

# KENOSHA NEWS

## High-Speed rail gets big boost

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by Deneen Smith

With the promise of an \$823 million federal stimulus program grant, Wisconsin will begin construction this year on a high-speed rail line linking Milwaukee and Madison.

Gov. Jim Doyle announced Thursday the state will receive federal funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to build a line linking Madison and Milwaukee. The governor said an \$810 million grant will cover the entire cost of building the high speed line linking the two cities, along with the cost of passenger stations, signaling and other infrastructure improvements.

Doyle said the line should be complete and taking passengers in 2013.

Chicago link

Another \$12 million will go toward improvements on the existing Amtrak Hiawatha line linking Chicago and Milwaukee through Kenosha County. The money will be used to install crossovers that will allow the passenger trains to pass freight trains on the line.

Although the Hiawatha line runs through Kenosha County, it does not stop here. The closest stop is in Sturtevant.

The money is part of \$8 billion in grants for high-speed rail projects announced by the White House Thursday.

In total the Midwest is receiving \$2.6 billion for high speed rail, including corridors from Chicago to Detroit, and Chicago to St. Louis and Kansas City, according to the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission.

Create jobs

“This is a major project that will create thousands of jobs in Wisconsin and invest in our long-term growth, connecting the major centers of commerce in Wisconsin and the Midwest,” Doyle said in a formal statement.

Adam Collins, a spokesman for the governor’s office, said the high-speed trains will travel at 110 mph and make the 85 mile trip between Milwaukee and Madison in 1 hour and 14 minutes. There will be stops along the line in Brookfield, Oconomowoc and Watertown.

Craig Thompson, executive director of the Transportation Development Association of Wisconsin, said Wisconsin received essentially everything it asked for in a grant request submitted last year.

#### Talgo train facility

Doyle's office aggressively pursued the grant, visiting Spain last February to study high-speed rail and pursuing an agreement with the Spanish company Talgo Inc. to put two 14-car Talgo train sets into service in Wisconsin.

As part of the announcement Thursday, Doyle said two additional train sets, four in total, will be assembled in the state.

That agreement calls for Talgo to establish assembly and maintenance facilities in the state to build the trains here. The Wisconsin facility will also support delivery of Talgo trains throughout the country. Collins said the site of that facility has not yet been established.

Thompson said the advance work on the rail project by Wisconsin and eight other states helped push them ahead in the grant process.

#### Major rail hub?

Ultimately, Thompson said, the project could link Chicago and the Twin Cities by rail through Milwaukee and Madison. "I think that could really be a game-changer for the regional economy," he said.