

Metra UP-NW Alternatives Analysis
Summary of Public Comments
June 20 and 22, 2006

Thank you to those who have provided comments on the proposed concepts for Metra's Union Pacific Northwest Line. Public informational meetings were held on June 20 and 22, 2006 in Arlington Heights and Crystal Lake. Comments have been received both at the meetings and on the Metra Connects website. Approximately 35 people attended the public meetings. Over 20 comments have been received to date.

On the comment form, one question asked whether one alternative was preferred over the others. Approximately 90 percent of the comments received favored the commuter rail alternative. This alternative provided more capacity, improved travel times, and improved reverse commute service on the existing UP-NW Line. In the comments, expanded commuter rail service was noted as addressing the growth that has already taken place, improving quality of life, meeting the need for improved travel times from McHenry County, and reducing the need for highway travel (and thus reducing congestion). A common theme was, "the sooner, the better." Multiple comments pointed out that commuter rail expansion will work in concert with the various downtown development and transit oriented development plans being implemented by municipalities along the UP-NW Line.

Multiple comments addressed the need for specific infrastructure. The most common theme was the potential need to provide in-fill stations, that is, stations between widely spaced existing stations where growth is occurring. Prairie Grove, about half way between the existing McHenry and Pingree Road stations, would reduce the drive time for residents in this rapidly growing portion of McHenry County. Another common theme was the relocation of the existing Crystal Lake Yard to a new location. Benefits were cited for both Crystal Lake residents and Metra (since the relocated yard would allow improved operations and potentially a reduction in operating cost). One comment mentioned that shuttle bus spurs may be needed from some stations. These shuttles would carry people the "last mile" from stations to employment destinations.

One comment received mentioned the need to examine expansion of schedules to address changing peak hours. With more people working or taking classes downtown until after 6:00 PM, peak service times could be expanded until later in the evening.

Comments received also addressed features to examine so that the project does not fix issues in one place while creating problems in another. One problem mentioned was traffic congestion at crossings. Since expanded service would likely involve additional trains, the impact of additional trains at crossing must be examined. During peak travel times now, traffic congestion occurs when gates are down. With increased Metra service, increased traffic congestion could occur. The impact on emergency services must also be examined. A second problem mentioned involved relocation of the yards. With all the trains stored at northwest of Woodstock and north of McHenry, a problem on the line could greatly disrupt service at "downstream" stations. These issues will be examined as feasible alternatives are developed and evaluated.

Again, thank you for your attendance at the public meetings, your review of the project on the Metra Connects website, and your comments. Based on public comment, alternatives are being refined and further evaluated. After screening of the feasible alternatives, we will conduct more public meetings in the corridor. We will seek further comments at that time. Note, however, that comments can be submitted any time during the study via the Metra Connects website. Your comments are appreciated!

Next Steps:

- Refine feasible alternatives based on public comments
- Evaluate feasible alternatives including ridership modeling
- Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
- Second Public Meeting
- Selection of Locally Preferred Alternative
- Preparation of New Starts Submittal for Federal Transit Administration
- Submittal of New Starts Package

If approved by the Federal Transit Administration, the project would enter Preliminary Engineering.

Feasible Build Alternatives:



Commuter Rail Capacity Expansion

- Consolidated commuter rail layover yards with cleaning and inspection facilities
- Additional stations including parking facilities and pedestrian/bicycle access
- Improved signal system
- Increased number of express trains
- Increased number of reverse commute trains
- Employer shuttles connecting Metra stations to major employers
- Increased overall capacity

Commuter Bus to Northwest Suburbs

- Commuter bus boarding facilities along Randall Road
- Service to major employers in Schaumburg, Rolling Meadows, and the O'Hare area
- Connections to Pace at Northwest Transportation Center and to CTA at Rosemont
- Coach buses would travel on existing highway facilities
- 15-minute frequency to each destination during morning peak hours

