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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** Here today. I'd like to thank everybody for coming out for this, event. I was, fortunate enough to talk to, TV station yesterday about this. The city of Portage is very excited about this. Personally, I love riding trains. Like I said yesterday, there's not a better way to travel than on a train. Because I what you can do is just sit back and enjoy the ride. You get to see, countryside that you've never seen before. So it's a great way to see, different parts of, Wisconsin that, or other states that you've never seen before. So, it's always a great event. I'd like to recognize, quite a few different people that are here today. And the mayor of Madison saw Gerald come.

[00:00:50] **Speaker 2** Yeah, you got it right.

[00:00:51] **Speaker 1** There we go. And, Wisconsin D.O.T. secretary Craig Thompson.

[00:00:57] **Speaker 2** He's on the train.

[00:00:58] **Speaker 1** Yep. Assistant secretary John Nielsen. Wisconsin D.O.T. passenger rail program manager. Richard cancer, Amtrak manager and government affairs. Is all of this. I told you, I.

[00:01:18] **Speaker 3** Got it right. And.

[00:01:22] **Speaker 1** Wisconsin D.O.T. secretary Christina Boardman, state representative. They've gone to the.

[00:01:30] **Unidentified** And our state senator, Joanne. We'd like to be first year at the club.

[00:01:44] **Speaker 4** Good afternoon everyone. I'm going to speak now. We have a train coming. Well, my name is Ishmael Cueva. I am the government affairs manager for West. I am based out of Chicago. Good morning. Good afternoon. I'm psych ward chairman Tony Kushner and our president, Roger Harris, and the more than 21,000 Amtrak people nationwide. I'm aware of our over 100 colleagues are working together throughout Michigan. I'm sorry. Wisconsin. Minnesota and Illinois to put this all together. So I'm really happy to be part of that group. That number will continue to grow as we inaugurate this borealis service today. First, we want to thank the state of Wisconsin, our longtime partner, for leading this effort to completion. Wisconsin. Together with Minnesota and Illinois, have come together to fund the borealis, Amtrak's 29th short distance state supported route. This will not have happened without the steady leadership of Governor Evers, Wisconsin Department of Transportation Secretary Thompson, and we also help them, too. Happy to welcome our neighbor Minnesota, as the newest state in the Amtrak family, a part of our business that account for half of the ridership and almost all of our growth. We're also here celebrating this new service, thanks to the strong leadership and support over the year from the city of Portage, led by the mayor, Economic Development Director Steve Selby, Chamber of Commerce President Marianne Hansen. And I also want to give a special shout out to other folks, as well, under the leadership of Amit Bose, the FIA now have the ability to lead and, the way to add new and improve existing services, because this administration and Congress have created the biggest passenger rail program in history. Amtrak contributed 5 million to the Twin Cities, Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Chicago inner City passenger rail capital project to help pay for the railroad improvements coming to this route to make our Amtrak and freight trains more reliable. I know this special mention is a railroad that owns, the route between Saint Paul and Chicago and controls almost all of it Canadian Pacific, Kansas City, CP, KC, the top tier railroad when it comes to hosting the Amtrak trains. Thanks to an agreement Amtrak made with KC. We can start the service now and make improvements going forward to make both the new borealis and the historic Empire Buhler trains better and better. These trains here in the Midwest and across the 46 states connect communities such as Portage. And this is at the heart of what we're doing. Why Congress created Amtrak 53 years ago. For Portage. This means new service, more schedule options, and convenient one seat ride, trips to the Twin Cities, Chicago and Milwaukee, and connection to the national Amtrak network via Chicago and also more. Visit local businesses like the one where I had lunch at our pitstop where I had a really good burger. Whether is Amtrak passenger trains or freight trains, rail can do more to prevent gridlock and improve supply chains. More highway lanes won't get the job done, but passenger train will. We're in the new era of rail, with leaders such as those you've heard from today, and we'll hear from later on. So there's more or there's more that we can doing here in Wisconsin, across the Amtrak Midwest Network and the country. There's a success story. What we promised in 22, or we're making it reality today in 2024. And we look forward to doing these events, in the in the upcoming months and upcoming years. And then look to our mayor here from Madison. Thank you for being here. And let's get ready to ride borealis and other Amtrak trains.

[00:05:21] **Speaker 3** Thank you. Thank you.

[00:05:25] **Unidentified** Next, we'd like to have.

[00:05:28] **Speaker 1** Wisconsin D.O.T. Deputy Secretary Christina Boardman. Thank you very much.

[00:05:39] **Speaker 2** Hi. Thank you so much to the community at Portage for organizing this amazing event today. We are so excited to sit with you to celebrate such great news for rail communities across Wisconsin. I just came from Milwaukee, where we mark the arrival of the borealis train as it rolled from into Wisconsin from Chicago for the first time this afternoon. And here in Portage, your transportation needs are different than in our bigger cities. But no matter the size of the community, reliable passenger rail is an important resource for many. It's been 22 years since we've expanded passenger rail in Wisconsin, and this long awaited train will provide more convenience and flexibility for commuters, families, students and tourists to get where they need to go. We know that some of our smaller communities have fewer options to get around, and are less likely to have the infrastructure for multi-modal services. That's why the state invests in passenger rail to help our private companies reach communities like Portage. So you've all been vocal, supportive supporters of borealis for years now because your community serves as a critical resource and a connection point for the central Wisconsin residents. You're right in the center of the line and can get to Minnesota, Illinois in just a few hours. Plus, just a few steps away from Wisconsin Dells. Portage is a gateway for many tourists from the States. We hope that this new rail service will bring more visitors to your community, and give your economy and small businesses a boost, just in time for the summer travel season. So thank you so much for being an advocate to help us make this happen. We couldn't have accomplished it without our local partners, and we hope this added service helps you feel more and connected to the rest of the state and the region. We also need to thank Amtrak, CPC, Minnesota, Illinois and Wisconsin D.O.T. staff and our federal and local partners who worked tirelessly to develop and implement plans for the new service. In addition to funding amongst these three states, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law discretionary grants helped make borealis a reality. The rail line needed infrastructure improvements to support long term growth of passenger rail in this corridor, and this federal funding was allowing us to look ahead to the future passenger rail in the system in Wisconsin. We're currently studying other potential opportunities to add rail services in different parts of the state. We want to bring more options to people in green Bay, Eau Claire and Madison, and passenger rail is so critical because it links our rural communities with popular urban cities in the region. And that's why we're committed to continuing to invest in resources to advance passenger rail in Wisconsin. So we must prioritize sustainable transportation options to meet the needs of all of our residents and visitors. So thanks so much for everyone being here today. And I'd like to turn it over to Senator Baldwin. Thank you.

[00:08:36] **Speaker 5** Well, thank you very much for for being here. This is very exciting. Across the 14 Senate districts. Actually, this stops in, Wisconsin, Wisconsin Dells, here in Portage, and then on to Columbus. And when you get off the train at Columbus, make sure you go over to Julie's Java house for a coffee. She's very excited to have, this extra, extra train coming through right now. My first train ride was actually a long time ago as a Girl Scout. We got on the train about Waukee and went up to the Dells. For a field trip. So this is very exciting that more people have that opportunity. So with that, the train is moving again, so we'll we'll get back to the air. Thank you all for being here.

[00:09:25] **Speaker 3** Yeah. Oh my.

[00:09:27] **Speaker 1** Gosh. Yeah. Oh, she comes to all of our community events. She's a big supporter of our community. And I'd like to thank her for coming today to show her support for this. Is, the state representative, did consider.

[00:09:45] **Speaker 3** Dave Considine, are you here? I don't see em.

[00:09:52] **Speaker 1** And I guess we'll. And it's up here with the river.

[00:09:58] **Speaker 3** Yeah. Well. What do you think? Should we cut it? Let's wait. Perhaps it would be more exciting to cut it when the people on the train are here. Yeah. Great.

[00:10:15] **Unidentified** What are we waiting?