

Potential Bidders Attend INDOT “Hoosier State” RFP Meeting

by Bill Malcolm and Doug Yerkeson

On April 16, potential bidders proposing to operate the Hoosier State or part of its service attended an INDOT mandatory pre-bid meeting. Attendees included Amtrak, PTSI Transportation, Corridor Capital of Chicago, Iowa Pacific of Chicago, Rail Plan of Baltimore, Herzog, and Rail Mark/Train Travel Holdings of Wixom, Michigan.

INDOT passenger rail director Bob Zier described the RFP, reaction from various parties, and future funding of the train to Chicago. Zier noted that local communities along the route (along with Beech Grove) have been disappointed with the recent poor on-time performance of the train, the beginning of which coincided with the onset of their funding the train.

Zier noted that part of the contribution of Indianapolis included operation of Union Station. The city is apparently seeking a potential developer to re-develop the site.

Zier also said several persons had contacted him about INDOT supporting rail service to Bloomington and Louisville. He also acknowledged that Ft. Wayne advocates were pushing for Amtrak to serve their community (and they wondered if the state could assist with funding).

Zier noted that the matter of Amtrak state funding would go in the INDOT budget to be considered next session by the Legislature. The INDOT RFP contract is apparently for three years.

Bids were due at the end of April with a decision from INDOT expected in May or June.



RFP meeting with Bob Zier.

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National Train Day Celebrated Around the State

National Train Day is May 10 and is being celebrated around the state (except for Noblesville, which will celebrate on May 3).



The first event will be at Noblesville on May 3 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Indiana Transportation Museum. (See story below). All the other events are on Saturday, May 10, and include:

Chesterton: Riley's from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Connersville: 10 a.m. to 12 noon

Elkhart: New York City Railroad Museum from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Indianapolis: from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Media event at 10 a.m.) Features a Bicentennial Train from the Indianapolis Historical Society.

Amtrak will have three cars and a locomotive on display. We will have a booth there.

For more information on these and other

events in Indiana and around the nation, go to www.nationaltrainday.com.

The Northern Indiana Passenger Rail Association

Ft. Wayne Rail Group Partners with Ohio on New Chicago—Ft. Wayne—Columbus Route

By Fred Lanahan

(NIPRA) continues to raise funds for the Chicago-Fort Wayne-Columbus, Ohio high speed rail Tier I Environmental Impact Statement study.

They have now linked with All Aboard Ohio, Northwest Ohio Passenger Rail Association, and the Mid Ohio Regional Planning Commission to complete the Ohio portion of our project.

NIPRA has been invited to attend and present at National Train Day in Toledo, Ohio at the Amtrak station on Saturday, May 3. NIPRA will also be presenting on our high speed rail project at the All Aboard Ohio Annual Meeting in Columbus, Ohio on Saturday, May 17.

Did you know? You don't have to go to Chicago

Take the Amtrak Thruway Bus from Indy to Connect with Other Amtrak Trains

to connect with other Amtrak trains.

Amtrak Thruway Trailways buses from Indianapolis serve the train stations in Champaign/Urbana, Bloomington/Normal and Galesburg, IL with convenient train connections to St. Louis, Springfield, and other cities.

The Trailways bus leaves twice daily including at 7:30 a.m. and 12:50 p.m.

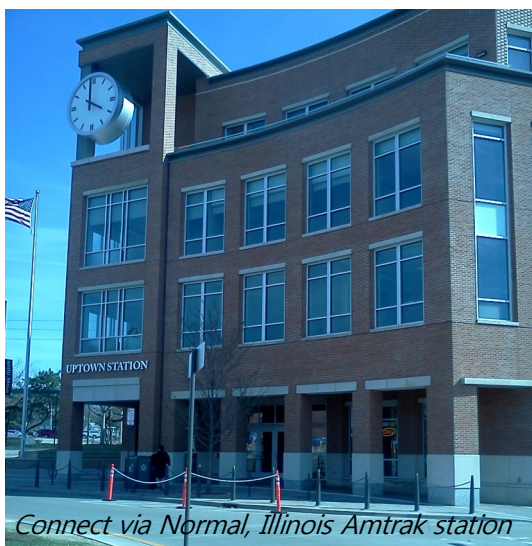
The 12:50 p.m. from Indianapolis goes to
(continued)
("Amtrak



Trailways buses fuel Amtrak connections

Thruway Bus" continued from page 2) Normal and then connects to the "Illini" train at 7:30 p.m. However, you can also catch an earlier train (avoiding a long layover); the "Texas Eagle" leaves Normal at 4:04 p.m. and arrives Springfield around 5 p.m. The Amtrak agent explained that Amtrak guarantees the bus/train connection, which is why they put you on the later train.

You can also go to Galesburg on the Amtrak Thruway Trailways bus to connect with other trains. Finally, to go to New Orleans, drive two hours east to the Vermillion, Illinois Amtrak station to connect to the train to New Orleans. Free parking is available.



Connect via Normal, Illinois Amtrak station

Amtrak Beech Grove Spruces Up Union Station

Amtrak staff in Beech Grove reports the facility not only repairs Amtrak cars from around the na-



An Amtrak employee cleans Union Station on April 26.

tion but also handles non-Amtrak work. In addition to just completing work for the state of North Carolina (which owns the new cars used for rail service in the state), the facility is talking to a commuter rail agency about repairing their cars.

The business expansion model is part of a new labor-management program in Beech Grove.

Finally, thanks to Beech Grove Amtrak employees who turned out on April 26 to help spruce up Union Station.

President's Report

By Steve Coxhead

Hoosiers are very interested in modern, 21st Century passenger rail systems, but the interest has heretofore been unfocused, and as a result, that interest is not reflected in the priorities and perceptions of our state government.

The "Hoosier State" Corridor is being preserved and improved. INDOT has entered into a one-year contract with Amtrak to operate the "Hoosier State" (which connects Indianapolis & Chicago four days each week). A stake-holder group has been formed to provide funding. INDOT has published a request for proposal (RFP) to interested parties to operate "Hoosier State" service beyond the initial year. Amtrak and several private sector firms have expressed an interest in bidding. Improved quality could be more important than minimal cost.

Commuter rail is to be expanded in Lake County (Northwest Indiana). Local communities and planning agencies are to contribute a total of \$8 million as the local match for federal funding. Initial phase will extend South Shore service from Hammond to Dyer. The first train will run in 2024.

Planning continues for improved service through Fort Wayne. Local communities (including both Indiana & Ohio communities) are providing funding for the Tier 1, Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The project envisions higher speed rail service (110mph), with an improved schedule, linking Chicago with Columbus, Ohio, via Fort Wayne. Construction could begin as early as 2020. The Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) *(continued)*

("President's Report", continued from page 3)
continues to reach out to both INDOT and Amtrak. There have been continuing conversations between IPRA and Bob Zier of INDOT regarding the "Hoosier State" service.

There has also been a direct outreach by IPRA leadership to Amtrak management in Chicago. This is initially in regards to the "Hoosier State", but is intended to continue and broaden to include other issues.

Indiana is represented at national and regional advocacy events. The state was well represented at the recent spring meeting of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association. IPRA members were given an opportunity to present the status of developments in Indiana at that meeting. IPRA was also represented at the Annual Spring Meeting of the National Association of Rail Passengers (NARP).

Finally, our organization and state will participate in the next annual meeting of the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission.

To join IPRA, go to www.indianahighspeedrail.org.

Indy's Union Station Cleaner After IBJ Story; Metro Sign Remains

In March, IPRA representatives spoke with the City of Indianapolis (which owns the Union Station) and Browning Investments (which manages Union Station) to urge better maintenance of the beleaguered facility (see pictures).



Union Station in Indianapolis

A consultant report being done by the City of Indianapolis on needed repairs to the station—which was due out in February—is still pending. However, our representatives pointed out that no such report is needed to clean the bathrooms more frequently or prohibit



This photo: Union Station's refuse-covered floors and old Amtrak sign. Below: The long-outdated Metro sign.

Greyhound passengers from sleeping on the floor.



The state of Union Station has improved after a story on passenger rail in the April 18-25 *Indianapolis Business Journal* reported that the "shabby condition" of the station may be deterring Amtrak passengers.

However, the "Metro" sign directing passengers to non-existent "Metro" bus service (the old name for IndyGo) at the station still is up despite requests to remove it. No IndyGo bus serves the station and IndyGo was called "Metro" 20 years ago. In addition, Amtrak employees note that the fluorescent lights make a loud buzzing sound and are in need of a minor repair.

Illinois Looks at New East-West Rail Line, Plans Introduction of Rockford Service in 2015

Lee Enterprise Newspapers reported on April 7 that the Illinois House has thrown its support behind the possible creation of an east-west passenger rail corridor. The House endorsed the development of an Amtrak route running between the Quad Cities and Danville.

Also last month, Governor Pat Quinn announced Amtrak service to Rockford from Chicago will start next year.

Indiana Transportation Museum Kicks Off Train Day Events May 3-4

By Michelle Yerkeson

On Saturday, May 3 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Sunday, May 4 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., the Indiana Transportation Museum in Noblesville will kick off National Train Day events in Indiana. All of the below items are \$7 with the exception of the stainless train. Free admission to the Museum and all of the National Train Day events if you arrive by Stainless train from Fishers.

Ride the Caboose Train to the Square. Also, tour speeders, enjoy a pump car demo, and tour historic cars. Shop tours are also available, a hooping demonstration, and a Morse code and telegraph demonstration. See model train layouts and visit the gift shop. Boy Scouts may participate in a badge class on railroading. Details at www.itm.org.

Amtrak Deals: Double Points, NTD Rate Special

Earn double points from Amtrak Guest Rewards through May 17. Register at www.amtrakguestrewards.com/doubledays

Amtrak also offers a National Train Day ticket special. Details at www.nationaltrainday.com.

Porter County Asked to Contribute to New Chicago—Ft. Wayne Route

An April 14 story from NWI.com reports that the Porter County Board of Commissioners are considering a request to contribute \$20,000 toward the first phase of a high-speed passenger train service between Chicago and Columbus, Ohio. The proposed line would include a stop in Valparaiso, which may contribute \$50,000.

For more information:

To join IPRA go to
www.indianahighspeedrail.org

To follow rail news on Facebook go to Hoosiers for Passenger Rail and/or Hoosiers for the Hoosier State.

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Note:

This group is not affiliated with Amtrak, the National Rail Passenger Corporation.