

## 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.

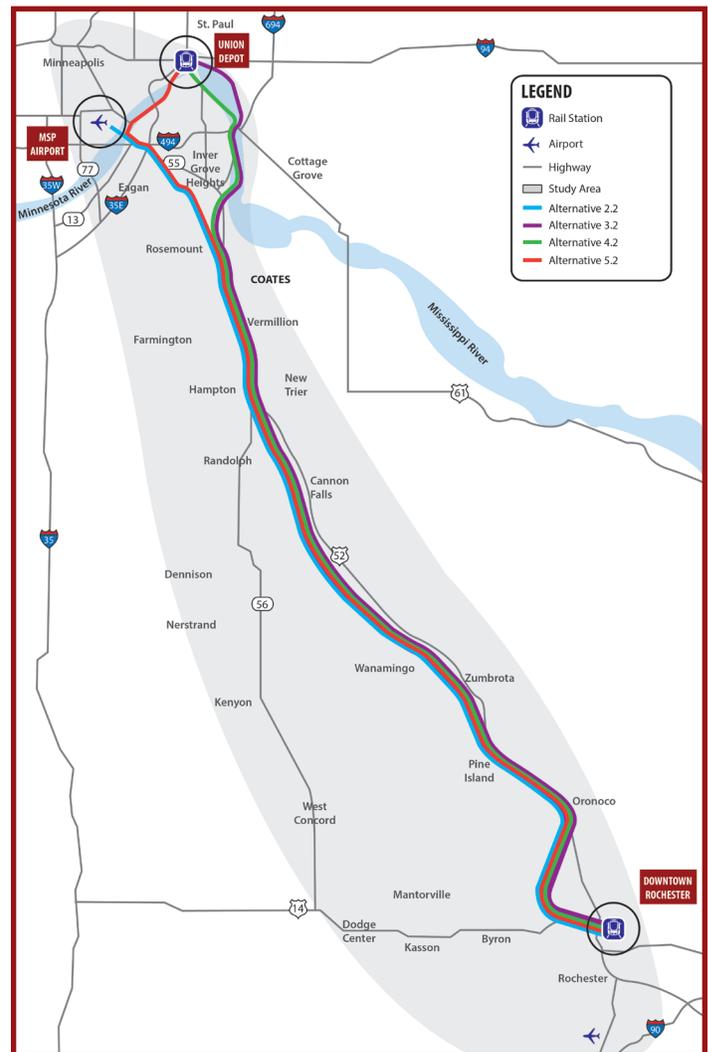


Figure 1: Alternatives in the Highway 52 corridor

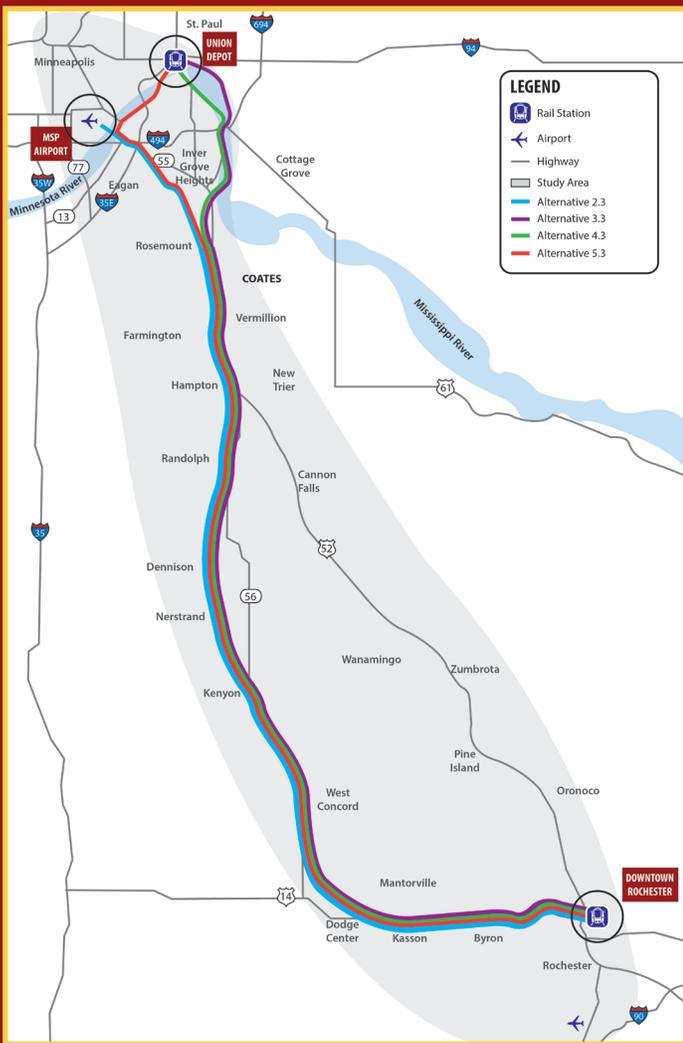


Figure 2: Alternatives in the Highway 56 corridor

## WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

A State Scoping Booklet and Draft Scoping Decision Document has been completed as part of the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement process. The Scoping documents are available at [www.goziprail.org](http://www.goziprail.org). Key decisions that will be made in the Tier 1 EIS include the location of primary terminal points and station locations, the locations of Mississippi and Minnesota River crossings, and the corridor alignments north and south of Coates.

Zip Rail project staff are currently in the process of working with local and regional stakeholders to communicate updated project information. Input from public stakeholders will ensure that the best and most viable alternatives have been identified. Public meetings are scheduled this summer 2014 at the following locations from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.:

Rochester Community & Technical College  
 Tuesday, July 29, 2014  
 1926 College View Road East, Rochester

Inver Grove Community Center  
 Wednesday, July 30, 2014  
 8055 Barbara Ave, Inver Grove Heights

Kenyon-Wanamingo High School  
 Thursday, July 31, 2014  
 400 6th Street, Kenyon

For details on the public meetings: [www.goziprail.org](http://www.goziprail.org)

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Rochester-Twin Cities Passenger Rail Corridor (Zip Rail) is an approximately 100-mile corridor between Rochester and the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan Area (Twin Cities) that includes the Counties of Dakota, Dodge, Goodhue, Hennepin, Olmsted, Ramsey and Rice. The project is led by the Minnesota Department of Transportation in partnership with the Olmsted County Regional Railroad Authority and the Federal Railroad Administration.

The purpose of the Zip Rail project is to provide a convenient, cost effective, reliable and safe passenger rail transportation alternative that will meet forecasted population and economic growth, mobility demands in the corridor, and connect intercity economic centers.

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

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