

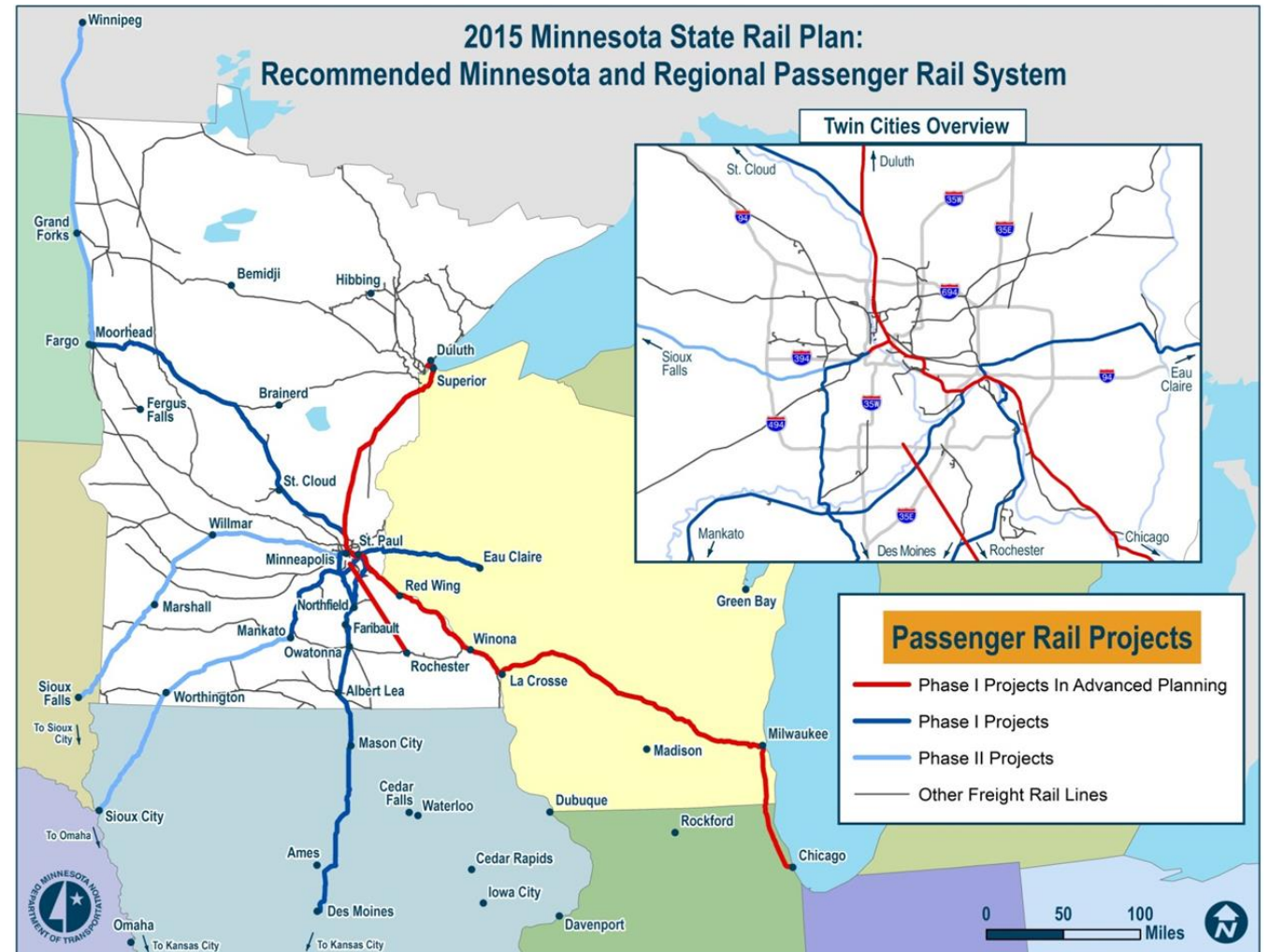


# Minnesota Passenger Rail Program Update

Dan Krom, Director  
Passenger Rail Office  
October 18, 2017

# State Rail Plan Vision

- Network of passenger rail services connecting Minnesota's economic centers to each other and Midwest States
- Increased Mobility
- Enhanced economic development opportunities



## Passenger Rail Goals

- Advance corridors incrementally to build ridership and system advantages, leaving open all future options for viable improvements
- Continue to participate with the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative States
- Develop an intrastate intercity passenger rail network connecting the Twin Cities with viable service to major outlying regional centers
- Develop all services with the ultimate goal to connect to both the Target Field Station and St. Paul Union Depot.



# Key Accomplishments

## Passenger Rail Program

2009 - \$26 Million in funding

### New Stations

- Saint Paul Union Depot
- Investments in Target Field Station
  - Right of way
  - Vertical circulation

### Intercity Passenger Rail Planning Activities

- Midwest Regional Rail Initiative HSR corridor
- Twin Cities – Milwaukee – Chicago (TCMC)
- Minneapolis – Duluth/Superior (NLX)



# Twin Cities to Milwaukee High Speed Rail Corridor to Chicago

- Builds upon the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, Nine – state Chicago hub network of passenger rail corridors
- Longer term vision, with some corridors achieving top speeds of 110mph: Chicago – Detroit, Chicago – St. Louis
- Objectives
  - 6 round trips daily, up to 110mph, travel time under 6 hours from St Paul to Chicago
  - Evaluate only the one build alternative along with the no-build alternative
  - Identify environmental consequences and measures necessary to mitigate environmental impacts
- Current Status
  - Updated ridership forecasts and operations modeling
  - Refine the purpose and need for the project
  - Agreement from FRA on the service alternative
  - Estimated completion – December 2017



# Twin Cities – Milwaukee – Chicago (TCMC) Phase 1 Study

- **Feasibility study for adding a second daily intercity passenger train between the Twin Cities (or St. Cloud) and Chicago, IL completed by Amtrak in 2015**
- **The purpose of a second daily train is to offer more options to travelers in the corridor by providing better eastbound reliability and increased train frequency**
- **The feasibility study recommended initial service start up between Union Depot, St. Paul and Union Station, Chicago along the existing Empire Builder route and stations stops (plus Milwaukee Airport stop)**

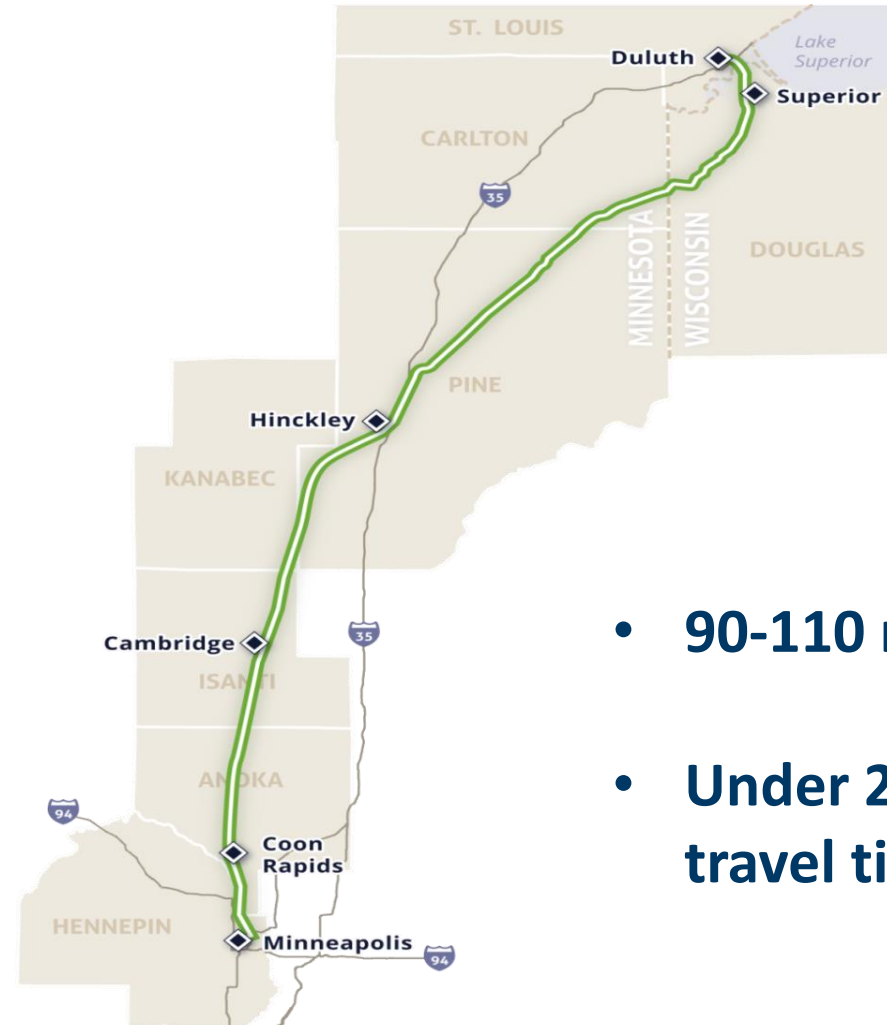
# TCMC Phase 1 Study Status

- Partnership with WisDOT, RCRRA, La Crosse APO, Mn. HSR Commission
- Completing 1st phase of the environmental work, rail capacity modelling, integration with existing Hiawatha service ridership and revenue forecasts and capital cost estimates.
- Service could begin as early as 2020 - 2021.



# Northern Lights Express (NLX)

- Intercity passenger rail service
- Four round trips/day
- Connects Minneapolis and Duluth
  - Coon Rapids
  - Cambridge
  - Hinckley
  - Superior
- 150 miles
- Existing BNSF tracks



- 90-110 mph
- Under 2 hour DT-DT travel time



- **2009 Feasibility Study**
- **Alternatives analysis studies complete in 2012**
- **Tier 1 Environmental Assessment completed, FONSI – 2013**
- **Completion of PE/NEPA Phase – June 2017**
  - **Financial Plan – Dec 2016**
  - **Service Development Plan – March 2017**
  - **Tier 2 Project Level EA – June 2017**
- **Final environmental approval – November. If funding for final design and construction is received in a timely manner, service could start as early as January 2020.**

# St. Cloud to Minneapolis Amtrak Demonstration Proposal

- **Proposal by the Governor's office to conduct a \$2 million, 3-6 month demonstration of intercity rail service on the corridor**
  - **St. Cloud to Target Field Station**
  - **Outside of current Northstar schedules**
  - **No intermediate stops - platform/trackage rights issues**
- **Anticipated outcomes**
  - **Data on exclusive St. Cloud to Mpls. demand**
  - **Integration with current freight/ commuter rail services on the corridor**
  - **Inclusion of Target Field Station in Amtrak's nationwide reservation system**
  - **Assessment of operational needs, equipment, crew training and platform integration at Target Field Station**

# Passenger Rail Program Funding Status

- **Office general fund appropriations through the current 2018-2019 biennium**
- **2018 G. O. bond fund request - \$11 million (proposed by MnDOT, not yet approved by the Governor's Office)**
  - TCMC - Requesting \$1 million to complete environmental work and service planning and \$3 million for the state's share of final design.
  - NLX -\$5 million for State's share of final design work and any supplemental environmental documentation.
  - \$2 million for demonstration project(s) and/or initial project work for "new" corridor projects (TBD)
- **NLX TIGER Grant submission - \$10 million for 16 rural grade crossing improvements for NLX**

# Questions?

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MnDOT Passenger Rail Program

Information:

[http://www.dot.state.mn.us/passenger\\_rail/](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/passenger_rail/)

