

**SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF MEMORANDUM**

TO: Wisconsin State Legislature Legislative Council
Special Committee on Regional Transportation Authority

FROM: Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Staff

DATE: September 10, 2008

**SUBJECT: STATUS OF PROPOSED KENOSHA-RACINE-MILWAUKEE (KRM)
COMMUTER RAIL APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL TRANSIT
ADMINISTRATION (FTA) SECTION 5309 DISCRETIONARY
"NEW START TRANSIT FIXED GUIDEWAY" CAPITAL GRANT**

The Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) commuter rail is a 33-mile commuter rail line extending from Milwaukee to Kenosha and connecting with existing Chicago to Kenosha commuter rail operated by the Chicago-based METRA commuter rail system.

The conduct of the Federally-required transit alternatives analysis comparing commuter rail to bus alternatives, the preparation of the necessary request to enter into preliminary engineering for a FTA Section 5309 capital grant, and the attendant preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) were all initiated in November 2005. Prior to these efforts, a commuter rail feasibility study and corridor study were completed. An intergovernmental partnership of the Cities and Counties of Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission has been the sponsor of these studies, along with the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Transit Authority (RTA). The Commission staff has acted as the staff to the intergovernmental partnership and RTA in these efforts.

In August 2007, the alternatives analysis and request to enter into preliminary engineering were completed and submitted to the FTA. An attachment to this Staff Memorandum is a newsletter which summarizes the results of the alternatives analysis and request to enter into preliminary engineering. Earlier in 2007, the RTA requested the Wisconsin State Legislature, as part of the 2007-2009 State Budget, to grant it the authority to sponsor and operate the KRM commuter rail and provide it with the authority to increase its vehicle rental fee from \$2 to \$15 per rental contract in Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine Counties. The requested operating and funding authority was not provided in the 2007-2009 State

Budget and the RTA subsequently withdrew its request of FTA to enter into preliminary engineering as it was certain to be rejected without having local funding to implement the commuter rail line, or the authority to sponsor and operate a commuter rail line.

The RTA has determined to complete its work required under Wisconsin Statutes Section 59.58(6) of recommending to the Governor and State Legislature with respect to the need for an RTA in Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine Counties to sponsor and operate commuter rail and all public transit and the dedicated local funding needed for commuter rail and all public transit. This report, including the attendant necessary changes in State law, will be completed by November 15, 2008, for consideration and inclusion in the 2009-2011 State Budget. The KRM DEIS is scheduled for completion in March 2009. The alternatives analysis and request to enter into preliminary engineering is being refined and updated and will be submitted to the FTA in the summer of 2009.

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Attachment