

NORTHWOODS RAIL TRANSIT COMMISSION

MEETING SUMMARY

GLTPA - Rhinelander

July 11, 2025

1./2. Call to Order / Roll Call - Introductions and Public Comment

The meeting was called to order at approximately 10 am by Acting Chair Dale Kupczyk. Those in attendance included the following: Doug Swartz Iron County WI Board, Dale Kupczyk Ashland County, Jeff Ratcliffe Houghton County/KEDA, Chris Voll Marathon County Board, Tom Buelteman Marinette County Board, Alan Barkstrom Price County Board, Wendell Johnson, Marinette County, Joel Enking Iron County WI, Scott Johnson Clark County Board, Peter Kaz Clark County EDC, Sheila Nyberg Clark County EDC, Shawn Brantmeier WPC, Brad Peot Watco, Jim Hoppe PCA, Jerry Wuorenmaa WUPPDR, Tony Pharo Oneida County EDC, John Varda LSSA-WCG, Libby Ogard Prime Focus LLC, Landis Holdorf Congressman Tiffany's Office, Anna Ringstad Senator Baldwin's Office, Kurt Olsen Dairyland Rail, Jenny Jakes Dairyland Rail, Jim Schmidt Dairyland Rail, Robert Pittman, Don Nelson Domtar, Unidentified, and Darryl Landeau NCWRPC.

Landeau noted that Florence County has withdrawn from the NRTC due to budget concerns.

Public Comment: None.

3. Approval of NRTC Meeting Notes from April 19, 2024

On a motion by Kaz, seconded by Enking, the meeting notes from September 27, 2024 were approved with all in favor.

4. Election of Officers

Landeau reported that election of officers was due, and that the Chair position was open due to Iron County eliminating Kelly Klein's position, and the Secretary position due to Joe Bonovetz's departure from the Gogebic County Board.

Alan Barkstrom nominated Vice Chair Dale Kupczyk, Ashland County for NRTC Chairperson. S. Johnson moved to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for Kupczyk. Motion passed with all in favor.

Chairperson Kupczyk opened nominations for NRTC Vice Chair. Swartz nominated Peter Kaz, Clark County. Enking moved to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for Kaz. Motion passed with all in favor.

Chair Kupczyk opened nominations for NRTC Secretary. Kaz nominated Tom Buelteman, Marinette County. S. Johnson moved to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for Buelteman. Motion passed with all in favor.

Jeff Ratcliffe, Houghton County, will continue as NRTC Treasurer.

5. Discussion/Approval of 2026 Budget & Administrative Services Agreement

Landeau reported that the administrative services fee and the set asides for potential miscellaneous expenses and the reserve to ensure maintenance of operations in case of reduction in membership as has happened in the past, will remain similar to previous years. On the revenue side, county membership dues continue at the original \$500 per county for Wisconsin and \$400 per county for Michigan.

On a motion by Kaz, seconded by S. Johnson, the NRTC Administrative Budget for 2026 was approved as presented with all in favor.

Landeau reported that the proposed service agreement for 2026 was the same as 2025. The agreement provides for the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) to provide administrative services to the Northwoods Rail Transit Commission (NRTC) to maintain operations for the rail commission. Activities include organizing meetings, preparing agendas and minutes, webpage maintenance, financial management and miscellaneous day-to-day functions.

On a motion by S. Johnson, seconded by W. Johnson, the NRTC Administrative Services Agreement for 2026 was approved as presented with all in favor.

6. Great Lakes Regional Infrastructure Accelerator 2025

Libby Ogard of Prime Focus LLC presented on her application for U.S. DOT Build America Fund Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA) Program.

The Northwoods Rail Transit Commission RIA application requested \$1.5 million to support a technical assistance center to support the development and financing of rail, intermodal and marine infrastructure projects within Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Illinois and Indiana over a twenty-four-month period. This center will provide technical assistance which will serve public and private applicants over a 24-month period. The RIA will fund education and outreach activities to support project applicants in project development activities and will host a bench of subject matter experts to assist with project predevelopment activities to improve project success. The RIA will also assist regional applicants with RRIF and TIFIA loans and Private Activity Bonds.

Ogard requests that members send your U.S. Congressional Representative a letter expressing your interest as a NRTC member to fund this program. A template letter is available upon request. Please contact Libby Ogard at logard@primefocusllc.com or 920-217-7222.

On a motion by Kaz, seconded by S. Johnson, sponsorship of the RIA application by the NRTC, contingent on no financial obligation by the NRTC or its member counties, was approved with all in favor.

7. Roundtable: County Updates

Clark County reported on its efforts to establish the Dairyland Rail Cooperative to rebuild service on the Medford-Spencer Line.

8. Discuss Next Meeting Date

Chair and staff will monitor need for a meeting as things develop. If something needing more immediate attention arises a meeting can be called at that time.

11. Adjourn

Chair Kupczyk adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:30 am.