

Resolution supporting the Solutionary Rail Electrification Proposal and Northern Corridor Demonstration.

## RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the City of La Crosse adopted its *Strategic Plan for Sustainability* in 2009 which includes a goal to enhance the community's transportation system, including supporting rail initiatives through La Crosse; and goals to reduce fossil fuel consumption and use renewable fuel sources; and

WHEREAS, rail electrification supports La Crosse's goal to use 100% renewable energy by 2050, and could economically benefit local rail employees, travelers, and businesses supported by rail freight; and

WHEREAS, the coal and oil rail shipping boom of recent years has pushed farm products off the rails and subjected rail workers to schedules that cause dangerous fatigue, and the more recent bust has placed many rail workers on furlough, underscoring the pitfalls of over reliance on one or two bulk commodities; and

WHEREAS, coal and oil create climate disrupting carbon pollution and must be phased out, underscoring the need for new rail markets; and

WHEREAS, oil train derailments and spills have occurred nearby on lines that pass through La Crosse – a spill by Winona in 2014, derailment and fire by Galena, IL in 2015, and derailment and spill by Watertown, WI in 2015 – underscoring the need for railroads to have an alternative to the bulk freight on which they have relied since public highway and aviation subsidies eroded their mixed freight and passenger markets; and

WHEREAS, rail, unique among long-distance heavy transportation modes, can also replace its own oil fuel supply with electricity that can come from increasingly competitive renewable sources; and

WHEREAS, rail line electrification can also be leveraged to build transmission lines that make now remote sun and wind energy resources available in metropolitan markets; and

WHEREAS, the Solutionary Rail strategy for rail electrification and modernization:

- Enables increased speeds and schedule reliability which allow railroads to reclaim mixed freight and passenger markets, providing options to dangerous freight and boom-and-bust cycles,
- Reduces reliance on fossil fuel shipments, and reduces fossil fuel use by shifting freight and passengers significantly to transport mode powered by a renewable electricity,
- Opens the way to reduce fossil-based electricity by substantially increasing renewable energy transmission and use,
- Creates a public financing tool, the Steel Interstate Development Authority, that overcomes capitalization barriers to U.S. rail electrification, and

- Creates a public-private partnership with railroads that can be the basis for improved working conditions for rail workers and renegotiation of track easements across tribal lands; and

WHEREAS, Solutionary Rail's proposal to electrify primary lines of the Northern Corridor from Seattle to Chicago – including the BNSF Northern Transcon and SOO Line / Canadian Pacific that pass through La Crosse – would jumpstart U.S. rail electrification by demonstrating success; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Common Council of the City of La Crosse calls on Wisconsin's Governor Tony Evers as well as BNSF, the major railroad serving the corridor, and its owner, Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway, to begin discussions on a Northern Corridor electrification, and individually and jointly initiate feasibility studies of this highly promising concept.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Common Council respectfully requests a response from the Governor's office and BNSF on the progress of this feasibility study as regular updates are available.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning & Development Department and Clerk's Department are hereby authorized to effectuate this resolution.