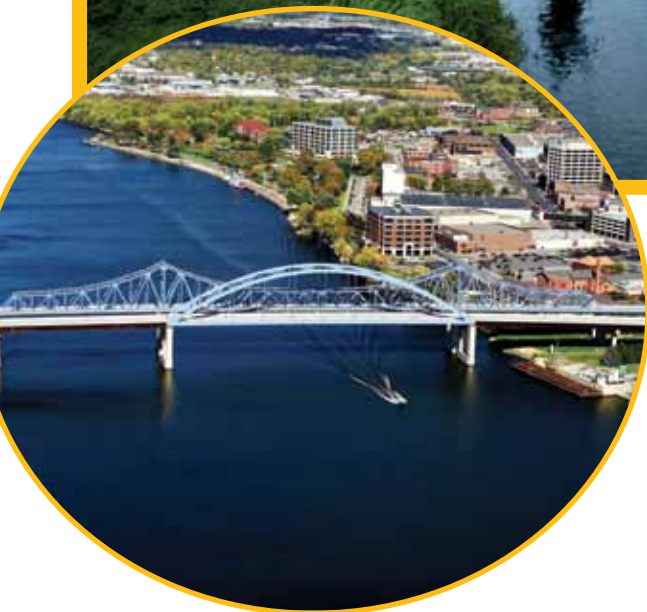
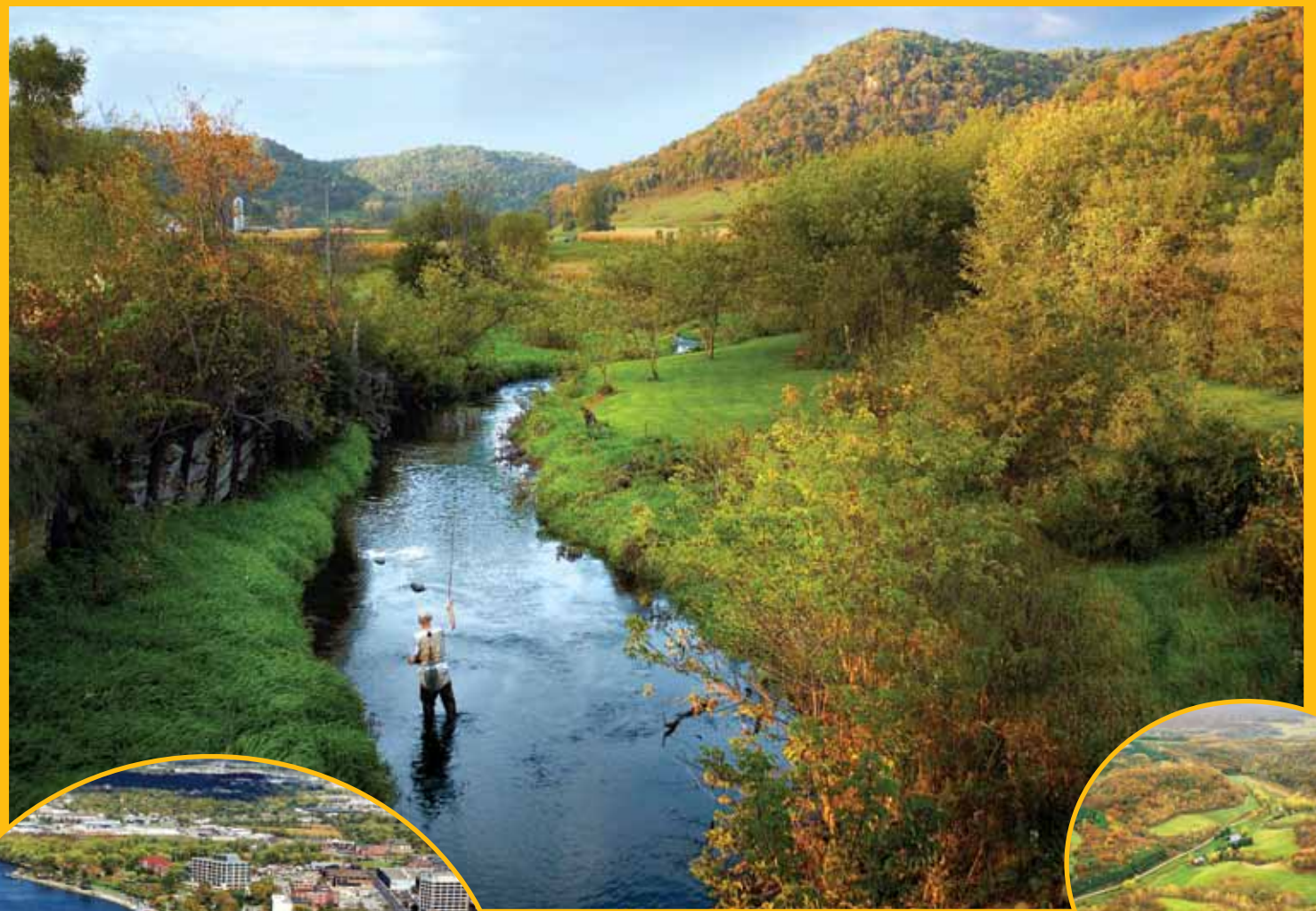




# Oktoberfest in the Capitol

*La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce  
La Crosse Area Convention & Visitors Bureau  
La Crosse Area Development Corporation*

712 Main Street • La Crosse, WI 54601 • (608)784-4880



## La Crosse Area Oktoberfest in the Capitol 2011



## Thank you!

The citizens, business and community leaders of the Greater La Crosse Area wish to take this opportunity to thank the dedicated public servants of Wisconsin government. Your hard work and commitment do not go unnoticed. You have our sincere appreciation for the jobs you do in the legislature, executive and judiciary branches and in every agency of state government. Wisconsin has long been the home of good and progressive government. We are proud of that tradition. We are proud of the work you do for the people of this great state.

# La Crosse Area Quick Facts

## La Crosse named to list of “Best Places to Live 2009”

– US News & World Report

Located in Western Wisconsin along the Mississippi River, the La Crosse Area is ideally located for business and industry, serving as the center of the tri-state area (WI, MN and IA). The La Crosse Area is linked to the Upper Midwest and the rest of the country by Interstate 90, the Canadian Pacific and Burlington Northern Railroads, the Mississippi River Navigational System, and air service via American and Delta Airlines at the La Crosse Municipal Airport. Nearly 4 million people live within 150 miles of La Crosse including the major urban areas of Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota and Madison, Wisconsin.

## Population

**La Crosse MSA:** 133,655 (2010 Census)

**La Crosse County:** 114,638 (2010 Census)

## Communities

### Cities

La Crosse  
Onalaska  
La Crescent, MN

### Villages

Bangor  
Holmen  
Rockland  
West Salem

## Labor Force

**La Crosse MSA Labor Force:** 76,845  
(2010, WI Dept of Workforce Development)

**Labor Force within 50 mile radius:** 229,596  
(Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission)

**La Crosse MSA Unemployment Rate:** 6.2%  
(July 2011, WI Dept of Workforce Development)

## Top Private Sector Employers

**Gundersen Lutheran (Health Care):**  
6,500 employees

**Mayo Clinic Health System (Health Care):**  
2,966 employees

**Trane Company (HVAC Manufacturing):**  
2,350 employees

**Kwik Trip (Convenience Store Manufacturing & Distribution):**  
1,000 employees

**Logistics Health Inc. (Medical Readiness):**  
1,000 employees

**CenturyLink (Telecommunications):**  
830 employees

**Dairyland Power Cooperative (Electrical Power Provider):**  
630 employees

**Chart Energy & Chemicals, Inc. (Heat Exchanger Manufacturing):**  
420 employees

**WalzCraft Industries (Cabinet Manufacturing):**  
407 employees

*(La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce)*

## Higher Education Institutions

**University of WI – La Crosse** (nearly 10,000 students)

**Viterbo University** (approximately 3,000 students)

**Western Technical College** (serves approximately 18,500 credit & non-credit students)

## Community Accolades

- ▶ La Crosse ranked 22nd healthiest county, 8th in health risk behavior and 4th in health factors in the 2011 Wisconsin County Ranking. (2011)
- ▶ La Crosse - Eau Claire Area ranked No. 24 among top 50 United States cities for healthcare by Healthgrades.com. (2011)
- ▶ La Crosse, WI - Winona, MN Area ranked 20th Most Secure Place to Live Among Small Towns by Farmer's Insurance Group. (2009)
- ▶ La Crosse MSA named top city for "Booming Job Growth" in Today's Hot Job Targets. (2007)
- ▶ Rated "4-Star Logistics Metro" by Expansion Management. (2006)
- ▶ UW-La Crosse Ranked #2 among Midwest Public Universities by US News & World Report (2011)
- ▶ UW-La Crosse named among 2010-2011 "Best values in Public Colleges" by Kiplinger Personal Finance. (2011)
- ▶ Western Technical College included in G.I. Job's list of Top Military Friendly Colleges. (2009)
- ▶ La Crosse ranked one of the Top 10 Places Worldwide to Toast Oktoberfest by USA Today. (2000)



# The La Crosse Area Front & Center

Every two years, approximately 100 delegates from the La Crosse Area participate in Oktoberfest in the Capitol, traveling to Madison to share issues of particular importance to our area with our state legislators and agencies of state government. 2011 marks 22 years and the 12th edition of Oktoberfest in the Capitol. The La Crosse Area has seen tremendous support and action on many of the issues that have been brought forward as part of Oktoberfest in the Capitol. For this we offer our sincere "Thank You"!

## The key issues we bring forward this year include:

- ▶ A renewed call for a focus on increased frequency of Amtrak passenger rail service at conventional speeds along the Empire Builder Route between Milwaukee and St. Paul via La Crosse.
- ▶ A request for the State Legislature to place particular focus on how specific regulations affect businesses in Wisconsin as legislation is being considered and for existing regulations to be applied uniformly across the State.
- ▶ Focus on the importance of Wisconsin's tourism promotion budget as an integral element of healthy communities and economic development.

## Additional items of interest to the La Crosse Area include:

### Higher Education Funding

Two of Wisconsin's finest institutions of public higher education are found in La Crosse, the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse and Western Technical College. These higher education institutions, along with Viterbo University and Globe University, are an integral part of the community, economy, culture, and indeed, the very future of Western Wisconsin.

**UW-La Crosse Centennial Hall:** The beginning of the 2011-2012 school year also marked the opening of Centennial Hall, the first new academic building on the UW-La Crosse campus since 1974. The \$40 million facility provides 44 new classrooms and lecture halls incorporating advanced technology and designed with the needs of students in mind. This project was made possible by a combination of public and private dollars.

We thank the Legislature for its dedication to the Centennial Hall project as well as of a new Eagle Residence Hall at UW-La Crosse in the past couple of years. We look forward to partnering with you on future projects at UW-La Crosse, such as the renovation of Cowley Hall, and at Western Technical College.



*Centennial Hall at UW-La Crosse opened for the 2011-2012 school year. Photo courtesy of Sue Lee, UW-L.*

## Tourism Promotion

Thanks to the Legislature, Department of Tourism and Department of Transportation for their partnership with local tourism leaders in reopening the La Crosse I-90 Welcome Center. Since February, the center has assisted over 45,000 visitors, providing information about local attractions as well as destinations across the state.

## Economic Development Commitment

Thanks to the Legislature, Administration and the WI Economic Development Corporation (and the former Department of Commerce) for their renewed commitment to being helpful to important business and industry as they grow and expand in Wisconsin as well as working to bring new business to our state. A few recent examples of this commitment in the La Crosse Area include:

**City Brewing:** Governor Walker recently joined City Brewing's senior management to present an award of \$490,000 in WI income tax credits. The company announced plans to create nearly 100 new jobs and to invest

approximately \$13 million in new equipment. City Brewing Company LLC now employs approximately 550 individuals and there are more employees in the brew house than at the height of the G. Heileman empire.

**Gundersen Lutheran:** Gundersen Lutheran was awarded a \$140,000 grant for the installation of its new biomass boiler which will be in use by next fall. The boiler is expected to save Gundersen Lutheran over \$500,000 per year and it part of the organization's plan to be energy independent by 2014.

**LIPCO Plant 6:** The La Crosse Industrial Park Corporation was awarded a \$250,000 Department of Natural Resources Ready for Reuse Grant and a \$165,000 Department of Commerce Brownfields Grant to assist with the asbestos abatement and demolition of its Plant 6 facility on La Crosse's near northside. The 12 acre site has been cleaned up and is now being offered back to the general real estate community for redevelopment. Initial estimates indicate that a mixed use redevelopment could yield as much as \$15 million in assessed value compared to the current value of less than \$4 million.



*Governor Walker joins City Brewing CFO Greg Inda, City of La Crosse Mayor Mathias Harter and LADCO Executive Director James Hill to announce a \$490,000 tax credit award to City Brewing. Photo courtesy of LADCO.*

# Adding Passenger Rail Service – An Incremental Approach to Increasing Transportation Options

## Position Statement

Transportation infrastructure plays an integral role in maintaining and strengthening Wisconsin's economic vitality and the La Crosse Area has been a crossroads, a place to meet, a place of important commerce in the Upper Midwest for centuries. Wisconsin and the La Crosse Area in particular boast some of the best transportation infrastructure in the country with Interstate 90, the Mississippi River, the La Crosse Municipal Airport, and freight and passenger rail service. These and many other amenities make the La Crosse Area an ideal location for business.

The Empire Builder Rail Route, serving the corridor between Chicago/Milwaukee and St. Paul via La Crosse and then continuing on to Portland, OR is one of Amtrak's most successful long-distance routes with continual increases in ridership. More than 5 million passengers traveled aboard the Empire Builder in 2010. Chicago/ St. Paul ranked #1 of "top city pairs by ridership" while Chicago/La Crosse ranked #4 on the Empire Builder Route (Source: National Association of Railroad Passengers Amtrak Fact Sheet).

**With "building on success" always being an appropriate business model, adding an additional train traveling in each direction between Milwaukee and St. Paul each day will make train travel an even more viable option for business travel, further driving opportunities for economic development in Western Wisconsin.**

## Background

The Oktoberfest in the Capitol delegation has long advocated for the implementation of higher speed rail service between Chicago/Milwaukee and Minneapolis/St. Paul via La Crosse but more importantly has advocated for increased frequency of daily service along the corridor, thus allowing riders to reliably reach major regional metro-markets and return in a single day.

With our current focus on maintaining and improving Wisconsin's existing transportation infrastructure rather than moving forward with high speed rail, we renew our call for a focus on increased frequency along the Empire Builder Route between Milwaukee and St. Paul via La Crosse.



*Amtrak's Empire Builder stops at the La Crosse Depot. Photo courtesy of LADCO.*

A 2010 study of over 2,000 La Crosse Area business leaders, conducted by UW-La Crosse business students on behalf of the Empire Builder Rail Coalition, exhibited overwhelming support for increased rail service along the Empire Builder Route. The 545 respondents indicated that while their current use of Amtrak service is relatively low, the availability of additional trains that would allow them to travel to their destination and return in a single day would significantly increase their utilization of Amtrak. This important correlation between increased frequency and increased ridership can also be evidenced by the success of the Hiawatha service between Milwaukee and Chicago with 14 trains traveling the corridor each day.

Today we ask the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to partner with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Amtrak and communities along the corridor to initiate a feasibility study of two additional passenger

rail trains on the Milwaukee to St. Paul Empire Builder Corridor traveling at conventional speeds of up to 79 miles per hour. The study could consider travel demand, capital and operating costs, station stop locations and times, cost sharing, cooperation with the host railroads and more.

## Summary

Transportation infrastructure continues to be an integral element of economic development, serving as a catalyst for business and industrial growth, convention and leisure travel and more. The La Crosse Area is committed to carrying forward Wisconsin's message that we are "Open for Business". With this visit today, we ask the Walker Administration, Wisconsin State Legislature and Department of Transportation to support the additional train service on the Empire Builder Route between Milwaukee and St. Paul via La Crosse.

*Contributed by the La Crosse Area Development Corporation*



*Supporters and members of the Empire Builder Rail Coalition from both Wisconsin and Minnesota traveled to Milwaukee via Amtrak in January 2010 for a Milwaukee Bucks vs. Minnesota Timberwolves basketball game. Photo courtesy of LADCO.*

# Tourism Funding – Return on Investment for Wisconsin

## Position Statement

The La Crosse Area has long been referred to as “God’s Country” in recognition of the incredible natural beauty with which we have been blessed. The allure of the Mighty Mississippi and the urge to explore the towering bluffs, which in many areas have been untouched by development, are just the beginning of the list of incredible assets that draw visitors to the La Crosse Area. The remarkable network of recreation trails, an array of arts and cultural experiences, a vibrant central business district, the charm of our smaller communities, an emerging culture of sustainability and so much more are all part of what one can expect during a visit to the La Crosse Area.

While we are certainly partial to the La Crosse Area, in fact, it can be said that the entire State of Wisconsin is a gem for visitors to explore. From the pristine beauty of the Great Lakes to the get away experience of the North Woods and the draw of our urban centers, all regions of Wisconsin truly offer opportunities for natives, newcomers and visitors alike to enjoy.

**While these treasures certainly add to our quality of life, it is easy to also recognize the economic benefits of the tourism industry in our great State. We would like to offer our sincere thanks to the Wisconsin State Legislature and the Administration for their recognition of the importance of the tourism industry and dedication to building on our tremendous recreational assets as evidenced by the \$2.6 million increase in funding in the 2011 – 2013 Biennial Budget.**

**The La Crosse Area is especially pleased to have partnered with the Department of Tourism and Department of Transportation to reopen the Interstate 90 Welcome Center after having suffered from its closure over the past two years.**

## Background

In 2010 Wisconsin’s tourism industry accounted for more than 300,000 FTE jobs and an overall economic impact exceeding \$12 billion. Tourism accounts for 5,800 FTE jobs and \$219.5 million in economic impact to La Crosse County alone.

With these startling statistics on the importance of tourism in Wisconsin, we are heartened by the increased commitment to tourism promotion with the recent passage of the 2011-2013 biennial budget. This in turn leads to an increased ability to market the recreational assets, convention facilities and sports venues as well as the unique festivals, arts and culture events, and all there is to see and do in Wisconsin.

Tourism has no political affiliation. It isn’t red or blue, but it is green -- as in the color of money being retained or brought into our state. Tourism is about relaxation, laughter and fun. Tourism is also about driving local economies. Whether you live in the Fox River Valley, Lake Geneva, Eau Claire, Milwaukee, Northern Wisconsin, Madison, La Crosse or any other region of the State of Wisconsin, tourism is about “heads in beds” and “butts in seats”. Convention and leisure travel helps local business provide jobs for Wisconsin communities.

Each visitor we attract from outside the state allows us to capture dollars that otherwise would have been spent elsewhere. And, every time we convince Wisconsin residents to spend their hard earned leisure dollars in our state, we continue to grow the economic pie. A primary driver of the hospitality industry is “heads in beds” of our local lodging establishments. It is estimated that for each night a visitor stays in our community, they spend an estimated \$92.12 at our local eateries, entertainment venues and shopping boutiques. Additionally, every time a person rents a hotel room in Wisconsin, the State receives 5% of the room rate in the form of sales tax and many counties receive ½% sales tax revenue. While not every community in Wisconsin can regularly attract tenants to an industrial park, every community can benefit from a tourism effort because of the many unique nooks and crannies of our State that deserve exploration.

## Summary

The strength of Wisconsin’s tourism industry is a critical element of our State’s economy and an important job creation sector. While we all recognize that budgets are tight, tourism funding by the State consistently creates a positive return on investment. The most recent study shows that for every dollar the Wisconsin Department of Tourism spent on marketing, \$7.00 was returned to the State or local government entities in the form of tax revenues. In these trying times, it is these sorts of investments that cannot be ignored. We again thank you for your commitment to tourism funding and trust you will continue to appreciate, as we do, the ROI of these dollars.

*Contributed by the La Crosse Area Convention & Visitors Bureau*



*Announcing  
the 2011  
Oktoberfest  
Maple Leaf  
and Torchlight  
Parade  
Marshalls.  
Photo courtesy  
of La Crosse  
Area Chamber  
of Commerce.*

# Rules & Regulations Inhibit Business Growth

## Position Statement

Growth and job creation are based on the ability of a business to be successful and make a profit. When government regulations and rules unnecessarily hinder the implementation of safe and efficient business operations, a “chilling effect” is often the result and the ability to grow is curtailed. Business owners and leaders question the value of investing when confronted with burdensome regulations.

It is also important to remember that the La Crosse Area is a border community and many businesses have service areas that span the tri-state area of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa. Looking at how Wisconsin regulations compare to Minnesota and Iowa can be a determining factor in where business chose to grow.



## The State of Wisconsin should:

- ▶ **be cognizant of the impact of rules and regulations (and their subsequent consequences on growth and job creation).**
- ▶ **be clear regarding the interpretation of those rules by Administrative Agencies.**
- ▶ **be fair with the enforcement of rules and regulations – apply them on a consistent basis across the entire state.**

## Wisconsin's Role

Business needs a stable, sensible and predictable environment in which to operate. Interpretation and enforcement needs to be consistent and the rules understandable so they can be followed by business. The simpler, less time consuming and straightforward the regulation, the more likely business can comply and move forward with their growth plans and new job creation. By more strictly policing the creation, implementation, interpretation and enforcement of the regulations of State agencies, the Legislature can ensure an improved regulatory environment that is fairer, more understandable and not unnecessarily burdensome to business. This is what we ask. This is what business needs.

*Contributed by the La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce*



*Photos courtesy of LACVB*

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