



Anitra Schulte
312-285-6875
Anitra@strategy.ink

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 10, 2016

Improved Service on Horizon for Train Passengers between Chicago and Milwaukee
Hiawatha Service Improvements Move Closer to Execution

CHICAGO – Passengers who depend on Amtrak’s increasingly busy Chicago-Milwaukee Hiawatha Service rail line are one step closer to increased intercity service, as Chicago rail and transit firm Quandel Consultants completes impact studies for client Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Quandel Consultants has completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) documenting the environmental impacts of increased Hiawatha Service and new railroad infrastructure needed to support three additional daily round trips between Chicago and Milwaukee. The number of daily round trips is proposed to increase from seven to 10. New infrastructure would include main tracks, siding tracks and train signals.

The EA and associated Service Development Plan are sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) in partnership with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). WisDOT and IDOT have jointly contracted with Amtrak to operate the Hiawatha Service since 1989.

Ridership on the Hiawatha Service has increased significantly in the past 15 years. Between 2001 and 2013, ridership nearly doubled, growing an average of six percent each year.¹ For several years, a number of peak-period trains have operated with few or no vacant seats.

Quandel Consultants Spearheads EA and Service Development Plan

¹ Amtrak Hiawatha Service Ridership data, WisDOT

WisDOT contracted with Quandel Consultants to prepare the Hiawatha Service EA and Service Development Plan. Consulting firm Quandel Consultants engineers solutions for rail systems across the U.S.

“Assessment of the Hiawatha Service comes at a critical time,” said Charlie Quandel, P.E., Managing Member and CEO of Quandel Consultants, and Chicago-Milwaukee Intercity Passenger Rail Project Principal.

“As highway congestion grows between Chicago and Milwaukee, business and non-business travelers will seek alternative modes of transportation to travel between these cities,” Quandel said. “Providing mobility and transportation choice is key to maintaining a robust transportation corridor. Quandel Consultants’ completion of the Environmental Assessment and Service Development Plan is the first step in achieving this goal.”

Quandel Consultants’ initial work in the Chicago-Milwaukee corridor was its role as Program Manager of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI). The MWRRI studied the feasibility of a Midwest intercity rail network using Chicago as a hub. Enhanced Hiawatha Service between Chicago and Milwaukee was part of the MWRRI study.

Collaborative Project Management Approach

Quandel Consultants brought its extensive knowledge of the Chicago-Milwaukee rail corridor and a long history in rail engineering and service development planning to the project. The firm also is known nationally for its collaborative project management style.

Since the project began in 2012, Quandel Consultants has led working group meetings with WisDOT, IDOT, Amtrak, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Canadian Pacific, Union Pacific and Metra, as well as numerous additional state and local agencies.

At these meetings, project stakeholders discussed existing and future constraints on the route, as well as infrastructure needed to mitigate the future constraints of adding three Hiawatha Service round trips per day. These meetings helped define the infrastructure improvements needed to implement the service.

Quandel’s Project Manager for the project, Melanie K. Johnson, P.E., emphasizes that collaboration played an essential role in moving the project forward. “The project team worked very closely with our FRA partners to identify a methodology for defining and evaluating the range of route, service, investment and design alternatives, which is a key component of an EA. Working together to organize and explain the hierarchy of alternatives in a way that would make sense to the public was crucial.”

WisDOT and IDOT continue to evaluate federal funding options, as they become available, to construct the new railroad infrastructure. For a project to be eligible for federal funding, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requires that a Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan be prepared, which consists of a National Environmental Policy Act

(NEPA) document such as an EA, and a Service Development Plan. The Service Development Plan defines the service improvements and the operational and financial aspects of the proposed passenger rail service.

The increased demand for Hiawatha Service prompted WisDOT to engage in the federal NEPA process in order to improve the service.

The Draft EA has been completed with results currently available for public comment. Public involvement meetings are scheduled to present the project and solicit feedback.

About Quandel Consultants, LLC

Quandel Consultants, LLC, has provided engineering solutions for the railroad and rail transit industry for four decades. Services provided by Quandel Consultants include program management, engineering, planning, operations analysis and construction management. Quandel Consultants has completed work for Departments of Transportation across the U.S., including Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri and Colorado. The staff collaborates with Class 1 freight railroads, Metra and Amtrak, as well as railroad personnel. Chicago-based Quandel Consultants has offices in Ann Arbor and Kalamazoo, Mich., and Cleveland, Ohio.