

September 2011

Ann Arbor – Detroit Regional Rail Project Update

Summer 2011 marks significant progress!

Summer 2011 has been a busy season for work on the Ann Arbor-Detroit Regional Rail Project. Below are updates on several fronts, as well as some exciting photos of progress being made on the passenger cars and infrastructure.



Cab Cars and Coaches

The Great Lakes Central Railroad is nearing completion on refurbishing nine passenger cars for the Ann Arbor-Detroit service. Two cars are complete and will undergo safety and mechanical testing in October 2011.



SEMCOG is the only organization in Southeast Michigan that brings together all governments to solve regional challenges and enhance the quality of life for the seven-county region's 4.7 million people.

Seats

The crash-worthiness of the seats in the passenger cars was a significant hurdle to overcome. American Seating (based in Grand Rapids, Michigan) designed and is manufacturing the seats. This summer the seats passed a rigorous set of Federal Railroad Administration crash tests. The seats are being delivered and installed in the cars as they are produced.



West Detroit Connection Track Project

This rail infrastructure project will shave ten minutes off the travel time for the Ann Arbor-Detroit commuter rail service. Agreements with the host railroads have either been executed or are in final negotiations. Construction of the West Detroit Connection Track is expected to begin in early 2012.

Environmental Clearance

This summer, the federal lead agency responsibility for the Ann Arbor-Detroit Regional Rail Project was transferred from Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to Federal Transit Administration (FTA). FTA is now reviewing MDOT and SEMCOG's request to initiate the environmental process to clear the project. FTA will determine whether an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required. Once this process is completed, additional investments can be made in the project.

Ann Arbor & Detroit Layover Tracks and Facilities

Work is underway regarding the design of layover tracks and facilities. The host railroads and host communities are a crucial part of the design.



Other Rail Infrastructure Improvements

A capacity analysis has been completed for most of the corridor, including the identification of infrastructure improvements needed to initiate the Ann Arbor-Detroit commuter rail service. The analysis

revealed the need for improvements such as new sidings, switches, and crossovers. Work on these improvements can begin once environmental clearance has been granted.

Stations

Two new stations (Ypsilanti and Airport) together with three existing Amtrak stations (Ann Arbor, Dearborn, Detroit New Center) are proposed for the commuter rail service. SEMCOG and MDOT have been working closely with host communities in the design of these stations. Preliminary design is complete and funding has been identified. Work can begin at these stations once environmental clearance has been obtained.

ADA Compliance

Portable station lifts are being obtained for the five stations to be used by the Ann Arbor-Detroit commuter rail service. In addition, all cab cars and coaches will be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The United States Access Board and an Ann Arbor ADA group have tested and provided feedback regarding the portable station lift and cars at this early point in their refurbishment. A second round of testing and feedback will occur once a passenger car has been completely refurbished.