

BRING BACK BLACKHAWK

Citizen's Committee Planning Meeting

Thursday, January 11, 2018, 1:00 P.M.

Owner's Club - Galena Territories

Meeting Summary

In spite of icy conditions, 37 citizens gathered at the Galena Territories Owner's Club to restore passenger rail service from the Tri-State area to Chicago. Registration of attendance and an agenda was available upon entering. Gerald Prodraga served as chair pro tem for the meeting, thanked people for their interest and presence and introduced James Mattingly, Galena Territories CEO. Mattingly welcomed the group, stated support for passenger train service and offered the Galena Territory facility for meetings as helpful.

Participants self-introduced noting their place of residence. There were no further announcements or additions to the agenda. A fact sheet (Attachment 1) on passenger rail offered by David Overby was distributed referencing passenger service curtailed in 1981 with advocacy activities of the past 15 years.

Discussion of goals for passenger service included the number of trains, station stops, schedule, ridership and related topics. Four trains per day, including express and local trains each direction, with station stops, schedule (Attachment 2) and ridership potential by train stops (Attachment 3) presented for review and discussion (See attachments). The goal of extending to Waterloo/Cedar Falls is noted because of significant Chicagoland student enrollment at University of Northern Iowa and Wartburg College in nearby Waverly. Conversation stressed citizen ridership including daily business, commuter, etc., to and from Chicago enhanced by tourism events and recreation, educational field trips, gaming patrons and airport access to Dubuque, Rockford and O'Hare. Discussion raised if cost of infrastructure improvement west of Rockford is known, what is the position of host railroad, possible ticket prices and related matters.

Rural economic development should be stressed as a component for service. Roger Schamberger of Lena Depot Stove Gang gave a project overview in modern replica of the 1873 depot initiative. The depot includes 450 feet of track frontage with support of the village board and local business association. Roger noted several community events like the Fall Fest, Winter Fest, and train show, connections to the Pecatonica River Trail, the NW IL Trail Foundation with bicycle, snow mobile and river activity, the proximity to Lake Carroll, Apple Canyon and Somerset Lakes, along with potential interest of Rafters restaurant in a dinner train. Bike trail connections noting the 5000 annual visitors to Sinsinawa Mound and a "Lead Region Loop" tour of Fr. Samuel Mazzuchelli historic churches designed and parishes formed in the area in design stage.

Funding sources discussed included federal and state government funding, stakeholder support and grants. Sustainability demonstrated is priority in both governmental and grant funding. USDA Rural Development grants possible for flag stops. Suggestion of locating a US location where such train success has occurred and replicate data in modeling the route. Regular ridership is the important factor with Galena and Dubuque being major focus. Tourism input outside Galena and Dubuque important, activities are better draw than events, push the positive train experience as opposed to fighting traffic.

Both the name of the group and name of the train brought considerable discussion. Ride the Rail some preference over Blackhawk for group name. An area or other connection is needed for train name, noting all the area has to offer, e.g., coordinate with Field of Dreams or other known uniqueness. Ride the Rail affiliated with Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque with membership is tax benefit with \$10 individual, \$100 organizational and \$200 business rates.

Dennis Waltman reviewed the Ride the Rail website and the newly released, first quarterly newsletter. Dennis stressed neither website nor a newsletter is not marketing but information and announcements. Longer articles of newsletter linked to website. Other publicity and promotional noted the importance of Chicago area and Amtrak marketing possibilities. Subcommittees needed to develop pro forma statement of cash flows and other related support documents.

A meeting is set for Friday, January 26, at 1P.M., Conference Room, Government Office Building, 200 So. Wyman Street, Rockford, IL with IL State Senator Steve Stadelman and Rick Harnish, Executive Director, Midwest High Speed Rail and Jim Coston of Corridor Capital, Chicago as resource persons. Suggestion that Iowa Pacific Railroad owner/operator Ed Ellis be added as a resource participant.

Meeting adjourned at 2:21 p.m.

Attachment 1

Blackhawk Fact Sheet

(Highlights of Chicago-Rockford-Freeport-Galena-Dubuque passenger train efforts)

1981 - Amtrak's Blackhawk passenger train between Chicago and Dubuque ceased operation.

2003 - A Freeport-Dubuque train was proposed.

2007 - The Blackhawk Area Railroad Coalition (BARC) of representatives from the Rockford-Dubuque segment was formed.

2007 - Amtrak released a formal Feasibility Report on the Chicago-Dubuque route.

2015 - More detailed plans for the Chicago-Rockford segment were developed.

2018 - Proposal: To renew the BARC (or Bring Back Blackhawk) citizens' organization to continue these efforts.

BBC will proceed with developing updated information to include:

Which communities could support a train stop.

How the communities would support a schedule for four trains a day by providing train depots.

How to cooperate with Midwest High Speed Rail, Chicago. MHSR will help BARC develop a route proposal to be included in a state-wide proposal to be offered to the Illinois Legislature.

Related activities:

The Iowa DOT has long-range plans to extend the Blackhawk to Waterloo/Cedar Falls and the University of Northern Iowa campus.

The Chicago-Moline Amtrak project is being developed.

The Iowa DOT has long-range plans to continue passenger train service from Moline to Omaha through Iowa City and Des Moines.

(Contact: ridetheraildbq@gmail.com)

(Visit: <http://members.trainorders.com/dr4/Blackhawk/>)

(Visit: www.ridetherail.org)

**Amtrak-The Blackhawk
Train A-Express
7 days per week**

READ DOWN	(West Bound)	READ UP	(East Bound)
Chicago-Union Station	5:45 AM		9:15 PM -?
*OHARE Airport (Shuttle-Bensenville)			
Elgin			
Rockford			
Freeport			
Galena	9:15 PM		5:45 AM
Dubuque			
Waterloo/Cedar Falls			

**Amtrak-The Blackhawk
Train B-Local
7 days per week**

READ DOWN	(West Bound)	READ UP	(East Bound)
Chicago-Union Station			
*OHARE Airport (Shuttle-Bensenville)			
Elgin			
Marengo			
Rockford			
*Seward			
Freeport			
*Lena			
*Apple River			
*Scales Mound			
*Council Hill Station-?			
Galena	9:15 AM-?		
*East Dubuque			
Dubuque			
*Dyersville			
Waterloo/Cedar Falls			

Bring Back Blackhawk

Projected Ridership

By Train Stop

Commuters (Daily up and back to Chicago)	Education/Social K-12 & Colleges (Commutes & class trips)	Tourism (Events and Recreation)	Casinos	(D
Dubuque	Cedar Falls	Dubuque	Dubuque	
Galena	Dubuque	Galena		
Rockford	Galena	Freeport		
Elgin	Freeport	Rockford		
+Scales Mound	Rockford	+Dyersville, Iowa		
+Apple River	Elgin	+ Lena		
+Lena	+Lena	+Apple River		
	+Warren	+Warren		
	+Apple River	+Scales Mound		
	+Scales Mound	++Darlington, W		
	+East Dubuque	++Shullsburg, W		
	++Darlington, W	++Monroe, W		
	++Monroe, W	+Seward (Pecatonica)		
	++Shullsburg, W			
	+Dyersville, Iowa			
	+Seward (Pecatonica)			

+ Denotes flag stop

++Denotes Wisconsin locations close to Illinois flag or actual stops