

GREEN BAY EXTENSION PASSENGER RAIL TRAIN

Reviewing GREEN BAY Opportunities

By Frank Ingram and Terry Brown

October 25, 2022 - There are many pieces of the puzzle necessary to accomplish the goal of bringing passenger rail to Green Bay and The Fox Valley. Amtrak's new Corridor Identification and Development Program has the potential to shape how funding for trains gets used for decades to come. We, NEWRails and WisARP, need to continue letting Amtrak and all others involved know that we want emphasis on the Fox Valley corridor.

Specifically, we record our support for the Chicago - Milwaukee - Fond du Lac - Green Bay Corridor. This will serve

**over 56 % of the Wisconsin population,
57 % of manufacturing business activity,
and 52 % of retail and wholesale businesses.**

NEWRails believes this corridor can provide connecting and through service to multiple communities in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio as well as connecting with the Amtrak long-distance passenger rail network in Chicago.

WHICH ROUTE TO GREEN BAY?

There have been some discussions over the route the Green Bay Extension should take. Here is a brief overview of the most likely options:

East of Lake Winnebago: This routing is supported mostly by nostalgia. Two routes, one via Kiel and one via

Sheboygan ran between Milwaukee and Green Bay. They are the shortest routes but suffer from communities that lack the population centers that are available on the west side of Lake Winnebago, not to mention having had track sections lifted decades ago.

All discussion that follows uses the Canadian National Railroad from Fond du Lac to Neenah, Appleton, and Green Bay.

The original WisDOT route via West Bend on the Northwestern line to join CN (Wisconsin Central) at Fond du Lac goes back to the 20th Century. This right-of-way between West Bend and Eden has been converted into the Eisenbahn State Rail Trail and would be very costly overall to consider.



The Canadian Pacific- Empire Builder route West out of downtown Milwaukee and crossing at Duplainville to join the CN is currently the favored route with most designers and engineers. The connection track between the CP and CN was removed several years ago since interchange traffic had dwindled to essentially zero. The connection track can easily be reinstalled, but due to the small area of land available for that connection, a tight curve will mandate slow train speeds through this section of track.

This route could provide a diversionary route for the WSOR route construction at relatively low cost and most likely can be

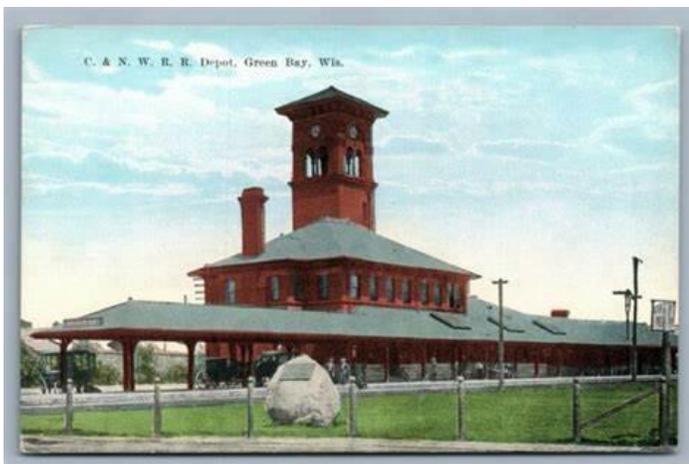
implemented much more quickly than the WSOR route. It is NEWRails preferred first option to get service operating while the WSOR is improved for service.

WSOR through northwest Milwaukee to Slinger, rolling through the 30th St Corridor is intriguing to consider on numerous points. It appears the WSOR from CP Junction in Milwaukee to Slinger is perhaps 75 percent Class 3 track, capable of 60mph for passenger trains. The track south of the 30th St. Corridor yard is welded rail but likely at Class 2 standards for a 25mph speed limit.

How much would it cost to bring the entire WSOR track from CP Junction to Slinger up to Class 3 track? How much would be the cost if an upgrade to Class 4 track (79mph for passenger trains) would be ordered? Can we, the passenger train riding public, be willing to ride at 60mph on this rail for approximately 20 miles?

This routing has the opportunity to serve North or NW Milwaukee and Germantown. At Rugby Junction WSOR runs parallel to the CN to Slinger for five miles. Construction of a Universal Crossover supporting both directions on both railroads at Rugby Junction South will add flexibility mostly for the CN mainline. (CN already has a two-mile siding at Ackerville along this same route, which might cause CN to balk at the CN-WSOR bi-directional running.)

The WSOR route is estimated to reduce train mileage by 20-25 miles compared to the CP-Duplainville-CN routing. The WSOR route would allow the Green Bay extension a chance to stop in southern Washington County and the NW side of Milwaukee. All issues considered; this route is the preferred route of NEWRails.



OLD DEPOTS STILL AROUND

Green Bay still has its two most storied train stations from the first half of the 20th century. Both are still looking good today but would no longer serve the needs of a 21st century train station.

The most recognizable station in Green Bay is the C&NW depot now used by Tiletown Brewery since 1996. There is enough surrounding area for this 1899 creation to function as a contemporary train station with all the intermodal connections. But its current owners have an ongoing successful business and would not likely be interested in

selling the building and moving out.

The other train depot still standing today is on the east side of the Fox River and was constructed by the Milwaukee Road railroad. In 1957 this building was donated to the city of Green Bay. In 1986 it was sold to the Green Bay Chamber of Commerce and still houses some Chamber offices today. The former Milwaukee Road train station is on the National Register of Historic Places because of its distinctive architecture. As time has passed other buildings have built up around this depot, therefore it is not a serious candidate for a future Green Bay passenger train station.



WHERE WOULD A NEW STATION GO?

The traditional assumption most people were considering was a very practical place; Leicht Memorial Park opposite the old NorthWestern Railroad station. The old C&NW building is now home to Tiletown Brewery, and would be across the tracks from a Leicht Park location. The park location is along the banks of the Fox River. It seems every proposed location will have concerns and drawbacks, and this one is no different. Perhaps the number one concern would be the loss of valuable park space near downtown Green Bay.

Over the years other locations have been rumored as possibilities. But when more investigating was performed the results usually came to reoccurring conclusions: The location was not practical for an assortment of reasons which could not be overcome. Some suggestions involved remodeling buildings, but rough estimates always seemed to make these possibilities cost prohibitive.



Recently an old location has come under new consideration. The property under scrutiny is currently owned by C. Reiss Coal Yard, near West Mason St. by the Fox River. C. Reiss Coal has considered for years moving their operations closer to the Bay. A State of Wisconsin grant that would cover over half of the estimated cost of the move was issued earlier this year (2022).

The Reiss Coal relocation of operations could make available a potentially very attractive portion of real estate along the west bank of the Fox River. *The City of Green Bay progress working through the possibilities of this site are currently unknown to NEWRails.*

One issue that could raise several flags in development is the curved track section just south of West Mason St. Amtrak is not likely to approve a station platform on curved track. However, the track section under the Mason St. bridge going north might pass inspection. The curved track also could create a sight problem for a stopped passenger train with a moving freight on a single track mainline in the area.

One positive for the C. Reiss Coal Yard is the potential for development surrounding the station. There should be plenty of area for intermodal connections with any passenger trains. The Coal Yard area along the banks of the Fox River would likely be an attractive backdrop for any seasoned developer. This area has the makings for a Brightline-style station development plan with loads of retail, restaurants, and housing nearby. This portion of the project, if it comes to fruition should continue to pay dividends to the City of Green Bay for decades to come.

GREEN BAY AND MIDWEST RAIL INITIATIVES

This program should be driven by a national agenda, providing for standard-speed lines at 79 mph for passenger trains. The Green Bay Extension needs to feed into a broader network of trains and intermodal connections providing regional and local service to multiple communities. Evaluation of each corridor should take into consideration how it fits into the national network, which will make it easier to set priorities and measure a project's full impact.

The process should make it possible to identify high-impact projects that localities or individual states might not be able to carry out on their own. This means taking account of shared assets between corridors, and shared benefits. For example, when considering the Green Bay to Chicago corridor, improving Chicago Union Station may be considered too expensive for the benefits it provides to just this one corridor. Instead, viewing it as a shared asset we can see that improvements to the Chicago hub will improve service on corridors throughout the Midwest and even across the national network. Shared assets need to be properly valued and prioritized when evaluating passenger rail projects.

PHOTOS IN THIS DOCUMENT

The top photo on page one is the C&NW depot after conversion to Tiletown Brewery. The traditional Wisconsin Central maroon and gold engines were delivering that days freight. This picture is by John Ryan from RailPictures.Net.

The second photo on page one is probably the only time an Amtrak Genesis Diesel engine ever visited Green Bay. This photo captured in 2000 was a U.S. Postal Service special Celebrate the Century Express train. This unique paint scheme was only applied to one Genesis P42DC, a baggage car and a modified interior Amfleet coach car.

The top photo on page two is a postcard image of the C&NW depot. The bottom photo is a contemporary picture of the Milwaukee Road depot, containing the Green Bay Chamber of Commerce label on the second story façade.

The photo on page three doesn't look much like a train station. But this Intermodal station, dedicated in June 2022, is the new station that will greet you in Normal, IL.