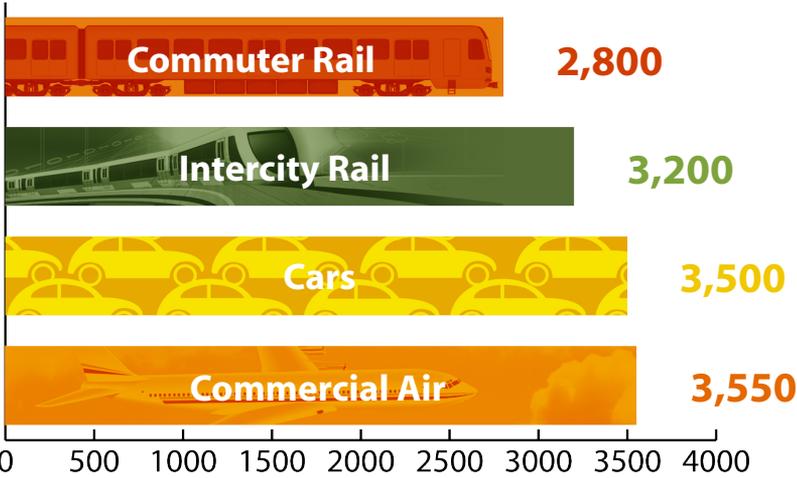
# Getting on Board now makes sense for Iowa's environment

Passenger rail contributes to energy and environmental sustainability. A reduction in the growth rate of vehicle miles traveled and the related reduced fuel consumption and vehicle emissions will help move Iowa toward a goal of energy independence and security.

The impact of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions on human health and our global climate is a very good reason to support the expansion of transportation modes that generate lower levels of GHG emissions.

The Chicago to Iowa City route plans to use an innovative "GreenLine" concept. Available or emerging technologies will be investigated and used to make this one of the "greenest" lines in America. Everything will be on the table for consideration as this line is developed, including fuel saving technologies, emission controls, alternative energy sources and lubricants, use of recycled or repurposed materials in the equipment manufacture and operation and even locally grown foods for the dining cars.

## Energy used per passenger mile (BTUs)



Source: U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Data Book

*Getting on Board now*  
makes sense for us



## ***Getting on Board now makes sense for us***

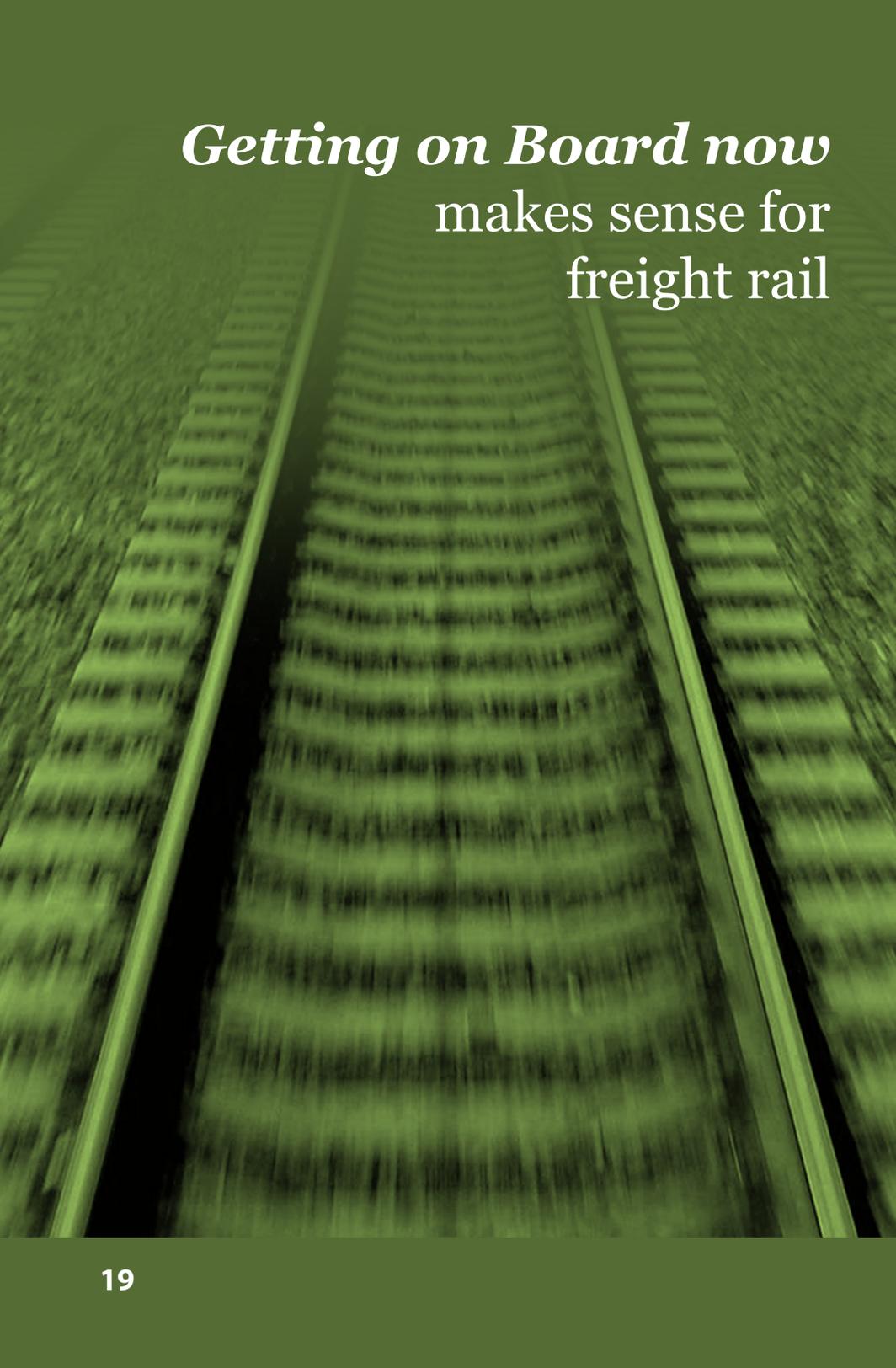
Expanded passenger rail is a key piece of a versatile, flexible way to move people, along with automobiles, air travel, buses, shuttles and commuter services. Alternative travel options that work in concert with or as alternatives to other modes allow smart and easy choices for travelers.

Passenger rail is an especially popular choice for business travelers who can quickly board a train and make productive use of the time on board. Families can take advantage of the travel time for relaxation and enjoy time together during a trip.

As baby boomers head in to retirement, this group will require attractive alternatives to automobile travel. One in five Americans age 65 or older does not drive, and the population older than 65 is expected to nearly double by 2030. Whether aging lowans can no longer safely drive or choose not to drive, the need will increase for travel options that allow them the ability to visit friends and family around the country.

On the other end of the age spectrum, university students will likely be frequent travelers, as many out-of-state students are from the Chicago area and Chicago is also a popular destination for weekend outings among young adults.





*Getting on Board now*  
makes sense for  
freight rail

## ***Getting on Board now makes sense for freight rail***

Passenger and freight trains will travel on the same track. The infrastructure improvements required for passenger rail will allow passenger trains and freight trains to coexist.

Track improvements will allow higher speed passenger trains to maintain schedules while allowing freight trains to continue serving their freight customers. Iowa's businesses, industries and agricultural sector who are currently served by freight rail will continue to enjoy the competitive shipping rates and access to distant markets that freight rail provides.

With high truck and passenger car volumes on many segments of Iowa's interstates, any shift of freight and passenger volumes to a rail corridor will provide congestion relief, save wear and tear on the highways, reduce pollutants and provide safety benefits to motorists.

Additional safety improvements at highway-railroad grade crossings required for passenger rail corridors will improve safety for motorists as well as passenger and freight trains.

Freight rail will continue to do what it does best by moving goods. Passenger rail will provide an alternative to moving people. Both serve a key role in Iowa's transportation system and in growing Iowa's economy and will help to relieve highway congestion as freight and passenger volumes grow.

# Members working to *Get Iowa on Board*

*“Rail – intercity, commuter, freight, and their intermodal links – is a vital part of the nation’s transportation system that helps balance demand across multiple modes.”*

*-Iowa DOT Office of Rail Transportation Director Tamara Nicholson*

## Passenger Rail Advisory Committee (PRAC)

In 2008, the Iowa Department of Transportation formed a Passenger Rail Advisory Committee whose members are helping shape the vision for passenger rail service in the state and make it a reality.

### **Membership includes:**

Ames Area Metropolitan Planning Organization  
AMTRAK  
Bi-State Regional Commission  
BNSF Railway Commission  
CN  
City of Osceola  
Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Cedar Rapids and Iowa City Railway Company  
Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority  
East Central Intergovernmental Association  
I-80 Corridor Passenger Train Task Force  
Iowa Association of Railroad Passengers  
Iowa Department of Economic Development  
Iowa Interstate Railroad  
Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments  
Johnson County Council of Governments  
Metropolitan Area Planning Agency  
Mid-West Interstate Passenger Rail Commission  
Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council  
Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission  
Union Pacific Railroad

**More information is available at:**  
**[www.iowadot.gov/iowarail](http://www.iowadot.gov/iowarail)**

Produced by



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of Transportation**

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01/04/2011  
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