



Quad Cities/Chicago Amtrak Route

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By Nicole Harris,

Quad-Cities passenger rail service may not yet be a reality, but one casino executive is hedging his bets on the future.

According to a recently released Department of Transportation report, the proposed passenger rail service between the Quad-Cities Area and Chicago could carry 111,000 riders per year. Bill Renk of Jumer's Casino Rock Island said these riders could translate to a big boost for the area's gambling market and many other businesses

Quad Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau president and CEO Joe Taylor said it was too soon to have specifics on the impact for area businesses. He predicts the influx of visitors would help the casinos, the hospitality industry and the Quad-Cities as a whole.

Mr. Renk, vice president for sales and marketing for Jumer's, said it was too soon for projections of just how many riders could make a stop at the Quad-Cities three casinos, but the prospect has great potential.

"We certainly see non-local players here, but we're primarily a local casino and have been because what we have to offer or really what we don't have to offer," Mr. Renk said.

The missing piece for Jumer's to expand its market is in the works, with a new casino and the essential hotel needed to host out of town players set to open next January. Mr. Renk said the new facility will make Jumer's a destination and further its reach into the non-local market.

Mr. Renk said the casino already has some customers who make the trip from Chicago, but passenger rail service could really make this demographic explode.

"I think there are a lot of pluses for the gambler coming to the Quad-Cities," he said. "A competitive market equals some real benefits to the player."

He said some things to lure Chicago gamers to this market include generous player points and lower stakes for table games. Due to supply and demand, more gamers in larger metropolitan areas mean higher minimum bets to get in the game.

Mr. Renk said Jumer's is preparing for an expanding market by increasing the casino's awareness in the Chicago area. He said some of this name recognition will come through the inertia of many Quad-City businesses looking to do the same to pull in prospective riders.

Mr. Taylor said the visitors bureau already invests marketing dollars in the Chicago market, but this effort would be increased to boost awareness.

Rail service or not, he said the casino looks to increase its exposure in many areas to spread the word about the new casino and hotel.

Isle of Capri representatives did not return phone calls seeking comment.