

Michigan Department of Transportation  
Status Update – Commuter Rail  
Public Act 84 of 2015 Section 713  
October 28, 2015

*Sec. 713. On or before November 1, 2015, the department shall report to the state budget director, the house and senate appropriations subcommittees on transportation, and the house and senate fiscal agencies on the status of commuter rail demonstration projects in the state, including the disposition of rail cars leased by the department for commuter rail service.*

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is currently involved in the development of two separate commuter rail demonstration projects – one between Ann Arbor and Detroit and the other between Howell and Ann Arbor. Additionally, MDOT contracted with the Great Lakes Central Railroad Company in 2010 to refurbish and lease passenger rail cars for use on those two proposed services.

**Ann Arbor – Detroit Commuter Rail Service**

Under the direction of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), MDOT continues to work with SEMCOG to introduce commuter rail service between Ann Arbor and Detroit. In order to move forward with this project, FTA determined that MDOT must first conduct a capacity analysis and more detailed environmental work throughout the corridor. Currently, MDOT is working with CN to conduct a capacity analysis between the West Detroit Junction and Pontiac to determine if any infrastructure or improvements are needed to accommodate future rail service on CN's ownership. This capacity analysis is scheduled to be completed by the end of February 2016. MDOT will work with FTA to complete any environmental work necessary to qualify for Federal funding.

**Howell – Ann Arbor Commuter Rail Service**

The Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (AAATA) was awarded a Federal grant to study the feasibility of this proposed service. Originally called "WALLY" (for Washtenaw and Livingston Line) by local grass-roots supporters of the route, the project is now referenced by its official organizers as North-South Commuter Rail. The study includes an in-depth analysis of ridership projections, station locations, capital costs and operating costs as well as an overview of funding and governance options in the event the service is feasible and desirable. Per Federal guidelines, the study includes a robust public engagement process, with multiple meetings at several locations along the proposed corridor. The study is expected to be completed in early 2016.

**Commuter Cars**

In cooperation with SEMCOG and AAATA, MDOT worked with Great Lakes Central Railroad (GLCRR) to refurbish 23 rail cars and had leased the cars in anticipation of the startup of the two commuter rail services outlined above. While all of these cars are completely refurbished, mechanically inspected, tested, and are fully FRA-compliant, MDOT has suspended lease payments as of September 30, 2015, due to the unavailability of commuter lines. We are currently working with GLCRR to finalize details for a contract that: protects the State's investment in the cars by keeping them available for up to five years, agrees on lease rates and terms for future use of the cars, determines a cost sharing arrangement if GLCRR sells the cars, and allows GLCRR to lease the cars on an interim basis. It is anticipated that these negotiations will be completed by early November 2015.