

NORTHWOODS RAIL TRANSIT COMMISSION

MEETING SUMMARY

Virtual – Google Meet

June 8, 2021

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

The meeting was call to order at approximately 10:05 am by Chair Wendy Gehlhoff. Those in attendance included the following: Wendy Gehlhoff Florence County Economic Development, Kelly Klein Iron County WI Economic Development, Charlie Glazman Douglas County Board, James Ceser, Douglas County Economic Development Gary Frank Oconto County Board, , Al Koskela Houghton County Board, Tom Laabs Gogebic County Board, Jeff Ratcliffe KEDA, Joe Bonovetz Gogebic County Board, Sheldon Johnson NWRPC, Chris Garcia BLRPC, Jerry Wuorenmaa WUPPDR, Doug Conway Watco, Ken Lucht Watco, Brian Buchanan CN, Bill Korrer WCA, Laura Nagro Ashland County, John Varda LSSA, Rich Kedzior WisDOT and Darryl Landeau NCWRPC.

There was no public comment:

3. Approval of NRTC Meeting Notes from January 22, 2021

On a motion by Klein, seconded by Laabs, the meeting notes from January 22, 2021 were approved with all in favor.

4. Chairperson's Report

Gehlhoff reported that the Executive Committee has been busy monitoring the situation as the CN line sale has progressed, sometimes having to react relatively quickly to new developments such as with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) review, which required two separate filings. STB decision on the sale is expected soon, and we anticipate working closely with Watco to restore rail service to our area. Watco was invited today to introduce themselves to the Commission.

5. Accept Douglas County, into the NRTC.

Landeau reported that outreach to surrounding counties in reaction to the sale announcement has led to a number of inquiries regarding membership and resulted in action by Douglas County to join the NRTC. Charlie Glazman of the Douglas County Board and Jim Cesar with the Douglas County Development Association were in attendance representing Douglas County and indicated they were pleased to be joining the NRTC. Mr. Glazman stated that the decision "makes sense" noting that Douglas County thinks of itself as the place where "rail meets sail".

On a motion by Bonovetz, seconded by Laabs, Douglas County is accepted into the NRTC, with all in favor.

6. WisDOT Report

Kedzior reported that WisDOT has been following the sale and is waiting to see the effect of the STB decision. They have been talking to shippers and are looking to provide support for efforts that have a positive effect on shipping in northern Wisconsin.

7. Watco Background / Update

Ken Lucht made a presentation on Watco's background with an update on the northwoods rail line sale. Because the sale of lines from CN to Watco has not yet been approved by the Surface Transportation Board (STB), the presentation was more of a high-level overview. Lucht talked about Watco's corporate philosophy and business model including their service to a wide range of industries and their expanding reach throughout Wisconsin. Lucht also provided an overview of the northwoods line purchase including a review of their plans to ramp up service and invest in rail infrastructure upgrades. He also talked about their experience restoring out of service lines and working closely with four other rail transit commissions in southern Wisconsin. There was miscellaneous question and answer.

8. LSSA Update and New Dimensions for Northwoods Rail

John Varda provided an update on the Lake State Shippers Association (LSSA) efforts to work with shippers and communities to help restore rail service in the Northwoods Rail service area.

9. Discuss Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date was tentatively set for September at the discretion of the Chair and potential agenda items.

10. Adjourn

On a motion by Koskela, seconded by Klein, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:35 am.