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## **Passenger Rail Gains Support from Federal Railroad Administration**

*Fort Wayne, Ind.* – Supporters of the proposed Chicago-Fort Wayne-Columbus passenger rail line have approval from Federal and State agencies to take the first step in establishing the new rail line.

Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry and members of the Northern Indiana Passenger Rail Association (NIPRA) were joined by mayors and representatives from dozens of communities along the proposed route today at the Baker Street Train Station in Fort Wayne. They announced the recent engagement with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to conduct an Alternatives Analysis and Public Input process that are required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) under federal law to begin the project.

“I’m encouraged by our collective efforts to develop innovative plans to make Fort Wayne a point of destination,” said Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry. “The approval from the FRA allows us to begin the process of establishing passenger rail service through Fort Wayne, northern Indiana and northwest Ohio. By working together, we’re committed to making a meaningful difference by bringing more transportation options and economic development opportunities to our region.”

“This is the result of years of hard work and dogged determination on the part of many of us,” said NIPRA spokesperson and Fort Wayne City Councilman Geoff Paddock. “The return of passenger rail to Fort Wayne will be a huge boost for economic development in Fort Wayne and Northeast Indiana. It will add momentum to our booming downtown and help revitalize neighborhoods that surround the train station. It is gratifying that the FRA and INDOT see there is an untapped market for rail service in Fort Wayne. We thank them for working with us over the past few years to reach this moment.”

The Chicago-Fort Wayne-Columbus corridor would provide high-quality passenger rail connections to 100 Midwest cities through a regional rail network that offers safe, comfortable and reliable service with amenities such as Wi-Fi and food service. Initial plans are for trains to travel at a maximum speed of approximately 75 miles per hour and eventually travel at 110 miles per hour. In many communities along the route, scheduled stops would take place at existing historic train stations, such as the Baker Street Train Station, 221 W. Baker St., Fort Wayne, IN 46802.

The Alternatives Analysis and Public Involvement Process is an investment of \$350,000 and will examine the preliminary engineering, technical analysis, service planning and environmental impacts along the proposed route. The study, along with the public input process, will start in early January 2017 and is expected to be completed by late fall. The FRA will provide technical assistance throughout the process. The analysis is being paid for with funding from cities and businesses along the corridor. The FRA will be the lead agency on the process and will utilize information gained in this work. Once the



Analysis is complete, engineering and design to upgrade the existing tracks can begin, pending funding. Supporters of passenger rail are optimistic limited service could begin by 2020.

A 2013 rail corridor feasibility study concluded that approximately 2.1 million riders would use the Chicago-Fort Wayne-Columbus route in 2020, with that number growing to more than three million in 2040. The study also estimated that for every \$1 of investment, \$1.70 would be generated in economic return through job growth and increased property values. More information about the Chicago-Fort Wayne-Columbus passenger rail can be found online at [www.niprrail.org](http://www.niprrail.org).

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## Statements of Support

### **Statement from the Indiana Department of Transportation**

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) recognizes that effective and efficient transportation options are needed to move goods and people and support economic activity. The *Chicago to Columbus Passenger Rail Corridor* proposes to incrementally provide next generation trains that will bring faster, more reliable and more service-focused mobility options. This corridor is not currently served by passenger rail or easily accessible air service. The development of this proposed project would provide transportation choice and environmental benefits, stimulate the economies of local communities and enhance the passenger rail network throughout the Midwest. INDOT recognizes and supports community efforts to begin the Environmental Assessment for the Chicago to Fort Wayne section of the corridor, with proposed stops in Gary, Valparaiso, Plymouth, and Warsaw.

### **New Haven Mayor Terry McDonald**

I am pleased to continue to support the Northern Indiana Passenger Rail Association and our partners along the corridor of the Chicago-Fort Wayne-Lima-Columbus Passenger Rail project. The importance of passenger rail will only increase as the demand for a more efficient method of transportation along this much-needed corridor increases. Higher Speed rail lines make sense, and by connecting the cities along this corridor we will only improve our combined economies, and provide for an efficient, fast, reliable, and workable mode of travel.

### **Allen County Commissioner Nelson Peters**

Allen County has been happy to play a part in helping to fund the last phase of passenger rail service through Ft. Wayne to Chicago. As the county continues to grow, it is essential that we do our part to ensure the success of an economic driver such as this.

### **Warsaw Mayor Joe Thallemer**

On behalf of the City of Warsaw, it is indeed an exciting announcement from Mayor Henry this afternoon! With the blessing of the FRA, the cooperation of our Indiana and Ohio partners, and the support of our communities and industry, these efforts are paying off with this major preliminary requirement being undertaken! This big step makes the future of high-speed rail service to all of our communities a bit more attainable!

### **Executive Director William Murdock, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, Columbus, Ohio**

On behalf of the Columbus to Chicago Passenger Rail project's Columbus Region partners, we are pleased to express support of our Indiana and City of Lima corridor partners as they advance the Phase 1 EIS for the Chicago-Fort Wayne-Lima portion of the project. The Columbus Region is expected to undergo significant growth in the next 20 years. Over 500,000 new people are expected to move into our region, raising the total number of residents to approximately 2.5 million by the year 2030. These figures and maintaining our successful economic environment are at the core of our commitment to create a robust multimodal transportation system that features passenger rail service to Chicago and the communities along the way.



**Executive Director of OrthoWorx, Inc. Brad Bishop**

We at OrthoWorx are encouraged to learn that the Federal Railroad Administration is supportive of proceeding with an Environmental Assessment regarding the potential to establish passenger rail service between Fort Wayne and Chicago (as well as to cities in Ohio). Companies in the orthopedic industry corridor between Kosciusko and Allen Counties employ approximately 10,000 individuals developing, producing and distributing advanced technology medical products for patients around the world. A continuing challenge for the orthopedic industry cluster is attracting the top talent that will power future growth in these companies. In our work with industry firms and their employees, the availability of passenger rail ranks very highly as desirable from a talent attraction standpoint, valued for both leisure and community transport.

**Executive Director of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association, Richard Harnish**

We applaud the Northeast Indiana Passenger Rail Association for initiating a study of the Chicago-Fort Wayne-Lima passenger rail corridor. The communities along this line have unique economic assets and the potential to grow substantially. Fast, frequent and dependable trains are needed to strengthen their economic ties, promote growth and provide better access to international markets at O'Hare.

**Financial support for the Analysis and NIPRA operations is provided by:**

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| City of Lima                             | Olive B. Cole Foundation                    |
| City of Plymouth                         | Orthoworx                                   |
| City of Valparaiso                       | Plymouth Industrial Development Corporation |
| City of Warsaw                           | Steel Dynamics, Inc.                        |
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