

**Minutes of the
East Wisconsin Counties Railroad Consortium
Meeting of July 9, 2025**

East Wisconsin Counties Railroad Consortium Meeting was called to order by Chairman Thomas E. Winker on July 9, 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 Darren W. Schroeder, Columbia County; Jeffrey Caine and Jim Mielke, Dodge County; Karen Madigan and John Zorn, Fond du Lac County; Dennis Mulder and Charlie Wielgosh, Green Lake County; Tom Winker and Marty Wolf, Ozaukee County; Jon Kuhlman and Chuck Born, Sheboygan County; Jeff Schleif and Robert Hartwig, Washington County; and Donald Nussbaum and Howard Miller, Winnebago County.

Excused: Shawn Rolland, Milwaukee County.

Others Present: Ken Lucht, WSOR/WATCO; Dave Frohling, Dodge County Chairman, Ben Mohlke, WisDOT; Don Vruwink, Commissioner of Railroads; Heather Graves, Office of the Commissioner of Railroads; and, Kim Nass and Kelly Lepple, Dodge County Corporation Counsel Office.

Public Comment: Dodge County Board Chairman, Dave Frohling, welcomed everyone to Dodge County.

Approval of Draft Minutes of March 12, 2025: Motion by Mulder/Schroeder to approve the minutes of March 12, 2025. Motion carried.

Financial Report: Jeff Caine reported for the period ending February 28, 2025. The balance in the checkbook as of February 28, 2025, was \$1,002.70. Deposits – \$276,204.69, Expenditures – None, and Transfers – \$275,201.21. Total EWCRC money on deposit in the Local Government Investment Pool as of May 31, 2025, is \$1,747,102.19. The interest rate for May 2025 was 4.36%. Motion by Caine/Schleif to approve the Financial Report as read. Motion carried.

Consider, discuss, and authorize payment of invoice of Dodge County for services provided by the Dodge County Finance Department in 2024: There was consideration of and discussion about the statement for services that was presented for payment from Dodge County, in the amount of \$950 for services provided by the Dodge County Finance Director and staff, in recordkeeping, accounting assistance, and in preparing the EWCRC Annual Financial Report. Motion by Caine/Holton to approve payment of this invoice and to authorize and direct the Office of Dodge County Corporation Counsel to send payment to Dodge County, in the amount of \$950, for services provided by the Dodge County Finance Director and staff, in recordkeeping, accounting assistance, and in preparing the EWCRC Annual Financial Report. Motion carried.

Consider, discuss, and authorize payment of invoice of Dodge County for services provided by the Dodge County Corporation Office in 2024: There was consideration of and discussion about the statement for services that was presented for payment from Dodge County, in the amount of \$4,605.41, for services provided by the Dodge County Corporation Counsel and staff in 2024. Motion by Nussbaum/Mielke

to approve payment of this invoice and to authorize and direct the Office of Dodge County Corporation Counsel to send payment to Dodge County, in the amount of \$4,605.41, for services provided by the Dodge County Corporation Counsel and staff in 2024. Motion carried.

Consider, discuss, and authorize the Financial Statements for the Year Ended December 31, 2024:

Kim Nass gave a report on the annual Financial Statement for 2024. Motion by Kuhlow/Zorn to approve the 2024 EWCRC annual Financial Statement as presented in written form. Motion carried.

Consider, discuss, and take action to authorize a contribution to update the Systemwide Economic Impact Study of the Publicly-Owned Railroad Network:

Ken Lucht reported that in 2014 the University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension Office completed a systemwide economic impact study of the publicly-owned railroad network. Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission (WRRTC) and the UW Extension Office met to discuss the need to update the *Economic Contributions of the Railroad Industry to Wisconsin: A focus on the publicly owned railroad system in Southern Wisconsin (2014)*. Ken Lucht stated that it will cost \$26,697.00 to complete the study. At its meeting in June of 2025, the WRRTC took action to contribute up to \$9,000 for this study. Ken Lucht asked if the EWCRC would be willing to contribute \$9,000 to the study. Motion by Mielke/Mulder that the EWCRC contribute \$9,000 to update the study. Motion carried. Ken Lucht stated that he will provide a copy of the 2014 study to County Clerks for posting on its county websites.

Consider, discuss and take action on the level of funding by member counties for 2026: There was consideration of and discussion about the level of funding for member counties for 2026. Motion by Caine/Schleif that the Board of Directors of the EWCRC recommend that each member county budget \$30,000 for its 2026-member county contribution to the EWCRC. Motion carried.

Report of WisDOT Railroads and Harbors: Ben Mohlke gave an update on the Janesville Bridge Project. WisDOT hopes to complete its environmental impact study by the end of calendar year 2025. By the end of 2026, WisDOT hopes to finish the engineering and design phase and start construction of the bridges in 2027. The Consortium expressed its concerns about the lack of communication from WisDOT on the timeline of the Janesville Bridge Project and expressed its concerns on why it is taking so long to get to the construction phase. Tom Winker asked that Ben Mohlke relay to Lisa Stern the Consortium's dissatisfaction with the speed of the project and that customers are upset and want to know when this project will be completed. Tom Winker requested that Lisa Stern attend the next meeting of the EWCRC. Ken Lucht stated that WSOR is concerned with the continued delays in the project and the customer impacts. Customers are currently rerouting traffic around Janesville which requires them to pay detour costs. Customers are paying approximately \$500,000 every year in detour costs for businesses in Wisconsin. WSOR is also concerned that the continued delays by the Union Pacific (UP) will blow up the budget of the project. The UP is considering this project a public bridge project and may require five temporary bridges be installed while the main bridges are being repaired. Ken Lucht asked that Ben Mohlke contact the UP and have the UP provide something in writing stating that this is a private bridge project which will avoid requiring WSOR to build temporary bridges. Tom Winker stated that he and Ken Lucht are going to contact Senator Ron Johnson's Office to create awareness at the federal level of the difficulties WisDOT and the WSOR has had working with the Union Pacific.

Ben Mohlke also reported that Didion in Cambria applied for a loan to upgrade and fix its rail spurs. WisDOT is in the process of approving that loan.

Report of WSOR: Ken Lucht provided a handout of WSOR's 2025 Track Maintenance Plan. Throughout the system, in 2025 approximately 30,130 ties will be installed, 21 grade crossings will be upgraded and numerous bridge rehabilitation projects on the Reedsburg Subdivision and the Prairie Subdivision will be completed. WSOR has not installed any continuous welded rail on the system because of the Merrimac Bridge project. WSOR is hoping to start installing continuous welded rail in late 2025 or early 2026. Brush and weed control are almost complete. WSOR sprays all 600 miles of its corridors to kill the weeds and brush to maintain proper drainage of its ties. A tie will last 35 to 40 years if properly maintained. WSOR is working with the City of Oshkosh to petition the Office of Commissioner of Railroads to create a new crossing over Compass Way in the Industrial Park. In 2025, Lycon will be starting construction of a new redi mix concrete plant. In order for Lycon to receive rail services, a new spur and crossing would need to be installed on Compass Way. All utility and grading work has been completed. Oshkosh Defense lost its military truck contract and will be shipping its last unit train of military vehicles sometime in June of 2025. AM General of South Bend, Indiana was awarded the five-year contract. The contract will be up for rebid in 2030. WSOR is working with the Town of Plymouth regarding the permanent closure of the Short Cut Road rail crossing. The agreement and closure of the Short Cut Road rail crossing will occur sometime this year in 2025. On June 29, 2025, WSOR had a train derailment in Hartford, Wisconsin, which resulted in two engines being destroyed. The line was back in service within 72 hours.

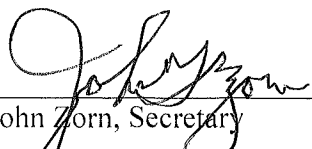
Chairman Winker stated that he attended a meet and greet with WisDOT Secretary, Kristina Boardman. Ken Lucht, Marty Krueger, WRTC and Don Vruwink, Commissioner of Railroads were also in attendance. There was a discussion about WSOR's and WRTC's public/private partnership with WisDOT, a discussion about what can be accomplished by working together, a discussion about the Economic Impact Study, and a discussion about the Janesville Bridge Project and working with the UP. 2025 Wisconsin Senate Bill 213 and 2025 Wisconsin Assembly Bill 219 proposes a tax credit for rail infrastructure modernization. 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.

Chairman Winker introduced Heather Graves and Don Vruwink, Commissioner of Railroads. The primary focus of the Office of Commissioner of Railroads is to ensure safety of the public at railroad crossings in the State of Wisconsin. The agency has primary responsibility for making determinations of the adequacy of warning devices at railroad crossings as well as approving the installation of new railroad crossings, alteration of existing crossings, and closing or consolidation of existing crossings.

Date, time, and place of next meeting (September 10, 2025): The next regular EWCRC meeting will be held on September 10, 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 Zorn/Schleif to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 11:35 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.