

**Minutes of the
East Wisconsin Counties Railroad Consortium
Meeting of September 10, 2025**

East Wisconsin Counties Railroad Consortium Meeting was called to order by Chairman Thomas E. Winker on September 10, 2025, at approximately 10:00 a.m., at the Dodge County Administration Building, Administration Auditorium, 127 E. Oak Street, Juneau, Wisconsin.

The Consortium rose to say the Pledge of Allegiance.

Certification of Public Notice: Kim Nass certified that the notice of this meeting complies with all applicable requirements of Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law.

Present: Char Holtan and Steve Balsiger, Columbia County; Jeffrey Caine and Jim Mielke, Dodge County; John Zorn, Fond du Lac County; Tom Winker and Marty Wolf, Ozaukee County; Jon Kuhlow and Chuck Born, Sheboygan County; Jeff Schleif, Washington County; and Howard Miller, Winnebago County.

Excused: Karen Madigan, Fond du Lac County; Dennis Mulder and Charlie Wielgosh, Green Lake County; Shawn Rolland, Milwaukee County; Robert Hartwig, Washington County; and, Donald Nussbaum, Winnebago County.

Others Present: Steve Balsiger, Columbia County; Ken Lucht, WSOR/WATCO; Matthew Belling, Didion; Don Vruwink, Commissioner of Railroads; and Kim Nass and Kelly Lepple, Dodge County Corporation Counsel Office.

Public Comment: None.

Approval of Draft Minutes of July 9, 2025: Motion by Zorn/Caine to approve the minutes of July 9, 2025. Motion carried.

Financial Report: Jeff Caine reported for the period ending August 31, 2025. The balance in the checkbook as of May 31, 2025, was \$1,003.48. Deposits – \$0.21, Expenditures – None, and Transfers – None. Total EWCRC money on deposit in the Local Government Investment Pool as of June 30, 2025, is \$1,753,361.56. The interest rate for June 2025 was 4.36%. Motion by Caine/Zorn to approve the Financial Report as read. Motion carried.

Presentation by UW-Extension, Steven Chmielewski, on Systemwide Economic Impact Rail Study: Steve Chmielewski made a presentation to the members of the EWCRC on the Systemwide Economic Impact Rail Study. In 2014 the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, the University of Wisconsin Madison and the University of Wisconsin Extension, Cooperative Extension, conducted a study on the economics of rail shipping associated with the publicly owned freight rail system in Southern Wisconsin. The intent of the study is to update the 2014 study and to explore how freight rail service impacts Wisconsin industries and contributes to the economy and to better understand the economic impact of rail freight services. The methodology was explained. The study will be statistically competent. A final report of the study should be available online to view by the end of January, 2026.

Commissioner of Railroads Report: Don Vruwink, Commissioner of Railroads reported that the week of September 15 through 21, 2025 is Wisconsin Rail Safety Week throughout the State of Wisconsin. The Commissioner also reported that his office will be traveling to Green Bay, regarding Quincey Street, where his office is working with the railroad to make that a safer area. The Commissioner further reported that his office will be meeting with Canadian Pacific regarding the recent incidents that have taken place in Reeseville, Wisconsin. On October 14, 2025, the Commissioner and his office will be in Wisconsin Dells giving a presentation to the Wisconsin Towns Association. On October 15, 2025, the Commissioner and his office will be attending WisDOT's Fall Freight Rail Conference. On October 16, 2025, the Commissioner and his office will be traveling to Oconto County to give a presentation to supervisors on railroad safety.

Report of WisDOT Railroads and Harbors: There was no representative from WisDOT that attended the EWCRC meeting. A report was sent to the Dodge County Corporation Counsel Office from Drew Archie of WisDOT to be presented at the meeting. Tom Winker asked Ken Lucht to explain the report.

Janesville Bridges Project: In 2021 a Federal RAISE Grant was awarded to the Janesville Bridge Project. WisDOT estimates that they will receive the RAISE grant in early 2026. Before the grant is awarded, environmental work needs to be completed to at least 30 percent. WisDOT's consultant, Quandel, has been selected and approved to complete the preliminary engineering by the end of 2025. The Union Pacific Railroad (UP) has agreed to review the preliminary engineering contract and work out payment. WisDOT is now executing the contract to keep the project moving. Once the preliminary engineering and environmental components of the project are submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and approved, the federal grants can be obligated and agreements between FRA and WisDOT can be executed. Final design is projected to be completed by the end of 2026 with construction starting in 2027.

Ken Lucht reported that the Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission (WRRTC) took action at its last meeting to draft a letter to the UP, its CEO, and its government affairs team, to let them know that this project is extremely important to Wisconsin, its counties, and businesses, and requests that they fully cooperate on a scope of work, on a budget, and on a grant agreement with WisDOT and the Federal Railroad Administration.

Progress in the City of Janesville: Initial scope of work includes filling in arches on the Rock River Bridge. The published route of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail shows the route going under the west end arch. WisDOT is leading the cause to reroute the Ice Age National Scenic Trail around the Rock River bridge and restore pre 2017 route under N. River Street. This has been an ongoing trespassing issue for both railroads, and we do not want to delay the project in the future. WisDOT is working with the DNR, National Park Service, and the City of Janesville to correct this issue.

Report of WSOR: Ken Lucht reported the following: WSOR is working with the WRRTC to draft a letter to the UP, to its CEO and to its head of government affairs, highlighting the importance of keeping the Janesville Bridge Project moving and on schedule. Ken Lucht asked the Consortium if they would consider drafting a support letter or would consider signing a joint letter with WRRTC. It was the consensus of the Consortium to have Tom Winker sign a joint letter with WRRTC.

WSOR recently completed a substantial tie replacement project and crossing replacement project on the Reedsburg Subdivision, between Madison and Devils Lake. This project will be completed in the next

couple of months. The Merrimac Bridge Project should be completed in the next 3 to 4 months. WSOR has a \$4 million tie replacement project currently underway on the Monroe Subdivision between Janesville and Monroe. This project should be complete in the next couple of months. WSOR is funding 100 percent of this project. WSOR is waiting on some awards for some state projects. These projects include two bridges on the Reedsburg Subdivision and continuous welded rail on the Prairie Subdivision, from Madison to Prairie du Chein. WSOR is working on a private crossing agreement with a company called Tracy Brothers located in Iron Ridge. WSOR is hoping to have an agreement in place in the next couple of months.

On September 4, 2025, Tom Winker and Ken Lucht attended a public hearing on Assembly Bill 219 relating to a tax credit for rail infrastructure modernization for short line rails. The federal government came up with a tax credit which makes all eligible short line railroads available for a \$0.50 credit for every \$1.00 spent on maintenance up to a certain cap for a certain amount of years. The next step is to take the bill to the Joint Finance Committee. WSOR is hoping that the bill will make it to the Governor's desk this session. WSOR has been doing a lot of rides with Wisconsin legislators. On September 19, 2025, WSOR will be giving Representative Born and some of his colleagues a ride from Horicon to Markesan. Ken Lucht is still working on scheduling a tour of Charter Steel.

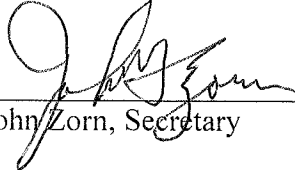
Reports from Customers on the System: A representative from Didion expressed his concerns about the Janesville Bridges and the direct and indirect consequences it has on Didion because they cannot utilize the Janesville bridges. It was suggested that Didion and other industries affected by the Janesville bridges should reach out to WisDOT.

Chair Report on Activities: Tom Winker reported that he and Ken Lucht contacted Senator Johnson's Office, and they went to Madison and met with Senator Johnson's Representative, Tom Petri. Tom Petri is going to continue to do follow ups with WisDOT to make sure that nothing falls through the cracks. Tom Winker also reported that he was reelected President of the Wisconsin Towns Association.

Date, time, and place of next meeting (November 12, 2025): The next regular EWCRC meeting will be held on November 12, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. Dodge County will host the meeting, to be held at the Dodge County Administration Building, located in Juneau, Wisconsin.

Motion by Caine/Schleif to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 11:07 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



John Zorn, Secretary

Disclaimer: These are draft minutes. These draft minutes may be approved, amended, or corrected at the next meeting of the East Wisconsin Counties Railroad Consortium.