**Kankakee County Commuter Rail Service Extension**

**Kankakee and Will Counties, IL**

**Background**
Chicago’s commuter rail agency, Metra, provides service from downtown Chicago to the suburbs over 11 operating districts, with Indiana operating a 12th line that runs on Metra tracks into Chicago. Service to the south suburbs is on the Metra Electric District (MED), which are Metra’s only electrically powered lines. It was originally built by the Illinois Central Railroad and acquired by Metra in May 1987. The adjacent freight railroad, which continues south to New Orleans, is now the CN Railway.

The end-of-line for MED is Governor’s State University (GSU) in University Park, 31-½ miles south of the Chicago Loop. A new major regional South Suburban Airport (SSA) is planned five miles south of GSU adjacent to the CN corridor, and the whole region south to the City of Kankakee (24 miles south of GSU) is growing rapidly. The last 12 miles, however are outside Metra’s legislated 6-county region.

**Parsons Brinckerhoff Role**

In February 2004 Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB) was hired by Kankakee County to do a 12-month study of the feasibility of providing commuter rail service to the City of Kankakee. The oversight group for the study is the Commuter Rail Task Force, consisting of members from Aroma Park, Bourbonnais, Bradley, IDOT, Kankakee, Kankakee County, Manteno, Monee, Peotone and Will County. It will review the engineering and planning aspects of various scenarios for linking into the existing Metra commuter rail system.

**Project Elements**

The study will proceed through the following tasks:

- Documentation of existing conditions
- Assessment of future plans
- Conceptual engineering of potential improvements
- Estimation of potential ridership
- Evaluation of financial feasibility
- Assessment of institutional issues

Some of the more challenging issues to be addressed by the study include:

- Coordination with proposed, extended Metra service and Midwest high speed rail service on or adjacent to the new SSA and the city of Kankakee
- Evaluating and proposing solutions to the institutional issues associated with operations outside the legislated Metra region
- Assessment of diesel-electric, diesel multiple unit (DMU), electric multiple unit (EMU), or even dual-mode motive power
- Consideration of cross-platform transfers to accommodate diesels in the suburbs and electric

- Coordination with a new major MED yard planned south of University Park
- Consideration of various end-of-line stations in the Loop
- Assessment of alternative routes and Metra Lines between Kankakee and Chicago
- Evaluation of various station sites for each municipality along the line
- Potential utilization of existing station structures and the current Amtrak station in Kankakee.

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