
Rail expansion needs sponsors for the next step

The next step in the proposed expansion of rail service from Kenosha to Milwaukee is a study that's expected to cost about \$4 million. The federal government will pick up most of the cost, about \$3.2 million. The state government has approved \$400,000. That leaves \$400,000 unaccounted for, and local government leaders are balking, so far, at picking up the check.

It's hard to blame them. All of them have tight budgets. Some of them, including Kenosha County Executive Allan Kehl, believe there may be other sources of funding, such as private contributions, that can be used so the costs of the study don't end up on property tax bills.

Pursuing private funds may prove fruitful. A number of business organizations should foresee significant benefits from this rail service expansion. It wouldn't be charity for them to chip in for this study; it would be an investment in something that should be good for business.

It's important, however, that the study proceed. Racine Mayor Gary Becker had the right idea about the rail expansion when he said, "The benefits are huge for Racine and for the whole Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee-Chicago region. It's an investment we would be foolish not to make."

Mayor Becker has already budgeted money for what could be expected to be the city of Racine's share of the costs. So far, other mayors and county execs are still looking elsewhere for their shares.

That's fine as long as they eventually find the money somewhere. To quote Becker again: "To stop this project for that amount of money would be ridiculous."