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MADISON (WKOW) -- Longtime advocates of high-speed rail said Wisconsin's receipt of \$800 million to establish Madison-to-Milwaukee service will create a viable alternative to car and flight commutes.

Former Department of Transportation analyst Keith Plasterer worked on the Midwest Rail Initiative. Plasterer told WKOW27 News studies have shown white-collar professionals will use the train to carry out work and increase billable hours, and recreational travelers will use the corridor for the train experience and to avoid urban parking problems.

Wisconsin manufacturers and commerce spokesperson James Buchen said the new corridor will open doors to opportunities across our border.

"It facilitates face to face communication and interaction between businesspeople: Madison; Milwaukee; Chicago. I think it will facilitate more transactions and commerce involving the Chicago region."

Transportation development association of Wisconsin executive director Craig Thompson called the federal support for expanded rail very helpful, but said road and highway infrastructure needs should not be neglected as rail is pushed.

Plasterer credits both former Governor Tommy Thompson and Governor Jim Doyle for supporting the concept of high-speed rail expansion and making Wisconsin's selection for funding possible.

Through a spokesperson, Thompson said he was "pleased" with the federal government's commitment to expanding Wisconsin's high speed rail infrastructure.

At Columbus' Amtrak station 40 miles from Madison, Sally Goodger of Milton arrived on the Empire Builder from Minneapolis and welcomed the coming of a Madison to Milwaukee train.

"I can take the train into Milwaukee to shop and attend events. It's comfortable and I don't have to drive."

"Madison to Milwaukee, for myself, it would probably mean visiting family," said Ken Paris on Sun Prairie.

Mary Schuyler of Madison called herself an "Amtrak frequent flier" and predicted ridership growth with the new connection.

"They'd get a million more times people to take this kind of transportation, they'd save the environment, and I highly recommend it."

Columbus' Amtrak manager says the fate of his station remains to be seen with the coming of high speed rail out of Madison. But he says he can see the stations complementing each other.