

Milwaukee Area-Racine-Kenosha Rail Study

Summary and Overview - Fall 2025

Contact Us

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Study Corridor

- **Union Pacific Railroad**
Kenosha Subdivision
between **Milwaukee** and
Kenosha
- **Currently no passenger
service** north of Kenosha,
though Metra connects
Kenosha to Chicago

Past Efforts in the Corridor

- **Feasibility Study (1998)** concluding commuter rail is technically and financially feasible in the corridor
- **Corridor Study (2003)** analyzing commuter rail and bus alternatives
- **Technical Studies (2005-2011)** to complete alternatives analysis, prepare a draft environmental impact statement, and submit a “New Starts” application to the Federal Transit Administration
- **Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (2009-2011)** was created by the State in 2009 to construct, operate, and manage the line and was dissolved in 2011
- **VISION 2050 (updated in June 2024)** continues to identify the corridor as part of a larger commuter rail network
- **WisDOT (2022)** requested entry into FTA New Starts on behalf of a private entity

Study Overview

- **\$5 million** provided by Congress to the City of Racine in 2022
- Building on **extensive previous studies**
- Considering **different approaches** to service design, sponsorship, and local funding
- **Goal** of entering a federal funding program

- Formed in November 2025, the MARK Passenger Rail Commission is guiding ongoing work
- MARK Commission succeeded an advisory Steering Committee that directed initial work assisted by a Technical Working Group
- Regional Planning Commission is also assisting

Primary Objectives

Determine a preferred service design, identify a project sponsor and funding, and develop a federal funding program request

An Opportunity to...

- **Connect** Racine, Kenosha, and other lakeshore communities to a world-class economic region and cultural center
- **Increase** access to jobs and education
- **Grow** jobs, **spur** development, and **lift** property values
- **Attract** new residents and businesses



Enhance Regional
Mobility



Spur Economic
Development



Reduce Traffic
Congestion

Lakeshore Communities Need Better Options for Connecting to Chicago and Milwaukee

Proportion of households without access to a car in the Cities of Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine is **twice the regional average**

The three cities exhibit development patterns that are aligned with the **rail corridor connecting them**

Regional connectivity is critical for promoting **economic growth**, attracting and retaining a **skilled workforce**, promoting **tourism**, and creating a **vibrant business community**

The service would connect employers to **new labor markets**, help attract and grow **new businesses**, help raise family incomes and decrease poverty through improved **access to jobs**, and help catalyze **redevelopment and growth** near stations



MARK Passenger Rail Commission

Role

- Multijurisdictional entity focused on long-term planning, public engagement, and access to state and federal programs
- Meets regularly to guide planning and development of MARK Rail
- Eligible to apply for entry into a federal funding program

Current Members

City of Milwaukee

- Ald. Robert Bauman
- David Misky
- Kevin Muhs

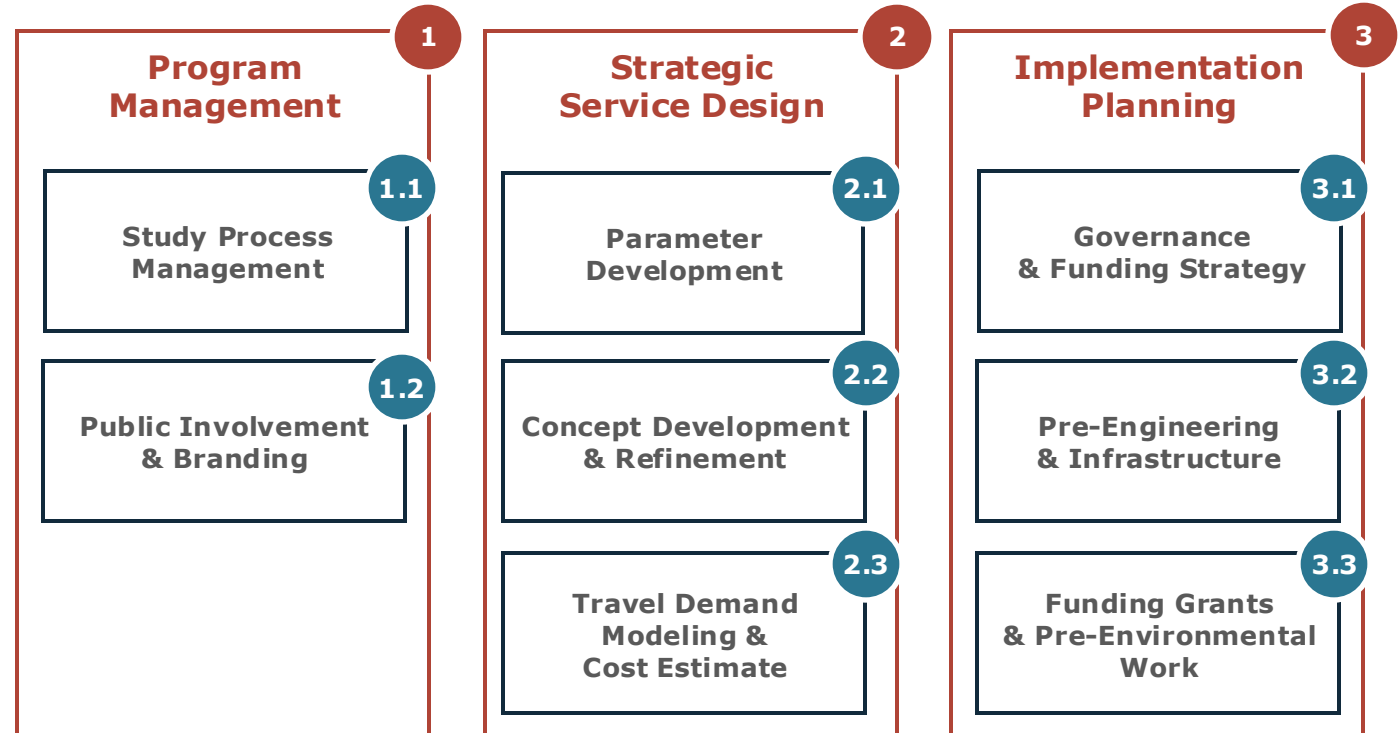
City of Kenosha

- Ald. Eric Haugaard
- Peter Barca
- Joan Wilk

City of Racine

- Mayor Cory Mason
- Common Council President Maurice Horton
- Scott Leonard

Main Study Consultant Team & Scope



TOD Value Capture and Real Estate Market Analysis (Led by AECOM)

Real Estate Market Analysis → Future growth trends, existing development value

Value Capture Methods → New development value and revenue



TOD Capacity Scenarios → New development estimate

Funding Gap Analysis → Value capture revenue comparison with project costs

Susceptibility to Change Analysis → New development potential

Potential Federal Funding Program Options



Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program

- Created by the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to fund planning for intercity passenger rail projects
- \$365M for FY22 Corridor ID planning and development activities (5% of Federal-State Partnership program funding)
- 69 passenger rail corridors were accepted into the Corridor ID Program (4 WisDOT Corridor ID projects)
- Next funding opportunity expected in early 2026



Federal Transit
Administration

Capital Investment Grant (CIG) Program (New Starts)

- Discretionary program that funds fixed-guideway investments, including new/expanded commuter rail
- Maximum annual appropriations for CIG is \$4.6B
- FTA requested \$3.97B for FY2025 in total appropriations (\$3.21B for New Starts)
- Requests to enter the program are reviewed on an ongoing basis

Pursuing FRA Corridor ID Program

<https://railroads.dot.gov/corridor-ID-program>

Why pursue Corridor ID?

- Process involves developing a Service Development Plan, which closely aligns with the current study
- Opportunity to advance MARK Rail further with federal investment throughout (in FTA New Starts, costs eligible for federal funding are not reimbursed until the end of the process)
- Stronger stakeholder support for the project as an intercity rail project
- Well-defined, step-by-step process allows time to build capacity and support, and secure non-federal funding
- FRA staff work closely with project sponsors throughout process
- Schedule allows time to prepare highly competitive Corridor ID application (next funding opportunity anticipated early 2026)



Current Study Progress – Fall 2025

- To support a Corridor ID application and guide the service development process, the Cities of Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha created the MARK Passenger Rail Commission in November 2025
- Important stakeholder organizations, such as host railroads and area transportation agencies, have been engaged and introductory meetings have been held
- Initial runtime and schedule analyses have been conducted to explore potential service patterns and travel times on MARK Rail
- Preliminary infrastructure assessment is underway, which will help identify what track and infrastructure upgrades will be needed to implement passenger service
- Analysis to determine the potential for transit-oriented development (TOD) value capture to contribute to funding MARK Rail is ongoing

Next Steps

- MARK Passenger Rail Commission initiates meetings to advance and guide MARK Rail going forward
- Once the Corridor ID funding opportunity is announced (~early 2026), the MARK Commission will consider submitting an application to enter the program
- If accepted into the Corridor ID program, the MARK Commission will begin key activities for a Service Development Plan as appropriate, including public and stakeholder engagement, service and station planning, and conceptual and early engineering

