

**APPENDIX D**

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**PUBLIC COMMENT COMPILATION SUMMARY**



## **Agricultural Resources**

- Recommend using available right-of-way to the maximum extent to minimize removing large tracts of land from other uses (such as farming and other agricultural uses).

## **Air Quality**

- The nation's transportation system needs to be reconsidered and restructured to maximize efficiency while minimizing impacts to air quality.
- Passenger trains would help reduce automobile emissions, fuel consumption, dependency on oil, highway congestion, ozone layer depletion, and would have a smaller carbon footprint.
- Trains cause noise and pollution and I don't want one running near my home.
- Buses generate less carbon dioxide emissions than trains and have higher passenger miles per gallon of fuel.

## **Climate Change**

- Passenger trains would slow climate change.

## **Cummulative Impacts**

- The Study should not just consider the number of potential passengers who would ride a high speed passenger train, but also consider how many cars that the system is taking off of the roads and reducing safety issues, the public and private development that would be created around the stations, jobs created, and the infrastructure improvements that would stimulate the economy.
- Economic, environmental, and social pros and cons should be considered.
- Passenger rail would be less stressful for travelers while being less harmful to the environment by moving more people with less fuel use.
- Overall impact would be less with a route which impinges least on residential areas.

## **Drugs/Crime**

- The Study should consider the potential for increased problems with drugs and crime at station stops and as a new conduit for drug trafficking, which currently occurs along the I-80 corridor, and crime from the Chicago area.
- Will rail travel along this system involve screening passengers for drugs and weapons?

## **Economic Impacts - General**

- Most people will ride the train from Iowa to Chicago, spend their money there and return. We would be maintaining a system that for the most part enhances other area's economies.
- Will the analysis of each alternative include the analysis of development opportunities in the vicinity of each station location? Will cost estimates be developed for each speed option for

each route alternative? Will ridership estimates be developed for different ticket prices and provide comparisons of travel times and costs for other travel alternatives?

- This issue has been studied previously, and funds should be used for construction of a passenger rail system rather than more planning so that our cities could already be experiencing the economic benefit.
- Studies should not just consider the number of potential passengers who would ride such a train, but also think about how many cars that is taking off of the roads, the public and private development that would be created around the stations, jobs created, and the infrastructure improvements that would stimulate the economy.

### **Economic Impacts – Benefits**

- Passenger rail is a smart economic investment for the state of Iowa because of the availability of federal funds for design and construction of the system.
- Beyond providing an easy and efficient alternative transportation option, new passenger rail would bring job creation, economic development along the rail corridor, business growth through regional interconnectivity, tourism, and necessary infrastructure upgrades.
- Dependable high-speed rail will link cities' economies and recreational activities in a mutually beneficial way.
- Passenger rail reduces travel expenses for consumers drastically by increasing competition between rail and flight travel in the Midwest and consequently reducing prices. Price reduction is important for those business travelers whose travel cost is not reimbursed by their company. The train option would increase flexibility in our economy to weather fluctuations in gasoline supplies and prices without undue hardship and economic decline.
- The development of a regional rail service would be a strong step towards creating a 21<sup>st</sup> century Iowa that can continue to compete with our neighboring states.
- Investing in rail improves both freight and passenger transportation service, thus creating jobs and increasing business opportunities, and providing a stimulus to the region.
- Passenger rail would allow people to easily and safely commute to jobs in other towns, as well as to shop in other towns, in all kinds of weather. The system would be a means to connect colleges and academics to both big cities and small towns in a highly efficient manner; this system would minimize the outmigration of young professionals from the Heartland and help recruiting and bring more people to the Heartland.
- It would make life easier for people who cannot afford individual or independent transportation, such as new immigrants, the elderly, and struggling college students.
- Areas around train station depots attract development.
- Even communities which will not have stops could still obtain new exposure by posting billboards prior to the train entering these communities.
- With constricted highways and other roadways in urban areas, passenger rail service will help areas suffering economically due to lack of transportation opportunities.
- Reduced transportation costs allows users to spend money on other things.

- Good public transportation can also be a factor in reducing the great divide between the haves and have-nots.

### **Economic Impacts – Negative Impacts**

- Both the State of Iowa and the U.S. Federal Government need to cut expenses rather than fund this venture.
- We can't afford this at this time due to the current deficit.

### **Elderly**

- The passenger rail system would be useful between Iowa City and Des Moines for the many elderly people that travel from Des Moines to the hospital at Iowa City.
- I am retired, and I don't drive at night, but I am still active and like to get to Chicago. Active retirees seek less dependence on automobile transport. Train service would allow me to keep traveling to Chicago (and Des Moines and Omaha), even after I stop driving. The system would allow us to stay in Iowa as we age and travel without driving.
- Providing a transit mode such as the passenger train system enhances senior citizen's quality of life, and allows them to see family throughout the Midwest or beyond.
- Many senior-citizen residents in small urban and rural areas are uncomfortable driving to metropolitan areas. We are intimidated by the heavy traffic in Cook County and downtown Chicago. Passenger rail would provide this option to travel to large cities.
- I'm at the age where short automobile trips are fine but I need alternate transportation for longer trips, and neither air nor bus suits me.

### **Energy Use**

- As fuel prices keep increasing and population increases, passenger rail is becoming a more attractive solution to moving people with less energy, including those that could commute between station stops.
- Buses offer more passenger miles per gallon of fuel than trains.
- Development of passenger rail infrastructure would be an investment in a fuel-efficient form of transportation, and lead to the conservation of energy and being less dependent on the use of foreign oil. If the future is high gasoline prices and not enough supply, with a passenger rail system, our country would have the means to weather such fluctuations in gasoline supplies.
- Passenger rail would reduce use of high carbon using and emitting cars (which often have a single occupant), and reduce the stranglehold that highly inefficient motor vehicle transportation has on national politics and international commerce.
- Air travel is just not as efficient as rail travel in terms of fuel costs. It makes good economic sense to use rail for medium length journeys as envisioned by the Omaha to Chicago route.
- Passenger trains are much cleaner and more energy efficient than buses and cars.

- Modern high speed rail is designed for efficient use of energy and has several major energy advantages over conventional vehicles. High speed rail designs could actually produce superior efficiency compared to electric cars.
- Heavy rail will never be energy efficient for passenger traffic as the weight of cars far outweigh the riders, unlike freight hauling coal or grain. It isn't energy or carbon efficient when compared to Europe's use of electric power for train locomotion.

### **Environmental Justice**

- The California Zephyr route goes through some of the poorest counties in Iowa. Although expansion of passenger rail is desirable, it should be accomplished while maintaining the existing California Zephyr route through southern Iowa; loss of this route would be economically detrimental to the area and its residents.

### **Funding of the Project – General**

- If passenger rail service were preferable (faster, cheaper, and/or better) than alternative modes of transportation, a private sector company would have already built one.
- Please put in enough money to do the infrastructure properly, or don't do it all.
- If highly urban corridors (such as within California) have problems for development of a passenger rail system (construction costs far exceeding projected costs), a rural corridor stands even less chance of success.
- Iowan taxpayers would have to fund and maintain a system that would mostly benefit other areas' economies.
- Private railroads are the main beneficiary of improvement of the rail system.
- Focus the funding on one entire route where money has already been spent for rail improvement of its existing infrastructure.
- Why is this Study occurring if the Governor of Iowa has already rejected allocating the state component of the funding?
- The Study needs to identify costs for completion, operation, and maintenance of the system (including costs to taxpayers) and the anticipated cost for tickets.
- If Nebraska isn't going to contribute funding to the project, the western terminus should be in Council Bluffs.
- Given that there is a Chicago to Omaha train running currently, can the taxpayer afford to fund the new passenger rail system?
- Federal funding of the rail system would lead to further urbanization in cities and detract from rural areas, causing indirect impacts to those rural areas and their school systems.
- The cost to build, staff, maintain, and update a dedicated passenger line will cost more than what can be charged for tickets. Consequently, the system would require massive subsidies. A passenger rail system won't get enough use to pay for its operation; it will not be self supporting. The development and maintenance costs will be underestimated. It will have minimal ridership and will lose money, just like Amtrak.

### **Funding of the Project – Options**

- Passenger rail travel needs better funding support from the Federal government, which spends much money to support the airline passenger industry and government subsidized highway system. Many foreign countries have strong government support for passenger rail service.
- Iowa should appropriate the allocated state funds for the development of a passenger rail system.
- The majority of the funding provided by the state of Iowa comes from the Reinvest In Iowa Fund which gets its \$115 million per year from gambling; this is a fine use of these dollars.
- Gasoline taxes could be increased to help pay for New Millenium projects of this nature.
- As a taxpayer, I would support some increase in state taxes, if necessary, to finance this project.
- If an affordable public offering such as bonds or stocks was used to fund a portion of the Project's cost, more people might use the service if they had a stake in the Project.
- Privately-owned railroads should help fund this project.
- If funding from one source gets reduced or cut, go after money from another source.
- Vehicular based subsidies should be capped or reduced in favor of mass transit options.

### **Funding of the Project – No Funding**

- Funding for passenger rail would be wasteful and is not prudent because of the country's existing debt.

### **Funding of the Project – No Taxpayer Funding**

- Taxpayers should not have to fund this railway project.

### **Funding of the Project – Alternative Use of Funds**

- Funding upgrading of the bus system would be a much better use of taxpayer's dollars. It would be cheaper for a rider to get a subsidy for a bus fare than to subsidize rail passenger transport.
- Reinvestment of funds in communities along Amtrak service through Southern Iowa would be a better use of funds than for the current study and proposed program.

### **Funding of the Project – Route specific**

- Route Alternative 2 should be able to be used with minimal start-up funding.
- Route Alternative 4 includes most of a route already funded by Illinois and thus should reduce start-up costs.
- Route Alternative 4 would require much funding to get the former Rock Island mainline back up to proper standards, plus the addition of new signaling.
- Route Alternative 4 goes through Des Moines and will be the only option that gets State funding because it is the capital.

- Route Alternative 5 is the current Amtrak route and should require less funding for improvements, but a cost-benefit analysis should be done to see which route makes the most financial sense.

## General

- What are the long-range plans for the greater Midwest Regional Rail System?
- I would like a high speed alternative in the form of an electric/monorail system run in conjunction with an Interstate Direct Current power line.
- If there is any financial gain by a railroad company, hopefully that company will be required to be more accountable to the public.
- I don't think any line that is not all there could be considered as a possible route because of the expense of route development.
- The proposed train systems should mesh with the Metra system and other local transit systems.
- An increasing volume of cars would cause problems for I-80 but how much could the train service prevent further spending on interstate highway improvements?
- The parent company of Iowa Interstate Railroad (IAIS), Railroad Development Corp. (RDC), is a proponent of passenger rail and would likely be a good partner on the project. The volume of freight traffic on IAIS would be less than the alternate routes, resulting in fewer scheduling conflicts.
- This project would help the country catch up with what is offered in Europe.
- Some communities along Amtrak routes have upgraded the facilities in and around rail stations, while others haven't; this factor should be taken into account so that the route picked will be welcomed by communities that it would serve.
- As an example for future train passengers, the Capital Corridor (a train service between Oakland and Sacramento which was said to be useless when it was launched) is now full to capacity.
- I think that it would really benefit many midwestern cities as well as midwestern colleges if there were a rail system that ran from Chicago to Omaha.
- Iowans value history; trains created Iowa's history in the 1800s and 1900s, and can help reconnect communities.
- To accomplish the needed ridership, we need to look at how public transportation in Iowa is often viewed as a poor person's choice of transportation. Promotion to the contrary is necessary to the success of a rail system, so that everyone is more inclined to use it.

## Health

- Public transportation betters public health. This rail service could reduce toxins from automobile exhaust which is a known major source of pollution causing smog and asthma attacks among other problems. Our health and our environment are very important things we should protect. This service would benefit our health, safety, economy and wellness.

## **Jobs**

- I would like to see something that describes how Iowa DOT would take steps to ensure workforce diversity on contracts when the rail is built.
- Beyond providing an easy and efficient alternative transportation option, new passenger rail would bring job creation, economic development, business growth, and necessary infrastructure upgrades.
- I am always in favor of alternative options which provide job opportunities and the possibility of new exposure to communities as long as these are cost effective. I believe that the preparation (and maintenance) of the rails, engines, and passenger cars will provide enough jobs to make this alternative mode of transportation cost effective.
- Implementation and construction would create jobs and many other economic benefits. In addition to temporary construction jobs, the project will lead to permanent jobs after completion both directly and indirectly (businesses, hotels, restaurants, bars, retail, etc.).
- This project could bring those looking for a job in the Chicago and Omaha areas to consider Iowa cities as part of their job search.
- Studies should not just consider the number of potential passengers who would ride such a train, but also think about how many cars that is taking off of the roads, the public and private development that would be created around the stations, jobs created, and the infrastructure improvements that would stimulate the economy.
- Lack of regional interconnectivity hurts potential economic growth and career opportunities for young people. I desperately want to move back to Iowa, but the opportunities need to be there. Passenger rail on a regional level would be an important step in that direction. Once passenger rail is established, Iowa's metro areas can then be connected to even more centers of activity in the region - Minneapolis, Kansas City, St. Louis, and so on.
- Businesses will want to be near the station depots, including the potential for convention centers near the depots.
- Passenger train service would assist in recruiting potential employees to come to an area at or near a train depot.
- I do not believe that this system will create more jobs, but I feel it could cost people their jobs from the motor coach industry.

## **No-Build Alternative**

- Currently, the no-build option is the proper one because we don't have the funds now to maintain/repair our existing infrastructure. If the system cannot be self supporting, it should not be built.

## **Noise**

- The Iowa Interstate Railroad (formerly part of Rock Island Line) runs near my house and the noise is loud, as well as noise contributed from helicopters (University of Iowa hospital), ambulances, students on scooters and motorcycles, the hospital's loud ventilation units, and,

seasonally, football traffic. My choice for a Chicago-Omaha route would be to choose the one which impinges least on residential areas.

- Trains are noisy, dangerous, disruptive, expensive and time consuming for motorists/pedestrians. I don't want one running anywhere near my home due to the noise and pollution.

### **Oppose the Project**

- Please don't spend tax dollars on rail service between Omaha and Chicago.
- I do not support this effort unless it is a private venture.
- I disagree with the need statement; although it assumes people want a train connection between Iowa and Chicago, all people I have spoken with do not want/need that connection. Not enough people would ride the system.
- I do not support the plan because the money could be better used for things such as education. Small businesses would decline, problems from Chicago would be transported to rural areas, and the rail line would open up a new corridor for the transport of drugs.
- The use of a bus system is a better option.
- I travel to Chicago once a month and I would never consider rail as an option. Cars and buses are more cost efficient and flexible. America will never have the type of rail use that Europe utilizes until we get a better rail system, and this system would not be comparable.

### **People with Disabilities**

- As a nation we've done little to accommodate anyone who does not/cannot drive a vehicle.
- I have an eye condition that could eventually result in an inability to drive. I would be interested in a train service to allow me to continue to travel.

### **Project Need**

- I don't believe there is a need for this system and it won't support itself.
- We need an alternative to air travel for long distances, because flights are difficult to find that are direct and affordable.
- We need train service that comes directly to the most populated parts of Iowa, including Des Moines.
- If such a system is needed, it should be done privately without any US government involvement.
- We have the California Zephyr, but desperately need a commuter type service for people going east/west especially to Chicago.
- Because of the distance between southern and northern Iowa, I would think you would have a need for both northern and a southern route to optimize ridership.
- Given the existing service by Megabus, Chicago to Eastern and Central Iowa is already well served at a fare that is less than a train, at a speed that is equivalent to a train, and it doesn't cost any state tax dollars. Consequently, there is no need for the proposed passenger train system.

## **Project Purpose**

- There is no purpose for this project because passenger rail service is not needed.

## **Property Acquisition**

- Available right-of-way and track should be used to the maximum extent possible to minimize removing large tracts of land from other uses (such as farming).
- To properly construct a high speed rail line, a direct route requiring acquisition by eminent domain may be the only solution.
- Use the existing interstate system for a route which would minimize right-of-way acquisition, the corridor would be fairly flat, and grade separation is already in place. There would be no better advertising for the than having the cars see a train fly past them at almost twice the speed.

## **Public Involvement**

- I would like to see the comments that are sent posted for the public to read.
- I wrote an e-mail but can't get it sent into your system, which seems complicated. I will probably need to write a letter with my feedback.
- I was pleased to hear of this process to obtain information for the establishment of an additional Chicago to Omaha rail passenger route across Iowa.
- This is an innovative and easy approach to public scoping and public involvement. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.
- I understand information about your open house is being promoted by cities who are in favor of rail service but I hope you are also informing individuals and groups who might not support it as well.
- Many of the pages of the website have a poster sitting on top of a tripod, but the text on the poster is too small to read. Readability should be your most important criterion in how to design your web site.
- It would be very helpful if the Iowa Connections program would make a map of all rail lines in Iowa, Nebraska, and Illinois; this would help a great deal in visualizing which route would be optimal.
- I think that an important part of any study could be a demonstration of modern passenger trains to the public. Many present day people have never seen or ridden in a train. People would be more likely to have an informed opinion on the subject of passenger trains if they had some actual experience with the subject being discussed.
- We would like to take part in this study and process and assist you.
- This online means to share information and provide comment is excellent; the format is great, it's easy to use and the information, including visuals, is nicely presented.

## **Rail - Freight**

- What do you mean by "high-speed" railway line and how is that structured with freight trains?
- How difficult would it be to use two different right-of-ways? Would it be more difficult to schedule with two freight companies?
- Passenger rail must be given priority over freight rail to make the service viable. Sharing track with freight line would be difficult due to congestion and safety concerns. A separate adjacent track dedicated exclusively for passenger rail service should be installed and used to avoid conflicts with freight trains, reduce safety hazards, and increase the efficiency of passenger service. We should be moving towards a dedicated high speed passenger rail right of way.
- Which routes have the sophistication to park (side rails) commodity rail in deference to high-speed passenger schedules?
- A rail line, more efficiently placed, faster and closer to current population centers, will likely see higher levels of use than one that is less direct and based on antiquated rights of way for moving freight.
- Is there a cost advantage to the Union Pacific (UP) route since it is already a dual track and constructed to high standards? On the other hand the route through Des Moines could be rebuilt for the primary purpose of providing high speed passenger service without having to accommodate the heavy UP freight traffic.
- Routes 1 and 4 have relatively little freight traffic, whereas routes 2 (Union Pacific) and 5 (BNSF Railway) have heavy freight traffic, which could interfere with passenger operations.
- I think the best route for the passenger service line would be on the abandoned Milwaukee route. This would not interfere with freight rail and would allow future improvements to be made without impacting freight service. Dual use of the track seems to always be at cross purposes with mutually exclusive goals.
- The problem with Amtrak is the bottlenecks with freight train traffic between Omaha and Chicago. It is only single track and Amtrak trains must share the tracks with freight trains receiving priority, which means that Amtrak trains must pull over on side tracks to let freight trains pass; this causes potential delays of up to 12 hours.

## **Rail – Improvements/Upgrades**

- Of course, vast improvements in the railroad infrastructure would be necessary, and that would be expensive, but it would more than pay back the costs, once the system were fully operational.
- The problem with the Canadian National (CN) route is that the stretch from Tara to Council Bluffs is non-signalized with Class III track. Although Dubuque, Waterloo, Iowa Falls and Ft. Dodge are on this route, it would be tough to make regular service on this route viable.
- The best choice would be the Union Pacific's mainline. The route is double track all the way (except the single-track portion from Missouri Valley down to Council Bluffs). It's a signalized route with centralized traffic control (CTC) in both directions, Class IV track, and could easily be upgraded to Class V. Clinton is also getting a new rail bridge over the Mississippi, which would

help speed and reliability of service. Freight trains run at 60 miles per hour (mph) on this Class 1 railroad without any road bed start up costs. Also, the UP route has been upgraded in terms of crossings or the elimination of said crossings.

- The California Zephyr runs on Route 5 and the tracks here are pretty rough. A lot of coal trains travel on this route and it would take a lot of work to upgrade for high speeds on these tracks.
- Half the right-of-way for Route 3 is abandoned and would require high cost for reacquisition.
- The IAIS railroad along Route 4 has greatly improved their track with welded rail, but service could be improved if the line were double tracked. This would allow a larger capacity of rail traffic on the route without requiring Iowa Interstate or the inter-city train to wait on sidings.
- The current Iowa Interstate railroad line is active and in good shape in terms of top speed (40+ mph) for freight, but signals would have to be re-installed or upgraded along the line. The current line is considered unsigned because the old signal system no longer functions. The investment in new signals could possibly be paid for as a joint venture with the Iowa Interstate Railroad. Both safety and expeditious handling of freight and passenger trains would be ensured. Although there are no active passenger depots on this line, many former stations are still present. Returning passenger rail service to a city with existing infrastructure would significantly reduce startup costs.
- Along Route 4, an elevated line is recommended over the Union Pacific Spine Line on the East Side of Des Moines to eliminate the diamond crossing now in use near SE 18th Street.
- Iowa Interstate would probably welcome the traffic and the funds to upgrade their track along Route 4, whereas UP along Route 2 would have to use the funding to expand capacity and some upgrading, on an already good roadbed overall.
- Route 4 would most likely require a lot of money invested to bring it up to current standards, and to get trains through each of the cities safely and conveniently for rail, vehicular, and pedestrian traffic.
- Adding another track to Route 5 would give Amtrak trains priority in use.
- Several factors seem to favor Alternative 5. It involves lines already operating as passenger rail service, requiring least infrastructure improvement and change of service. Improvement of rail beds for high speed service will increase reliability and ridership. The span over the Mississippi River at Burlington is just now completing an upgrade, making it the newest railroad bridge to span the Mississippi in the US. The BNSF route across southern Iowa is the only route with stations and track structure capable of supporting trains operating at maximum speeds of 79 to 90 mph. Also, there is a routing facility to accommodate passenger and freight trains.
- Build a bridge across the Missouri River into Downtown Omaha.
- Union Pacific's railroad bridge between Council Bluffs and Omaha is very busy with rail service and may need to be upgraded with a third track for passenger service.
- Install high speed track wherever possible. Amtrak engines can operate 110 mph on proper tracks (concrete railroad ties). The investment would justify the outcome. Create very good grade separations.
- Current tracks can't support high speed travel especially in areas prone to flooding.

- It is in our national strategic interest to move towards a dedicated high speed passenger rail right of way within our existing interstate system (I-80 for this project). The majority of our interstate system has an under-utilized median between the road beds that could be developed for dedicated high speed passenger rail. The routes are fairly straight and flat. Right of way acquisition would not be as severe as new routes. Grade separations already exist.
- It would be best if signaling systems would allow for top speeds of at least 90 mph. This would require the installation of cab signals and automatic train stop in the cabs of the engines.
- Slower service is fine, this means less time to get the project going because of less work to create high speed rail barriers and high speed rail improvements.
- Will the railroads be asked to fund any up-grades to their trackage to enable passenger rail?

### **Rail - Operations**

- The most important operational issues are going to be reliability and cost. It needs to run on time and it needs to be at least close to the cost of using a car. Train schedules should be arranged so you could conveniently make a weekend trip.
- Air travel is much more vulnerable to terrorism than is rail travel.
- How will train operations impact those who live along the route concerning train traffic, track upgrades, and potential dangers?
- An evening departure from Omaha arriving in Chicago early morning would be great, and a daytime train would be good, arriving in time for an evening at your destination.
- What is the anticipated travel time for this trip?
- And with 5 rail stops between IC and Chicago versus direct bus traffic to the same destination, taking the bus would be faster. We feel the train should be higher speed though and take less than 4 hours to complete the trip from Iowa City to Chicago. I think that speeds should be 110 mph, except of course, at crossings/stops.
- Trains must operate at 79 mph in the beginning, but once grade-crossings and curves are handled, trains should operate up to 125 mph and perhaps more. Place stops at selected Illinois cities before the Quad Cities ( perhaps a connection with the Quad Cities Airport), an Iowa City stop (coordinated Cedar Rapids bus), a Grinnell stop, a Des Moines stop, and a Council Bluffs-Omaha stop. Freight service should occur during non-passenger times, and an 80 mph average could be maintained putting the time from Omaha to Chicago at 6 hours which compared to air and bus travel would be very competitive.
- If the rail is built using the current Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) designation for high speed rail (110 mph), ridership will be anemic. The reason other countries have successful rail is speed (155 mph) and convenience compared to air and automobile transport.
- Unless a high speed route is established, the best manner for moving more people between Chicago and Omaha would be to add service at opposite times of the current Amtrak schedule. This would be leaving Omaha for Chicago at Night to arrive Chicago in the AM and leaving Chicago in the AM for arrival at Omaha in the PM. Trains would need to run more times a day than Amtrak does now.

- I think there should be a direct route with NO stops between Union Station and Moline, IL. Then directly to Iowa City, Cedar Rapids and then Des Moines. I am not familiar enough with the Iowa/Nebraska landscape and travel needs in those areas to comment on stops after Des Moines.
- The line should have stops in Atlantic and West Liberty, too, so the people in rural communities between Omaha, Des Moines and Iowa City do not have to drive 60+ miles to catch a train.
- As a person in the middle of Iowa, I would like a stop added in between Cedar Rapids and Ames; or Iowa City and Des Moines.
- Connections to Denver, initially via interlining with other service (coordinating schedules, etc.) would greatly increase the attractiveness of service.
- Are there light-rail or bus connectors that could create a hub and spoke and use the Interstate's right-of-ways to connect cities such as Ames, Mason City, Fort Dodge, Cedar Rapids, and other smaller communities?
- Your best option to insure continued support of the people for proposed operations will be to be sure your stops serve more than one purpose; don't just stop at major cities downtown, but at hospitals and shopping centers and the like. Also a connector to and from the Des Moines Airport and a connection to the California Zephyr. Thus further encouraging travelers to utilize rail transport.
- Move the current California Zephyr operations to the selected route for regional passenger rail.
- I would like a high speed alternative in the form of an electric monorail. Electric motors require far smaller cooling and lubrication systems, saving weight and pumping losses.
- Create a connecting service two or three cars long and Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs) could be used along the Iowa City and Cedar Rapids Railway to connect passengers between Iowa City and Cedar Rapids. If a higher capacity is needed, US Railcar has Double-deck DMUs available. A route connecting those two cities would greatly aid persons going to the Veteran's and University hospitals, providing there was a shuttle and the costs could be kept low.
- Do you have a passenger origin/destination matrix per route announced? How far (average) is each train station from its potential clients? Do you envisage the electrification of this railway line? What kind of railway signalling and railway telecom technology would be installed in this railway line?
- Stop abandoning lines for bike trails until connections are considered.
- Would there be luggage handling for oversized bags?
- Need reliable schedule, secure location, services at train stations, food service on the train.
- Recommend that a trailer loading system be implemented at freight rail stations to increase efficiency and reduce long-distance trucking needs.

### **Routes – Alternative Routes**

- Service is expected to be available from Chicago to Moline and Chicago to Dubuque by 2014; the focus should be on developing these two routes.
- I don't think any line that is not all there could be considered as a possible route because of expense.

- Adding a route through Des Moines or Cedar Rapids could affect the viability of their airports.
- Instead of doing this Project, consider constructing a light rail running from Iowa City to Waterloo.
- It appears a more efficient option in Illinois is to use the first part of Route 5 until it crosses Route 4, then through Moline, Iowa City, Des Moines and on to Omaha. A connection is being built between routes 4 and 5 at Wyanet, IL for the planned service between Chicago and Moline, so route 5 could be used into Chicago, rather than upgrading route 4 all the way to Chicago. This route would be consistent with various published regional transportation/transit plans for Iowa and Illinois.
- A combination of the Chicago to Dubuque to Cedar Rapids to Iowa City to Des Moines to Omaha lines is the best way to combine tourism and business into a successful rail line that this area of the Mid West desperately needs.
- Recommend the route in Iowa extend from Clinton to Iowa City to Des Moines to Omaha.
- Extend the route from Omaha to Lincoln, Nebraska
- The Chicago to Omaha route should go through Clinton, Cedar Rapids, and Ames.
- It should go from Chicago to Davenport or Cedar Rapids to Iowa City to Newton (SpeedWay) to Des Moines.
- As an alternate route, I would suggest connecting Route 2 just west of Cedar Rapids at its southernmost point to the point on Route 3 closest to it to the north, that way you serve both of Iowa's largest cities.
- The Dubuque-Omaha and Clinton-Omaha routes should be added after the others are operational.
- My preference would be a modified Route 2 that used the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City Railway (CRANDIC) line to join Route 4 after arriving at Cedar Rapids, continuing west from Iowa City.
- Will the rail service pass through Durant?
- I understand the "need" for east-west corridor travel, but connecting a north-south corridor (say Minneapolis-Des Moines-Kansas City) would be very attractive.
- There has been a suggestion to create a Kansas City to Omaha Route in addition to a new route and the existing Amtrak route.
- Some future service recommendations would be Omaha to Saint Paul, and Kansas City to Saint Paul through Des Moines. How about a direct route to Saint Louis and Detroit too?
- I would like to see a renewed Pioneer on the Overland Route for a connection between Chicago and Seattle.
- High speed inter-urban service from the northern and southern parts of Iowa should be considered.
- This line should not run to Omaha as a line already runs from Chicago to Omaha. It should run from Chicago, IL to Burlington, IA to Kansas City, MO. It is an ideal route as it covers a large portion of underserved areas in Illinois, southern Iowa and connects two large metropolises'.
- The two routes that run through or near Cedar Rapids are similar but would still put more automobile traffic on I-380 which isn't needed at all.

- Route 3 could be used for the eastern portion of a route alternative, then Route 2 could be intersected somewhere between Cedar Rapids and Ames.
- I would like to see the route go through Kewanee, IL because they are completing a new station house. From Kewanee it should go to Moline, Iowa City, Des Moines and Omaha!

#### **Routes - Locations**

- None of the alternatives go through both Iowa City and Ames. If they would choose the IAIS Route, would it be possible to connect Cedar Rapids-Iowa City via the Crandic, and Ames-Des Moines via Union Pacific as new rail commuter connections? This would also cover two of the larger communities on the Highway 30 corridor. I-380 is approaching capacity, and this corridor is quickly becoming an integrated metro area.
- Would it at all be feasible to look at putting a station in Lincoln? I truly feel like there is a large need for travel from Lincoln-Chicago, as Omaha already has a cheap SWA flight multiple times daily as well as Megabus departing/arriving twice.
- You could consider a smaller section from Chicago-Dubuque-Cedar Rapids-Marshaltown to Ames (or Des Moines).
- Route 1 could have a connection to Sioux City and Sioux Falls from Ft. Dodge and Route 4 could have a connection to Cedar Rapids, and maybe Waterloo, from Iowa City.
- If future demand increases, the Ames-Des Moines segment could be extended north to Mason City and Minneapolis (which is part of the Midwest Regional Rail System (MRRS)). Another line could also run from Iowa City to Mason City via Waterloo.
- I would ultimately like to see a route that would connect to Sioux Falls, SD.

#### **Routes - Route Alternative 1**

- Routes 4 and Route 1 both seem to me to come close to the possible largest ridership areas, encompassing the Iowa City/Cedar Rapids area and the Des Moines/Ames area as well as Waterloo/Cedar Falls.
- Route 1 might be plausible with Illinois' plans to re-establish the Black Hawk, and indeed paying for an extension of the Black Hawk into Iowa might make sense at some point.
- Route 1 is good because it would provide service to a fair number of people who have almost no access to commercial transit, including University of Northern Iowa (UNI).

#### **Routes - Route Alternative 2**

- Ames is in a central location and has an existing station. It would also bring more consumer traffic to the area.
- Route 2 could be the least expensive route based on the improvements implemented by the Union Pacific.
- Route 2 would help student transit at multiple colleges; Iowa State (Ames), Kirkwood, Coe, Mount Mercy (Cedar Rapids), Ashford University and Clinton Community College (Clinton).

- Route 2 going through Clinton, Cedar Rapids and Ames would be beneficial for the students. Clinton has a rail road depot that could easily be refurbished and is very near to a larger metropolitan area.

### **Routes - Route Alternative 3**

- Much of Route 3 would have to be replaced and the Illinois portion has significant freight traffic making it an unattractive choice.
- Acquisition of the abandoned right-of-way for this route would be challenging.
- Part of the old Milwaukee Road route could be used if it was combined with another route.

### **Routes - Route Alternative 4**

- The Rock Island/Iowa Interstate (IAIS) route is likely the most feasible due to the proximity of large population centers and there are more frequent travelers from Des Moines due to the larger insurance and banking employees; as well as lower freight volumes, allowing more space and track time for passenger trains. Des Moines has an existing bus system and cab firms that would allow people to take mass transit to and from a local station.
- Route 4 along Quad Cities, Iowa City and Des Moines puts rail service within an hour of the majority of the state's population!
- Route 4 would serve Iowa City/Coralville/North Liberty and the growing corridor community.
- The very best route through Iowa would be on the old Rock Island Line, now operated by IAIS (Iowa Interstate Railroad). Des Moines is a very important crossroads and would be a major source of ridership. IAIS has a very well maintained main line all across Iowa. There are many students at Drake, Iowa State, Grinnell College, U of Iowa, Coe College, Cornell College, etc. that would find this route much more convenient.
- Route 4 through Des Moines makes the most sense as you will travel through some of the most densely populated areas of Iowa. With this proposed rail route through Des Moines, travel to Chicago will be much more relaxing than the 5 to 6 hour drive fighting traffic.
- Route 4 would be best because there is already Amtrak service along Route 5.
- This route is preferable because the service could parallel I-80 Omaha to Davenport. Proximity to I-80 would facilitate access to stations, allowing the line to more conveniently serve a larger population.
- Route 4 through Iowa City is important based on the city's potential to draw ridership for the Iowa City Veterans Administration Health Care System, the University of Iowa, and the nearby city of Cedar Rapids.
- I do not think the Davenport to Omaha route passing through Iowa City, Grinnell, Des Moines and Council Bluffs would be sufficiently utilized to be cost effective.

### **Routes - Route Alternative 5**

- Route 5 has numerous disadvantages: It hits the least number of urban centers and population of all the routes; it has a fairly high amount of freight train traffic, there are no tracks dedicated

solely to passenger lines, and most importantly - it already has passenger rail service. Iowa needs another passenger rail corridor, not more trains on the one it already has.

- The Burlington Depot is being revitalized and high speed service would certainly make that more worthwhile and give added incentive. Amtrak will be upgrading its loading and unloading facilities shortly and BNSF is redoing its bridge and rail service here. It would seem that the Burlington, Iowa route could be up and running sooner than the other considered routes.
- I think that a passage way through Burlington, IA would be a great opportunity for passengers to view a historical portion of Iowa, as it is the original capital. It would also give a great opportunity for passengers to view the Mississippi River, and have an opportunity for the passengers to view some of the many wonderful sights of Burlington.
- Since this area of the Midwest is subject to several months of winter, this southernmost route would tend to be the best alternative with fewer winter weather delays.
- Burlington has the California Zephyr, but desperately needs a commuter type service for people going east/west especially to Chicago.

### **Routing Process**

- Pick one route and get funding for that entire route, relying on what has already been improved for that route.
- I would like to follow and be involved in the process of route selection.
- Why have an alternatives analysis if you've already picked your preferred alternative?
- It would be best to use routing that would increase frequencies on existing routes that would maximize the investments in the present infrastructure and provide greater flexibility for people who already are used to using the train. I think it would be better to demonstrate the value of rail travel by having greater depth of service rather than spreading service over a broader area so that it is not that convenient for the riders or cost-effective for the providers.
- Is this project going to happen and the route the only question?
- The study should analyze where people in and out of state live and will most likely want to travel.

### **Safety**

- I have concern that these high speed passenger trains are sharing tracks with freight trains. The passenger trains will be traveling faster and with more frequency than the freight trains. This will take an incredible amount of effort to ensure no collisions while still keeping both the passenger and freight trains on schedule.
- I believe that the Union Pacific rails, if used, would likely be the safest since the company spends so much time, energy, and money on rail monitoring and maintenance.
- Passenger rail will reduce traffic accidents as it will decrease congestion, allow travelers to use a safe and alternative method for travel during harsh winter conditions, decrease the number of potentially distracted drivers, and decrease drinking and driving incidents.

- Would the passenger service have something like the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to address the security issues to facilitate safe travel for the public? How do other railway systems ensure the safety of their passengers?
- Create very good grade separation crossings, especially in urban areas with high crossing volumes. One reason France's rail system is so successful is safety. For US high-speed passenger rail to be successful, it has to be very safe.

### **Schedule**

- It appears that it will be over a year before a decision is actually made. Iowa is several years behind Illinois already and the planning study is overdue. Service is expected to be available to from Chicago to Moline and Chicago to Dubuque by 2014.
- Get the studies completed and the Project constructed and operating.

### **Station Facilities & Upgrades - General**

- The Study should identify and consider better/fewer stops at key population centers, convenient access off roadways, with secure and free/low-cost parking and amenities around each stop, a secure station, reliable schedule of trains, and reasonable mass transit for the station-to-door service as well as rental cars, airports, bus stations, and other train stations for continued long-distance travel.
- The best option to insure continued support will be to have the stations serve more than one purpose; don't just stop at major cities downtown, but at hospitals and shopping centers and the like.
- The stations should have ready access to motels, with nearby event locations and major business/retail developments.
- For inter-city routes, I suggest you put in stops to connect as many county seats as possible, with stops close to hospitals and county courts.
- There should be minimal stops to keep the system operating at high speed capacity. I think there should be a direct route with no stops between Chicago Union Station and Moline, Illinois. Then directly to Iowa City, Cedar Rapids and then Des Moines.
- A close proximity to I-80 would facilitate access to stations allowing the line to more conveniently serve a larger population. It should basically run parallel to I-80 making 5-6 stops along the way. Suggested stops in Iowa could be Davenport, Iowa City, Grinnell, and two or three other stops along the way West to provide travel options for rural people. Other potential stops could be Wilton, Homestead, Newton, De Soto, and Atlantic.
- Does the map on the website identify the only station stops planned? Are there plans to use feeder bus routes from cities not on the main route? How many stops would be proposed along the route?
- Give special thoughts to taking bikes on board and making it very convenient to roll them on board from stations. Chicago downtown, Des Moines, etc. as well as the Quad Cities are very 'ridable' places and may make it a very attractive excursion for many.

- Is there any possibility of putting a car on the train...sort of like going on a ferry across the English Channel...so you have it available for transportation when you get to Chicago ?

### **Station Facilities & Upgrades – Location Specific**

- Ames, Iowa still has an existing station that could be utilized.
- The Burlington, Iowa depot is being revitalized and could be used for the high speed route.
- Clinton, Iowa has a railroad depot that could easily be refurbished and is very near to a larger metropolitan area.
- Council Bluffs, Iowa has infrastructure in place to allow a multi-modal terminal. A station location in eastern Council Bluffs may work best at the edge of the metropolitan area, similar to Metropark Station on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor in New Jersey. There could also be a station in Omaha, similar to having a terminal in San Francisco and one in Oakland, California.
- A station in downtown Des Moines, Iowa could utilize the existing DART System and more effectively leverage the public transportation infrastructure for the city.
- A station in Grinnell, Iowa will increase access and ridership, and mimics the station spacing on the existing route (Osceola-Ottumwa-Mt. Pleasant) being centrally located between Iowa City and Des Moines. The newly constructed Spaulding Center for Transportation (Iowa Transportation Museum) located adjacent to the train tracks, would be an ideal location for the depot.
- Iowa City, Iowa has a train depot to revitalize, and the entire area around the depot is planned for development, which increases the chances that Iowa City would be a destination for people.
- Kewanee, Illinois has a brand new station house that will be finished soon and could be used by the Project.
- If the Union Pacific bridge across the Missouri River was used, an Omaha station could be located at the former Union Station (currently the Durham Museum) and Burlington Station could be reused for a station location, or a station could be sited south of the Durham Museum. The current Amtrak station in Omaha could also be the terminal.
- If the Illinois Central bridge across the Missouri River was used, the Omaha station could be just south of Eppley Airfield or east of the Century Link Center (which could also host a maintenance area for maintenance and cleaning of railroad cars).

### **Support the Project**

- We need more passenger rail in America, not just more lanes on our freeways and bigger airports. Passenger rail is dependable, fast, safe, progressive, efficient, and greener compared to other modes of transportation.
- As a retiree, I look forward to passenger rail service to Chicago and points west. I would much rather not have to drive - it's frightening to be on I-80 with the trucks and dense traffic. I would probably go to Chicago more often if there were good mass transit, since I don't drive there during winter. It would eliminate the wear and tear on my car, stopping to refuel, paying tolls, parking, and having to be cramped in a car for multiple hours while trying to get through Chicago traffic.

- I used to drive but currently use Megabus. The buses are often late due to traffic. An option by rail would be much faster and more comfortable.
- Most of my Chicago friends don't have vehicles and this would allow them to visit without having to rent cars.
- The passenger train service would be an efficient and greatly improved option for travel, especially for retirees and college attendees. Young adults are less interested in owning cars and working in places that require long commutes; they want better public transportation.
- I travel about 30,000 miles a year driving for work across the state of Iowa and Nebraska each year, but would do much of my travel by rail if high speed passenger rail service was operational.
- I would use this new rail system to visit friends and family, attend sports games, and explore the Midwest as long as it's even relatively cost-effective and time-effective mode of transportation for traveling throughout Iowa, Illinois, and Nebraska.
- Active retirees seek less dependence on automobile transport because of the stress of driving and health/safety concerns, and the cost of driving and maintaining a vehicle.
- I believe with rising fuel costs, ridership will make the passenger rail system very viable. Flying short to medium distances is not practical due to the parking, check-in, checking baggage, security inspections and waiting for the flight.
- I am a Des Moines resident who travels several times a year to Chicago, Milwaukee, and Madison and occasionally to Omaha. A high-speed rail system would make my travel (both personal and business) for more enjoyable, as well as time and fuel efficient. The cost of air travel to Chicago from Iowa is very expensive.
- It would be a welcomed addition to the transportation needs in Central Iowa and Des Moines especially for those people with less than the average national income that either have no car or are car bound for mobility. Good public transportation can also be a factor in reducing the great divide between the haves and have-nots.
- Other modes of public transportation are heavily subsidized by government, including highways (roads, highway patrol, rest areas, snow plows) and air travel (terminals, runways, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), TSA). It only makes sense that government should also invest in passenger rail travel, which is the most fuel efficient mode of transportation.
- A more efficient, reliable train system to the area would encourage us to stay here, paying taxes and spending money in Eastern Iowa, but still allowing us to visit Chicago.
- The younger generation is in favor of transit options like this so that we can use our laptops, cell phones, etc. as opposed to just driving everywhere.
- Passenger rail would be a great alternative for simple planning such as who's car to take, and when should we leave.
- I know my employer would encourage the use of this service. If we're serious about easing the use of our public roadways, this is the way to do it.
- I would like a safe, comfortable way of long distance travel that would not involve running a security gauntlet to sit in a cramped airplane with my ears hurting or white knuckling it through

unfamiliar traffic in a car. Ideally I'd like to travel on a modern train with amenities like a dining car, have my car travel along for the ride, and be able to relax on a long trip.

- Being able to take a train would be a great alternative assuming it were cost friendly (cheaper than gas/parking/tolls, and cheaper than flying), faster than driving, and that train schedules were arranged so you could conveniently make a weekend trip.
- The service should be minimally five (5) round trips daily at (2) hour increments during daylight hours to compete with interstate highway I-80 traffic. Rail is still the cheapest, most efficient mode of passenger travel to-date.
- An Omaha to Chicago rapid passenger rail service would also give us the option of exploring Omaha which we have not taken advantage of due to the greater distance from our home.
- It seems clear that our heavy reliance on air travel is not sustainable in the long term. Airlines are going bankrupt even with federal subsidies and the inevitable rise in fuel prices will only exacerbate that problem. In addition, the point of terrorism is not primarily to do harm, but to create fear, and air travel is much more vulnerable in that regard than is rail travel. We need to strengthen our passenger rail system both to provide a sustainable and more ecologically tolerable transportation option and to strengthen national security by creating an additional, and more robust, alternative to air travel.
- I think this train would provide more travel options to lowans, and could promote visits by people from out of state.
- There's clearly a demand for travel between Chicago and Omaha and along that route as evidenced by the Greyhound and Megabus services provided by those respective companies. Furthermore, passenger rail will also reduce traffic accidents as it will allow travelers to use a safe and alternative method for travel during harsh winter conditions.
- A convenient form of transportation between Omaha and Chicago would be an excellent stimulus to business in the Omaha area by facilitating work with companies with a presence in Chicago, and making Omaha a more attractive place to live because of passenger rail opportunities.
- Rail passenger service was decimated when our government subsidized freeways and air travel with a vengeance, to the exclusion of privately-owned rail transportation. Trains are more comfortable, more roomy, and frequently are more suited to community access than other forms of transportation. Even buses create a problem with accessibility that trains have traditionally not caused.
- Only 10% of Grinnell College's students are from within Iowa, so a sustainable system, like passenger rail, would greatly alleviate the overburdened I-80.
- Iowa City, has the University Hospitals and Clinics which many people from both Illinois and Iowa go to for state-of-the-art medical treatment; many people are on limited incomes and don't own cars and can't afford airfare, but should be able to afford a rail/train ticket.
- Driving with young children is also inconvenient so if it was much more affordable than flying I think people would really take advantage of it.
- Reliable, quick train service would eliminate thousands of commutes on I-80, which is notoriously difficult to travel on in central Iowa during inclement weather. It would make it far

easier to be carless and still have access to the region's urban areas. If we are thinking 10, 20, 50, even 100 years out in to the future, passenger rail is going to be our most reliable, energy efficient mode of transportation.

- As an Iowa Film Professional, I have an increasingly demanding need to travel to Chicago as the Iowa Film Infrastructure continues to build. Having an alternative travel method will prove to be invaluable to our Iowa Film Industry.
- Instead of van travel with students and worrying about driving, some school trips could occur by rail allowing instructors to interact with their students.
- I attend college in Iowa but I'm from Chicago and it's too expensive to fly if I want to go home for the weekend but if I take a Greyhound I only get to be home for 24 hours because I spend so much time traveling. I would definitely use a train from Chicago to Iowa City.
- The passenger rail train would bypass all the hassles of the tollways and expressways. The main problems with bus travel that I have noticed are that the bus is rarely on schedule and the time options are very limited. If a passenger rail system were able to offer several trips within a day, stick to scheduled arrival and departure times, or decrease the travel time, we would most definitely opt to travel by rail over bus.

### **Train Amenities**

- Trains are more comfortable, more roomy, and frequently are more suited to community access than other forms of transportation. I think people are only willing to pay extra for this type of transportation if there is the prospect of a more luxurious ride, allowing them to relax and enjoy their trip.
- I have ridden Amtrak service without working restrooms, so the proposed system should not have that occur.
- I traveled on an Amtrak train, and was disappointed at the seating arrangements because they were more like a bus than trains in Europe.
- People should be able to take more luggage on a train compared to an airplane.
- Preferred amenities include multiple departure times, on-time service, food service on the train, short travel times, tables, and wi-fi for Internet users.
- Consider four across seating in coach class and three across in business class, with occasional two facing seating for four people at a table in both classes. For business class, consider adjustable seating to a flat position similar to that class for international airline travel.
- Another consideration to incorporate in any new rail service is the ability to bring bikes because many potential station areas are very bike-friendly for riding locations.

### **Transportation - General**

- Invest funding in something that people will actually use, like highway improvement.
- People in the Midwest usually drive cars or fly on a plane. They are not likely to think about taking a train like people on the east or west coast.
- More rail is not needed because it isn't used much now.

- Other inter-urban rail or bus rapid transit could connect other population centers to this main line. I hope we eventually implement this and provide travelers and passenger car users an alternative to negotiating the interstate along with the heavy trucks.
- We don't need a 10 lane-wide Interstate 80.
- In addition to passenger rail, I'd like to see some additional forms of transit to help students get more cheaply to and from the airports as well.
- Those of us who live in Clinton have no bus, train, or air service at all for passengers, and highway service is constricted. Consequently, the town is widely considered to be suffering economically due to lack of transportation opportunities. Even if the route didn't go through Clinton, it would help if there was a link to a central Iowa route through the Quad Cities.
- I would like a high speed alternative using an electrified rail system.
- I have traveled to Europe and utilized the train system via a Eurorail pass; their transportation system makes us look very backward. After my trip, I was looking to travel to California from Iowa and I was extremely disappointed to find the availability so limited and the prices so high. After traveling over seas, the first thing I would like to see in public transit in the Midwest is more trains, preferably one that makes stops at all the major cities. What an efficient, pleasant way to travel.
- I do not believe that this would cut down on interstate commerce (i.e. I-80) due to the regional nature of this rail line.

#### **Transportation - Bus Service**

- Funds for passenger rail would be better spent on upgrading our busing system to make it more attractive. Invest in more energy-efficient buses that would be able to alter their routes and utilize the existing public roads.
- Buses are crowded and uncomfortable, and are really for those not in a hurry to get to their destination because of the buses frequent stops.
- Megabus service is half the cost and runs pretty efficiently and will make choosing any passenger train much less likely.
- Bus connections (both incoming and outgoing) with reasonable schedules tied to the passenger train's schedules should be added to other nearby cities (especially with those having colleges or universities) and tourist destinations for whatever route is selected.
- As a comparison to costs and times of existing travel modes between Omaha and Chicago, the Megabus makes a one-way trip from Omaha to Chicago in just under 9 hours for varying costs as low as say \$30. Greyhound and Trailways make the run in just over 9 hours for about \$50 one way. Airlines fly the route in an hour and a half for around \$400. Adding arrival time of two hours prior, that lengthens air travel to close to 4 hours without getting to downtown Chicago. According to GoogleTravel, travel time for driving 475 miles is under 8 hours and at 20 mpg at \$4 per gallon; it would cost one person \$100 for the one way trip.
- The Megabus service works just fine, with four express trips per day along Route 4. The travel time would likely be similar for rail to complete the trip. Buses have a better on time record than

Amtrak. There is also less carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) output with buses. Finally bus services are self-sufficient.

- The Project will hurt the existing, faster, cheaper bus service that manages to survive without public subsidy. Rail costs are underestimated, rail ridership is overestimated and the only ones to benefit are a group of riders "too good" to ride the bus. The rail option would also be too expensive, especially for families with children.
- The Megabus is proof that people are willing to use a better form of mass transit if it is available.
- My husband and I also use the Megabus service several times a year. If there were a train option with convenient arrival and departure times, we would go by rail, as it is much more comfortable.
- The Iowa City metro area consistently has the highest bus ridership in the state and Des Moines is a close second. The ridership for most transit systems in Iowa is limited to transit-dependent riders. The Iowa City metro area, and Des Moines to a lesser extent, has a high number of "choice" riders—People who can afford and have alternatives to riding a bus but chose to take the bus. These are the same people who are going to chose to take a train rather than drive and are going to provide the ridership to sustain the passenger rail route (both financially and politically) once it is established.
- Bus service between Cedar Rapids and Iowa City and between Ames and Des Moines through Ankeny is recommended.

#### **Transportation - Current Train Traffic**

- When are the current railroads brought into the picture? Will the railroads be asked to fund any up-grades to their trackage to enable passenger rail?
- The ongoing conflict between Amtrak passenger service on freight routes suggests a certain incompatibility and inefficiency between passenger and freight services.
- The Iowa City area can't handle more train service near the old train depot due to a switching train blocking Dubuque Street anywhere from 15 minutes up to 1-½ hours. We have an Amtrak stop South of Iowa City. Why not spend the millions of dollars and help improve their service?
- There already is a service from Chicago to Omaha; the Amtrak service for the California Zephyr runs along BNSF track (Route Alternative 5).
- At the Omaha station, I would like a convenient connection to the California Zephyr.
- Amtrak is unreasonably priced, takes too long (upwards to 12 hours), is not reliable, and does not serve the hub communities. The decision back in 1970 to select the (now) BNSF mainline across southern Iowa was flawed and Iowans have been paying for it ever since. For out-of-town travelers, the distance to the stations is a disincentive. The costs of tolls, gas, and parking can exceed the price of a ticket. Southern Iowa is the only portion of the state that has passenger rail when the bulk of the state's populations lives in cities in the northern portion.
- The biggest problem with the current Amtrak system is that there are no tracks dedicated solely to passenger lines.
- What will happen to the California Zephyr line if that route isn't the one chosen for the high speed passenger rail service? Will it continue unchanged? Will it be discontinued? Although

expansion of passenger rail is desirable in the State of Iowa, it should be accomplished while maintaining the existing California Zephyr route through southern Iowa. Many of the poorest counties in Iowa are located across southern Iowa and losing passenger rail would be economically detrimental to the area and its residents.

- Adding another track to the Amtrak route would help improve Amtrak trains priority in use.
- If any of the proposed routes would result in eliminating the California Zephyr service through Galesburg, then I wouldn't support any of them.

### **Transportation - Highway Congestion**

- This would be big help with easing the traffic flow and congestion on I-80.
- Road congestion and urban sprawl have caused extended driving times throughout Iowa. Iowa and Nebraska would also get some more visitors that are now stymied by the westward traffic on I-80.
- High speed rail is something that should have been promoted equally with Interstate Highways!! We wouldn't be in this mess with all the automobiles and trucks on our highway systems if the country had maintained and improved the rail system. It would reduce traffic on I-80, potentially reducing accidents and injuries as well.
- We frequently travel by car to both Chicago and Des Moines for personal reasons, but this is becoming increasingly less enjoyable and obviously more hazardous as the traffic density, particularly of long-haul tractor-trailers, rapidly increases on I-80 through Iowa and on I-88 east of the western suburbs of Chicago.
- The majority of college students in Iowa are from out-of-state, so a sustainable system, like passenger rail, would greatly alleviate the overburdened I-80. Many students only have automobiles for traveling between school and home. I travel to Chicago occasionally and the Metra is a very nice system. As with I-80, I would much rather take a train than battle roads and parking in Chicago.
- This would be especially convenient for those that live in the City of Chicago since traffic congestion is so terrible by car. Thus, having to make the onerous journey by car out of the city probably discourages many from traveling to Iowa.
- Route 4 also parallels I-80, the major interstate highway crossing the state, which would increase the probability that the railroad link would serve to lighten the traffic load on that often-overcrowded road. There is currently a lot of daily commuter traffic on I-80 between Des Moines, Newton, Grinnell, and Iowa City, some of which might be absorbed by the rail line if the timing of trips was right.
- With this proposed rail route though Des Moines, many will partake in using it and most will find it much more relaxing than the 5 to 6 hour drive to Chicago fighting traffic.
- My wife and I live in Iowa City and we seldom visit Chicago, not because we don't want to, but because we take no pleasure in getting there and navigating Chicago streets with an automobile.
- The Study should include detail of the volume of auto transportation along these various routes today as an indication of which route is the most promising from a ridership standpoint. I

believe the routes of Omaha to Des Moines, Des Moines to Iowa City, and Iowa City to Davenport will show a clear advantage in potential ridership. Just as the population growth followed the rivers in the 1800's, the population growth has followed the interstate highways in the last three decades.

- The I-80 Route is already the most heavily traveled route through the State of Iowa and is deteriorating based on its use. Along this corridor you have a greater population to draw from to increase the ridership of this passenger rail route while in the meantime; the Interstate Highway System will be preserved by decreasing the number of passenger vehicles that travel this route daily.
- Larger masses of people could be transported thereby reducing the number of vehicles on the highways, interstates and provide future generations the opportunity to experience the beauty of the rural communities and environment.
- Lots of students go home on weekends, crowding the highways with young inexperienced drivers. A rail alternative would relieve congestion, improve safety on the connecting roads, and also reduce parking problems. It could also cut down on incidences of drinking and driving, for those who choose to imbibe on game day.
- This rail connection is important because Iowa is over-paved, and more roads/autos are not a sensible solution.

### **Use of the Project**

- The Study should review the demographics for each station node, review the population located on each line (including towns which the train passes through), and identify the potential ridership considering students, senior citizens, sports fans, tourists, and businessmen).
- The rail system could be used most regularly by commuters, but also often by college students and seniors as a main transportation system connected to other transportation hubs, businesspeople attending meetings (and being able to work on trains), relatives and friends visiting each other, patients visiting hospitals, and also by tourists and people attending sporting events and traveling on holidays.
- Travelers would use the passenger rail system more often the faster, more convenient (based on access and timeliness), and cheaper it would be compared to alternative transportation modes.
- The system will get more use in the future as additional passenger rail connections through Chicago and other cities are established.
- I would like more of Nebraska to be included in this service, but would drive to Omaha to catch this train.
- Travel to Chicago would likely increase based on many commentors noting that they would travel more often if a reasonably priced rail option was available.
- The passenger rail service could be used by fans attending Nebraska, Iowa, and Illinois football games and other sporting events. Ridership would spike during major sporting events.
- Although the Megabus is an option of travel along the corridor, I would prefer being on a train rather than a crowded bus.

- Amtrak users noted that a route through Iowa City and Des Moines would likely get more passenger use.
- I could see this being particularly useful in the winter when drives to Chicago and/or Omaha can be uncertain and sometimes hazardous affairs.
- Ridership would appear to be highest along Route 4 because it serves major populations (Quad Cities/Iowa City/Des Moines) and is close to several colleges and universities (for example University of Iowa, Drake, Grinnell are very close to the route and Iowa State is only about 45 minutes from the route). Students, faculty, and staff would likely at the schools would likely be regular users of the rail system. These major population centers have research centers, medical facilities, tourist attractions, and businesses that would encourage ridership. There are many businesses that have different branches along this route, thus attracting business ridership.
- Given that RAGRAI is a nationally known bike event, it might help attract ridership if folks know that they can bring along their bikes on the passenger trains.
- Please be sure, as much as possible, to calculate the potential Amish usage of the train; they are a hidden demographic, and will be heavy users.
- Many students that go to Iowa City are from the Chicago area, thus there is a high demand for affordable transportation service for the students, as well as parents, other family members, and friends that visit them. In inclement weather, it would provide another option for those students who might otherwise drive. Train service would be a good recruiting tool for the colleges. The rail option might also reduce parking problems at the schools.
- If the travel time, costs, and stops aren't reasonable, don't build it because it won't get enough use.
- Based on Denver's experience, they have great equipment and free rides, but inadequate ridership. The system won't get enough ridership to pay for its operation and maintenance.
- I drive 4 hours to Chicago for business a few times each year and have considered taking a train, but the hour drive to a station, the train ride, and travel to my business destination and the return trip would take longer than driving, and the cost is comparable, so I would likely continue to drive even with the rail service option.
- Using an estimated round trip ticket price of \$100 from Omaha to Chicago, and estimated ridership, it doesn't appear that the system would be economically feasible without massive subsidies.

### **Water Quality**

- The nation's transportation system needs to be reconsidered and restructured as the population grows and energy sources are stretched to the limits for cost and availability and cause impacts on air and water quality. The passenger rail transportation system would be a wonderful environmental and economic move.