

Environment Commission Supports Passenger Rail

Citing environmental benefits, the Environmental Protection Commission unanimously passed a resolution supporting the expansion of passenger rail service to several of Iowa's largest cities.

Information from the British government estimates that emissions by passenger mile for rail are only 45% as much as emissions from cars and trucks, and only 27% as much as emissions from air travel on short routes such as Des Moines to Chicago. Information also shows that there is

potential for electric rail to operate with zero carbon emissions if it is powered by renewable energy. This type of passenger rail could increase the market for Iowa-manufactured renewable energy.

Currently, southern Iowa is served by two passenger trains, but recent state and federal legislation is aimed at expanding to other areas in Iowa. The Iowa Department of Transportation will be able to compete for federal passenger rail funds with a \$3 million

appropriation in House File 822.

Governor Culver also signed Senate File 151, which changes the definition of passenger rail to include both short and long commutes, and encourages the Department of Transportation to engage in contracts that will bring more passenger rail to Iowa. There are recent proposals to bring service to Dubuque, the Quad Cities, and Iowa City from Chicago. Long-term plans involve service to Des Moines and West Des Moines.