

# Oswego OKs resolution urging Metra service extension

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By ERIKA WURST - news@KendallCountyNow.com

Oswego Village Board trustees have not given up hope that one day residents will be able to ride the Metra commuter rail from Kendall County all the way into the city of Chicago.

On Tuesday, trustees unanimously agreed to pass a resolution urging the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) to consider the project one of high priority as it puts together its "ON TO 2050" regional comprehensive plan.

Village staff called the undertaking a "tall hill to climb," but have hopes that by making their voices heard, the project will come to fruition.

Extending Metra service from Aurora to Kendall County was recommended in CMAP's GO TO 2040 regional plan as a "fiscally-unconstrained project." It remains on CMAP's low-priority list. That said, studies performed in 2001 and 2002 concluded that extending Metra service along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway mainline tracks from downtown Aurora to Kendall County is feasible.

As a result, the U.S. Congress reserved \$7.5 million in funding to study the extension. The study is underway and is expected to be completed in 2019. These studies will include the design of the extension and station sites and will include cost estimates and preliminary financing strategies.

It is the village's hope that the completion of this study will bump the Oswego Metra project into a higher tier of importance on CMAP's regional plan.

Since the 2001-02 studies were performed, Kendall County's population has more than doubled to approximately 135,000 residents, making it the fastest-growing area in Illinois and one of the fastest-growing regions in the country. CMAP estimates that Kendall County's population will nearly double again by the year 2040, and the demand for public transit will continue to grow as a result.

Knowing this, the village of Oswego acquired 20 acres of property on the north and south sides of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe for a future Metra station site, and in the 2015 Comprehensive Village Plan, trustees designated complementary land uses surrounding the site such as high-density multi-family residential, commercial and mixed uses.

In their resolution supporting the extension of Metra service into Kendall County, trustees highlighted some of the benefits. They said the rail extension would relieve traffic congestion, promote greater mobility, create more livable communities, stimulate economic activity in the region, provide access to jobs inside and outside of Kendall County, and provide an environmentally conscious form of transportation for Kendall County. They urged CMAP to include the extension as a high priority on its ON TO 2050 plan.

Public comment is open until Aug. 15, and other Kendall County towns, cities and villages are urged to make their voices heard. Yorkville, Plano and Sandwich are each expected to pass their own resolutions supporting the project.

