

**To: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL.**

**FROM: Dave Maroney, Director of Economic Development and Planning.**

**SUBJECT: Zip Rail.**

**DATE: August 14, 2014.**

**BACKGROUND.**

The accompanying *Newsletter (Summer 2014)* provides a brief update concerning the proposed Zip Rail project. On August 13<sup>th</sup> the Economic Development Authority discussed Zip Rail and authorized me to ask MnDOT to define how the project is expected to benefit the planning and development interests of Cannon Falls. The City Council may wish to seek the same information on behalf of the community?

**REQUESTED COUNCIL ACTION.**

With the consent of the City Council, Staff will request MnDOT representatives to document how Zip Rail might benefit and/or negatively impact Cannon Falls should the project be constructed in or near the community.

## PROJECT UPDATE

### NUMBER OF POSSIBLE ROUTES NARROWED

Since the Open Houses held last summer 2013, Zip Rail project staff have been working to analyze and evaluate the 1,200 possible route combinations for the high-speed passenger rail connection between Rochester and the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. From the feedback provided at last year's Open Houses and from ongoing discussions with corridor stakeholders, the number of possible route combinations have been narrowed down to eight (see Figures 1 and 2). To assess the routes, the project area was broken up into two areas: north of the City of Coates and south of the City of Coates. The potential route segments for the northern segment include two corridors between MSP Airport and Coates; and three corridors between St. Paul's Union Depot and Coates. One of the corridors connects to both destinations. For the southern segment, two corridors were identified, following Highway 52 and Highway 56, from Coates to Rochester.

### HOW ARE ROUTES EVALUATED?

The initial evaluation of possible Zip Rail routes, known as Level 1 Screening, included the preliminary travel time from one end of the corridor to the other, redundancy of service with existing bus and other transit services, impacts to the natural environment, and impacts to the built environment. Considerations were also based on input received from public agencies and other stakeholders.

Currently, the remaining eight routes are being analyzed using Level 2 Screening evaluation criteria. The evaluation criteria include preliminary travel time from end to end, top speed, ridership estimates, consistency with local planning efforts in each city, connectivity with existing street grids and infrastructure, and the social, economic and environmental impacts of each alternative.

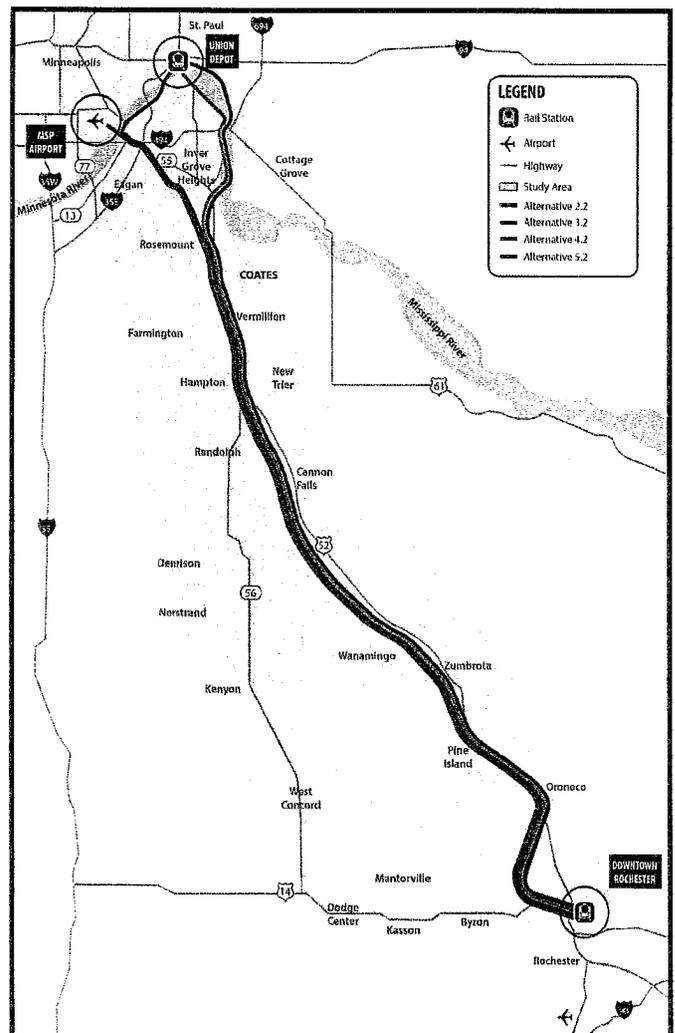


Figure 1: Alternatives in the Highway 52 corridor