

Earth Tech, Inc.

Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Alternatives Analysis *Environmental Impact Statement & Project Development Phase*

February 2007

Public Information Meetings

in association with:

HNTB

**CAMBRIDGE
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and

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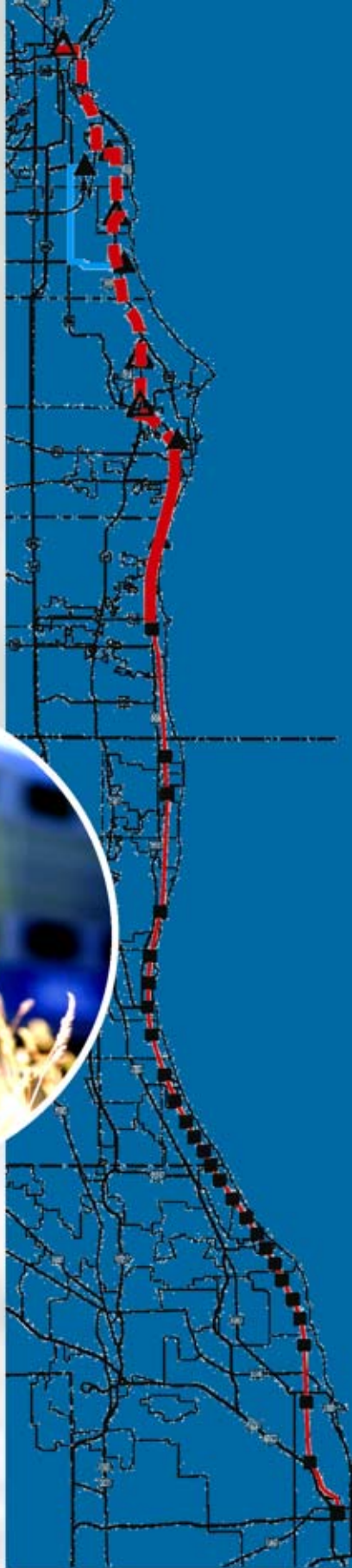




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I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade a very high level of interest has developed in the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) corridor for improved commuter transportation service. This interest has resulted in the creation of a group involving major employers and municipalities and counties which has as its objective the improvement of transit service within the corridor. At the request of the local units of government, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the seven-county Southeastern Wisconsin region, has completed two studies^{1,2} which focus on transit improvements throughout the KRM corridor.

On behalf of an intergovernmental partnership, consisting of the counties and cities of Kenosha, Racine and Milwaukee, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and the Regional Planning Commission, the Commission has undertaken the EIS and Project Development phase of the KRM Alternatives Analysis (AA) in order to produce a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), refine the previous alternatives analysis, and develop further a commuter transportation project within the corridor. This study is funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5309 "New Starts" program, WisDOT, and the members of an Intergovernmental Partnership consisting of the Cities and Counties of Kenosha, Milwaukee and Racine, WisDOT and the Regional Planning Commission. The products of this study will be used to support an application to the FTA for funding of Preliminary Engineering (PE) under the FTA's New Starts program.

II. PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

This report presents public comment received on the KRM project. The following is included in a series of appendices:

Section A. KRM Newsletter, Edition 3, January 2007

¹ Feasibility Study of Commuter Railway Passenger Train Service in the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Corridor, Community Assistance Planning Report No. 239, the Regional Planning Commission, Waukesha, WI, June 1998.

² Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Corridor Transit Study Summary Report and Recommended Plan, Community Assistance Planning Report No. 276, the Regional Planning Commission, Waukesha, WI, August 2003.

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- Section B. Press Releases and List of Media Outlets
- Section C. Public Information Meeting Presentations
- Section D. Display Boards
- Section E. Meeting Attendance Sign-in Sheets
- Section F. Written Comments Received at Public Information Meetings
- Section G. Comments Received by E-mail
- Section H. Comments Received by Letter
- Section I. Opinion, Editorial and News Articles

Public Meeting Input

Public input has been received throughout the conduct of the KRM project. Input collected as part of project scoping meetings held in February 2006³ documented comments that were received through spring 2006. While the preponderance of comments documented in this report were received during and shortly after the meetings held in February 2007, all input collected after May 2006 are included. Comments received through March 7, 2007 have been included herein.

Attendance at the three public meetings is shown on **Table II-1**. A total of 79 written comments were received at the meetings.

TABLE II-1. KRM FEBRUARY 2007 PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING ATTENDANCE

Meeting	Date	Attendance	Written Comments Received
Kenosha Gateway Technical College	05-Feb-07	109	40
Racine Gateway Technical College	07-Feb-07	66	16
Milwaukee Downtown Transit Center	08-Feb-07	88	23
	Total	263	79

³ Final Scoping Report and Appendix, KRM Alternatives Analysis, EIS and Project Development, Regional Planning Commission, Waukesha, WI, May 2006.

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The public was able to also provide comments electronically through the website created for the project.⁴ In addition, comments were received by the Regional Planning commission via e-mail or by letter. **Table II-2** indicates that 722 comments were received, of which 460 came by e-mail.

TABLE II-2. PUBLIC COMMENTS BY METHOD

Method	Comments	Percent
e-mail	460	64%
Meeting Form	88	12%
Letter	174	24%
Total	722	100%

The 722 comments documented in this report can be divided into four general categories, including:

1. in support of commuter rail in the KRM corridor,
2. in support of improved bus service (the Transportation Systems Management Alternative),
3. in opposition to commuter rail service in the KRM corridor, and
4. questions or suggestions about the project or otherwise noncommittal.

In summary, the results by KRM position category were as follows:

TABLE II-3. RESULTS BY POSITION OF RESPONSE

	Responses	
1. Support KRM	668	92.5%
2. Support Improved Bus	1	0.1%
3. Oppose KRM	39	5.4%
4. Questions/Noncommittal	14	1.9%
	722	100.0%

Following is a discussion of the results, including the predominant reasons cited for the underlying positions of respondents.

⁴ <http://www.sewrpc.org/KRMonline/>

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1. Comments in Support of Commuter Rail Service in the KRM Corridor

Some responses supporting KRM included a qualification, which were tallied and presented on **Table II-4**. As can be seen, the vast majority of comments of support were not qualified.

Table II-4. Comments in Support of KRM with Qualifications

	Responses	% of Responses	
		of Support	of Total
1 Unqualified support	649	97.2%	89.9%
1.1 Support, but opposed to rental car tax	6	0.9%	0.8%
1.2 Support, but opposed to Somer Station location	2	0.3%	0.3%
1.3 Support, but not without funding for MCTS	7	1.0%	1.0%
1.4 Support, but not without thru service to Chicago	4	0.6%	0.6%
Total Support KRM	668	100.0%	92.5%

A variety of reasons and comments were cited for expressing this opinion, including:

- Provide a more balanced transportation system
- Encourage and facilitate commerce and workforce development
- Act as a catalyst for developing transit-oriented communities that are environmentally friendly
- Willing to pay additional taxes to support project, additional development will more than offset the costs
- Access to more jobs, housing options, mobility for all, less dependence on cars and gasoline
- Promote alternative forms of transportation that reduce global warming emissions
- KRM is a viable and legitimate option for the reconstruction and expansion of I-94

2. Comments in Support of Improved Bus Service in the KRM Corridor (TSM)

One person indicated a preference for enhanced bus service in the corridor. This individual felt that the proposed KRM commuter rail project is unneeded, and that a bus rapid transit system would better serve the area because buses are more versatile and cheaper.

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3. Comments Opposed to Commuter Rail Service in the KRM Corridor

A sampling of reasons cited by the 39 people opposed to the implementation of commuter rail service in the corridor included the following:

- No provision for service for the western or northern suburbs of Milwaukee
- Will compete with Amtrak
- Transfer with Metra will add time to trip
- Object to the Somers station location
- Waste of money, service won't be used, already have empty buses; do not need an empty train too. New developments will continue to grow around major highways and not near train stations.
- Against project because of rental car tax
- Proposed level/type of rail service not appropriate
- Property values will plummet on all houses and apartments within close proximity to the tracks
- Commuter line will not be cost effective; additional taxes will be needed to pay for it
- Commuter rail is an antiquated idea that must rely on huge taxpayer subsidies to exist; the automobile continues to be the transportation mode of choice in a modern living and economic environment.

4. Questions or Noncommittal Responses to Commuter Rail Service in KRM Corridor

A total 14 responses did not state a position supporting or opposing KRM. Several of these involved questions, such as:

- How were the estimates of increases in jobs, real estate values, etc. derived?
- Need to see simple and clear ridership projection numbers
- Will KRM hire its own employees, or use Union Pacific employees as Metra does to operate the trains, track repair, clerks and management?
- What would the fares be?

Several other responses in this category offered ideas or suggestions for the KRM project. It is likely that many of these comments were supportive of KRM, but the statements did not explicitly express support. A sampling of these comments is listed below.

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- Another funding possibility is a Transit Lottery, similar to the statewide lottery, but limited to the involved counties, and devoted to supporting all forms of transit.
- Proper facilities should be built to assure a safe passage for walkers and bikers directly to the stations; stations should have adequate facilities for bicycle parking.
- An article on KRM said that the Metra can not come to Wisconsin because they are a division of the State of Illinois. There is nothing stopping them.
- The KRM fare needs to be a little higher than \$2.66 per ride. The MCTS is at \$1.75.