Evaluation of Options for a

Twin Cities – Red Wing Inter-city Rail Passenger Service
Executive Summary

Prepared by

LTK Engineering Services

in association with
SRF Consulting Group

for the

Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority

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Red Wing Inter-city Passenger Service

Executive Summary

LTK Engineering Services, with the support of SRF Consulting Group, Inc., has conducted this evaluation of options for an intercity rail passenger service operating between Saint Paul and Red Wing. In addition, LTK was asked to perform a further evaluation of issues and costs associated with an extension of such a service from Minnesota Union Depot to the Downtown Minneapolis Northstar Intermodal station in order to serve Downtown Minneapolis and potentially also connect with trains to and from Duluth. These are the main findings:

1. A service between the Twin Cites and Red Wing could be designed as an every-day service, including as an extension of the proposed Red Rock commuter rail service between the Twin Cities and Hastings. Alternatively it could be established, possibly as the first phase of a long-term program to for inter-city service, as a "weekend and holiday only" recreationally-oriented service, perhaps with two round trips per day complementing the existing daily Amtrak *Empire Builder* service. Trains would generally follow the current Amtrak route between the Twin Cities and Red Wing, with intermediate stops at Hastings and Treasure Island Resort and Casino.

2. Red Wing is a small city, and therefore the potential for generation of ridership is not high. Depending upon the service alternative selected, studies suggest that ridership would probably be in the range of fewer than 300 trips per day.

3. A commuter level of service between Saint Paul and Red Wing would first require the investment in capacity infrastructure on the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) calculated in the Red Rock study, now under way. The most significant, but by no means the sole cost element, would be the grade separated track approach to the east end of Minnesota Union Depot, and the related capacity improvements at Hoffman Avenue in the vicinity of Dayton's Bluff. Together, these would represent a cost of more than $100 million. If the Red Rock project were already implemented, however, those costs would presumably already be covered. A "starter" level of service, such as the recreational service considered as a first increment in development of this line, might involve an investment in the $22 – $77 million range. This is subject to discussion with the CPR.

4. Between Saint Paul and Downtown Minneapolis, there are two principal alternative railroad alignments – the CPR/Minnesota Commercial alignment currently used by Amtrak, and the BNSF Railway's Midway Subdivision. These were evaluated in 2001 as part of the commuter rail alternative of the Central Corridor project. These railroad lines are congested with freight traffic; that is particularly true of the BNSF between Downtown Minneapolis, Minneapolis Junction and Saint Anthony Junction, which is just north of Midway Station. For a full commuter level of service, the 2001 study estimated a range of infrastructure costs of $44 – $68 million. A starter level of service might require

less in the way of capacity improvements, perhaps $19 – $29 million, again subject to discussions with the BNSF and CPR Railways.

5. Minnesota Union Depot will have sufficient space to accommodate a Red Wing service of any type, including, in all likelihood, a small maintenance and storage facility which cold be located there to keep capital investment costs as low as possible.

6. If it were desired to accommodate Red Wing or Duluth passenger service on weekdays in Downtown Minneapolis, it would be necessary to modify the present design of the Minneapolis Intermodal Station. The Northstar weekday service concept will require midday storage of four commuter trainsets in the station, occupying all station tracks and platform faces. The site is very constrained. Any additional trains serving the station on weekdays will require the construction of more tracks and platforms, and vertical circulation to and from street level, or, alternatively, a remote storage yard for Northstar equipment. On weekends, with reduced commuter rail service and no midday storage of equipment Downtown, it should be possible to operate other passenger train routes to Downtown Minneapolis.

7. The lack of passenger train capacity in Downtown Minneapolis is an urgent transportation concern that requires study in the context of region-wide and statewide passenger rail development potential.

8. If it is desired to implement a passenger rail service to Red Wing, the following factors would appear to suggest the desirability of an incremental development strategy based on a weekend-holiday concept as a first step:

    - Ridership potential is not high

    - A limited recreationally-oriented service could be operated with a single, smaller trainset and a two-person crew, keeping operating costs low

    - There would be several different ways to develop subsequent increments in a development strategy

9. A modest, weekend-only recreational service offering two trips per day between Minnesota Union Depot and Red Wing might require an initial capital investment in the range of $31 – $106 million, with an annual operating cost of $3.5 – $4.2 million, minus fairly modest ticket revenue.

10. It is emphasized that the analysis is based on only very limited discussions with the operating railroads. No agreement by them with these conclusions is implied. If there is any interest in pursuing this service, discussions with the BNSF Railway and CPR should be undertaken as early as possible.

Red Wing Inter-city Passenger Service

MAP 1 - DOWNTOWN TO DOWNTOWN CONNECTION
USING BNSF, MIDWAY SUBDIVISION

No.	Date	Revisions	App.

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MINNEAPOLIS TO ST. PAUL
SHUTTLE STUDY

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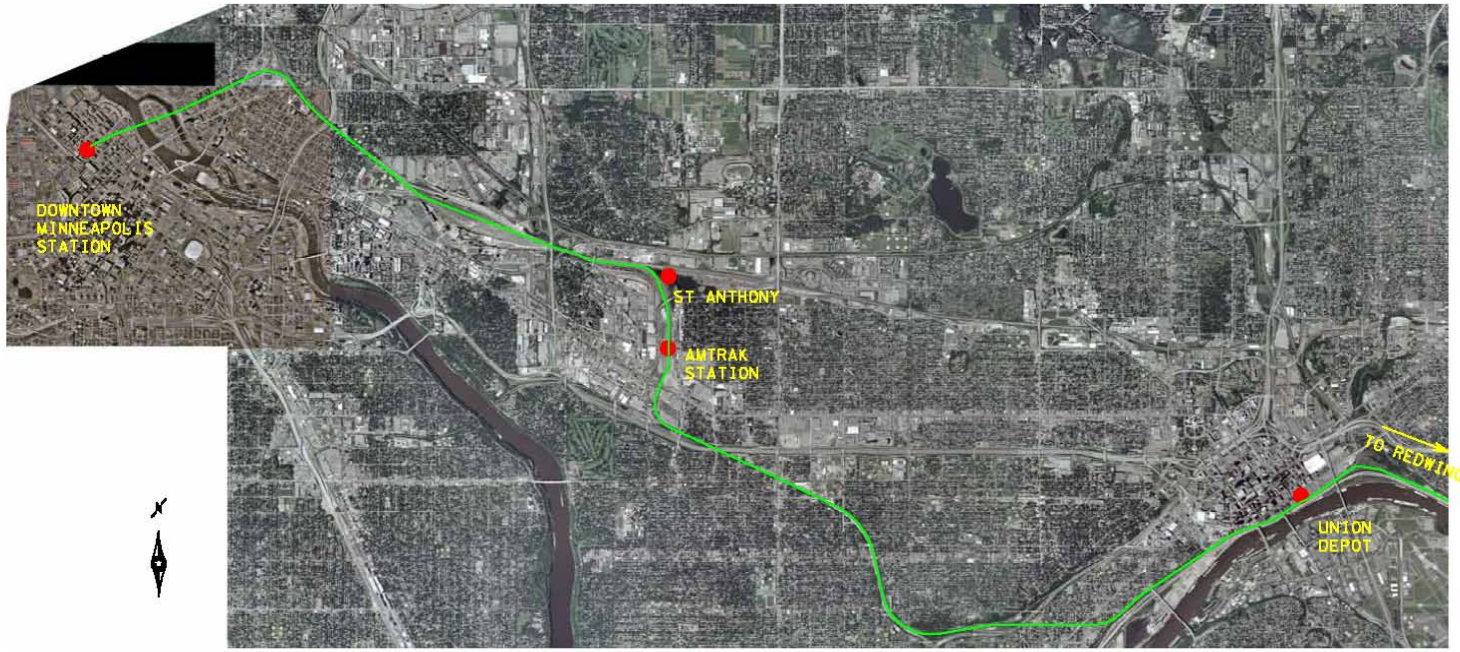
MAP 2 - DOWNTOWN TO DOWNTOWN CONNECTION USING BNSF, MINNESOTA COMMERCIAL AND CPR



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DESIGNED BY:
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LTK LTK Engineering Services

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PLAN, SPECIFICATION OR REPORT WAS PREPARED BY ME OR UNDER MY DIRECT SUPERVISION AND THAT I AM A DULY LICENSED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA.

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