

**Minutes of the  
East Wisconsin Counties Railroad Consortium  
Meeting of July 10, 2024**

**East Wisconsin Counties Railroad Consortium Meeting** was called to order by Chairman Thomas E. Winker on July 10, 2024, at approximately 10:00 a.m., at the Dodge County Administration Building, Administration Auditorium, 127 E. Oak Street, Juneau, Wisconsin.

The Consortium rose to say the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Certification of Public Notice:** Kimberly A. Nass certified that the notice of this meeting complies with all applicable requirements of Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law.

**Present:** Char Holtan and Darren W. Schroeder, Columbia County; Jeffrey Caine, Dodge County; John Zorn and Karen Madigan, Fond du Lac County; Dennis Mulder, Green Lake County; Shawn Rolland, Milwaukee County; Tom Winker and Marty Wolf, Ozaukee County; Jon Kuhlow and Chuck Born, Sheboygan County; Jeff Schleif and Robert Hatwig, Washington County; and Donald Nussbaum and Howard Miller, Winnebago County.

**Excused:** Jim Mielke, Dodge County; and Charlie Wielgosh, Green Lake County.

**Others Present:** Don Vruwink, Wisconsin Commissioner of Railroads; Lisa Stern and Ben Mohlke, WisDOT; Ken Lucht, WSOR; Emily Traiforos, GoRail; Kimberly A. Nass, Dodge County Corporation Counsel; and Kelly Lepple, Dodge County Corporation Counsel Office.

**Election of Officers:**

Kim Nass called for nominations from the floor for the office of Chairman.

**Chairman:** Jeff Caine and Char Holtan nominated Thomas Winker for Chairman. There were no other nominations. Motion by Mulder/Caine to cast a unanimous ballot for Thomas Winker as Chairman. Motion carried by unanimous vote. Thomas Winker was elected Chairman of the EWCRC.

Upon election, Thomas Winker assumed the office of Chairman.

**Vice Chairman:** Jeff Caine nominated Jeff Schleif for Vice Chairman. There were no other nominations. Motion by Schroeder/Madigan to cast a unanimous ballot for Jeff Schleif as Vice Chairman. Motion carried by unanimous vote. Jeff Schleif was elected Vice Chairman of the EWCRC.

**Secretary:** Jeff Caine and Jeff Schleif nominated John Zorn for Secretary. There were no other nominations. Motion by Schroeder/Schleif to cast a unanimous ballot for John Zorn as Secretary. Motion carried by unanimous vote. John Zorn was elected Secretary of the EWCRC.

**Treasurer:** Karen Madigan nominated Jeff Caine for Treasurer. There were no other nominations. Motion by Schleif/Mulder to cast a unanimous ballot for Jeff Caine as Treasurer. Motion carried by unanimous vote. Jeff Caine was elected Treasurer of the EWCRC.

**Public Comment:** Don Vruwink introduced himself to the Consortium and reported on some of the projects that the Office of the Commissioner of Railroads is working on.

**Approval of Draft Minutes of May 8, 2024:** Motion by Holtan/Mulder to approve the draft minutes of May 8, 2024. Motion carried.

**Financial Report:** Jeff Caine reported for the period ending June 30, 2024. The balance in the checkbook as of March 31, 2024, was \$1,002.44. Deposits – \$275,203.73. Expenditures – \$5,086.82, and Transfers – \$270,117.21. Total EWCRC money on deposit in the Local Government Investment Pool as of May 31, 2024, is \$1,375,938.94. The interest rate for May 2024 was 5.38%. There was discussion about why Winnebago County only contributed \$25,000. Don Nussbaum will follow up with its Finance Department to submit the \$5,000 to make its 2023 contribution whole. There was discussion about why Milwaukee County only contributed \$25,000. Shawn Rolland stated that he will follow up with the County Board Chair to allocate \$5,000 to make its 2023 contribution whole. Kim Nass stated that she will issue new invoices to Milwaukee County and Winnebago County in the amount of \$5,000. Motion by Caine/Schleif to approve the Financial Report as read. Motion carried.

**Consider, discuss, and take action on 2025 funding level for Member Counties:** There was consideration of and discussion about the level of funding for member counties for 2025. Motion by Schleif/Mulder that the Board of Directors of the EWCRC recommend that each member county budget \$30,000 for its 2025-member county contribution to the EWCRC. Motion carried.

**Consider, discuss, and take action on Freight Rail Preservation Program Grant Application Instructions and Project Selection Procedure:** Ben Mohlke provided to the Consortium Members a draft copy of the proposed revisions WisDOT would like to make to the Freight Rail Preservation Program (FRPP) Grant Application Instructions. Ken Lucht expressed his concerns with the proposed revisions and how detrimental it would be to smaller, short line and regional railroad carriers in Wisconsin, including the publicly owned railroad system if Class 1 carriers were allowed to apply for FRPP government funding, and that WisDOT should reserve the FRPP to the short lines and regional railroad carriers throughout Wisconsin. Ken Lucht also stated that FRPP be eligible for any track owned or controlled by a community, municipality, county, or rail transit commission. Community-owned tracks that have never been improved or upgraded using state grant funds ought to be eligible under FRPP. Ken Lucht also reported that the public comment period ends at the end of July of 2024 to express concerns with the proposed changes. Ken Lucht asked that the EWCRC send a letter in support of WSOR's concerns to WisDOT's proposed changes objecting to Class I carriers being allowed to apply for FRPP government funding, that WisDOT should reserve the FRPP to the short lines and regional railroad carriers throughout Wisconsin, and FRPP be eligible for any track owned or controlled by a community, municipality, county, or rail transit commission. Motion by Mulder/Caine to authorize Tim Winker to draft, sign and submit a letter to WisDOT before the public comment period has ended. Motion carried.

**GoRail Presentation by Emily Traiforos:** GoRail is a nonprofit organization supporting freight rail investments. Emily Traiforos provided a handout to the Consortium Members regarding rail-related funding programs. Ms. Traiforos reported on numerous rail-related funding programs relating to Grade Crossing Safety and Improvement Projects, Rail and Multimodal, Intercity Passenger Rail, and Transportation Research and Development. Ms. Traiforos also reported on Railroads and the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and how CARB's in-use locomotive regulation rule will hurt the American

economy. Ms. Traiforos also reported on the AskRail application which launched in 2014, balanced rail regulation, and the public benefits of freight railroads.


**Report of WisDOT Railroads and Harbors:** Ben Mohlke reported that WisDOT was awarded a RAISE Grant for the Janesville bridges and track restoration project. The total amount of the Janesville Project is approximately \$11.28 million. Mr. Mohlke further reported that approximately 18 spans have been installed on the Merrimac Bridge and this project should be complete in 2025. The 2024 WisDOT Annual Freight Railroad Conference is scheduled to take place on November 12, 2024. Anyone wishing to attend should register online by November 10, 2024. The Conference will be held at the Marriott Conference Center located in Middleton, Wisconsin.

**Report of WSOR:** Ken Lucht reported the following: WSOR will be installing approximately 30,000 ties on its Reedsburg Subdivision between Waunakee and Devil's Lake. The Merrimac Bridge project is a \$26 million project, and that project should be completed by 2025. WSOR will be installing ties and switch ties on the Prairie Subdivision and on the Johnson Street Yard in Madison. WSOR will perform its routine weed spraying and brush control to protect its rail, crossings, culverts, bridges, and ties. WSOR will be installing approximately 500 ties on the Cambria Subdivision, 3,000 ties on the Milwaukee Subdivision, and 2,000 ties on the Plymouth Subdivision. WSOR will also be completing a number of at grade crossing rebuild projects: On the Cambria Subdivision, STH 26 will be completely rebuilt. On the Milwaukee Subdivision, a crossing on STH 67 will be replaced, and a crossing on STH 91 will be replaced. On the West Bend Subdivision, WSOR will be installing approximately 500 ties and rebuilding at grade crossings on CTH NN and STH 60. WSOR is constructing a new locomotive shop in Janesville. Every 92 days, locomotives must come into the shop for routine inspection.

**Date, time, and place of next meeting (September 11, 2024):** The next regular EWCRC meeting will be held on September 11, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. Dodge County will host the meeting, to be held at the Dodge County Administration Building, located in Juneau, Wisconsin.

Motion by Schleif/Caine to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 11:22 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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John Zorn, Secretary

**Disclaimer:** These are draft minutes. These draft minutes may be approved, amended, or corrected at the next meeting of the East Wisconsin Counties Railroad Consortium.