

# Feds fund study of Rockford-Chicago rail line

By OWEN R. BRUGH  
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ROCKFORD – Belvidere will receive \$200,000 from the federal government to study rail options between the city and Chicago via Huntley, Marengo, Gilberts and Elgin.

The money was secured by U.S. Rep. Don Manzullo, R-Ill., to study whether such a line is feasible. The time is right to study the option, Manzullo said.

“This funding will tell us exactly what we can do, how we can do it and what it would cost,” he said.

The most obvious option is extending Metra to north central Illinois. Rockford and Belvidere officials previously have spoken about extending service from Elgin to Rockford through northern Kane and southern McHenry counties.

“The idea of extending Chicago’s passenger rail service to Belvidere and Rockford has become a viable consideration,” Manzullo said.



**Manzullo**

Other options also exist. These include some type of private service and a public system that would link to the end of the Elgin line.

That is good, Metra spokesman Tom Miller said, because Metra is occupied right now planning expansions to Elburn, Chicago’s far south suburbs and along the North Central Line to Antioch, in addition to a new line connecting Joliet to Schaumburg via Hoffman Estates.

“We’re pretty busy right now with what we have going on,” Miller said.

Metra plans to eventually expand

service to Huntley, but it could be 10 years before the commuter rail service rolls into town.

In addition, Metra is limited by state law to serving Cook, Will, DuPage, McHenry, Kane and Lake counties.

State law would need to change, Miller said, and Boone and Winnebago counties would need to accept the 0.25 percent sales tax assessed by the Regional Transportation Authority, Metra’s parent agency.

“We would want to wait until they finish their studies before we even considered it,” Miller said of an expansion.