

## Hammond Best Choice for New Stop (MI DOT Gary Hearing News)

The Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) told attendees at the Michigan DOT hearing on the plans to upgrade tracks from Porter to Chicago that Hammond/Whiting is the most logical choice for the new Northwest Indiana stop. However, Dennis Hodges of IPRA also noted that the Gary Airport has always been envisioned as a transit hub as well. IPRA will be filing comments on the proposal; comments are due December 19. In a story on October 30 in the *Post Tribune*:

*"Officials discussed four routes that would require capital investments ranging from \$2.3 billion to \$3 billion and annual maintenance of about \$155 million. Two of the routes might have an impact on the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, and all would require construction of bridges and other structures to avoid freight traffic in Northwest Indiana."*

*All but one of the possible routes would stop at the Hammond/Whiting and Michigan City stations, but project officials said there is talk about building an additional station in Northwest Indiana."*

For more information on the proposal, go to [www.greatlakesrail.org](http://www.greatlakesrail.org) on MI DOT's website.

## Link IndyGo with Regional Bus/Amtrak Transportation Center (Oct. 30 IndyGo Transit Center Workshop News)

IPRA told IndyGo representatives, including CEO Michael Terry, that the new IndyGo Transit Hub should offer feeder service or connecting bus routes to the Amtrak transportation center for seamless connections on both ends.

Our group said the choice of IndyGo's transit center is a second best option. Grand Rapids, Denver, St. Paul, Bloomington-Normal, Champaign-Urbana, Milwaukee, and St. Louis all have opened or refurbished their stations into inter-modal hubs where passengers can take inter-regional bus, Amtrak, city bus, and light rail from one station. At a minimum, there should be better signage at the Amtrak Greyhound Station on 350 S. Illinois to the new IndyGo transit hub on Washington Street. *(continued)*

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*("IndyGo" continued from page 1)* Terry noted Greyhound had approached IndyGo about moving its station to the new IndyGo facility. Greyhound feels the current facility is too congested, he said. Barons Bus, Trailways Bus (the Amtrak Thruway connection), and Miller Bus also use the beleaguered facility (see photos and next story). The current Union Station needs \$4 million in repairs according to a recent consultant report, and the contract has not yet been issued.

Currently the #16 route serves the Amtrak / Greyhound station and it operates once an hour and only on weekdays. However, IndyGo noted the Amtrak departure and arrival times are outside the times when IndyGo operates anyway.

## Free Wi-Fi, Snacks, Business Class Added to Hoosier State (Oct. 1 Amtrak Whistlestop Tour Highlights)

Amtrak CEO Joe Boardman hosted a whistle stop tour on a special Hoosier State train on October 1. In press conferences from Indianapolis to Dyer, Boardman announced the addition of free WiFi and free snacks on the Hoosier State as well as the addition of a business class coach. He also said the proposed transfer to Corridor Capital was not analogous to arrangements in North Carolina where a similar out sourcing is in place since the Hoosier State operates in two states making it subject to interstate Federal regulations (EPA, FRA, FDA, etc.).

Boardman called for another extension from the planned January 31 date in order to allow Amtrak to

continue to operate the Hoosier State. He noted that Corridor Capital did not talk to Amtrak before submitting its proposal to INDOT.

Boardman told a Renaissance audience that they need more than four months to negotiate with CC. He said CC hasn't talked to Amtrak at all.

At a stop in Lafayette, State Representative Randy Truitt told a Lafayette audience that continuing the Hoosier State was not a subsidy but an investment.

On the special October 1 train, Amtrak explained the complex Hoosier State route includes the following routing railroads:

- CSX
- CN
- Belt Line Railroad
- Norfolk Southern
- Union Pacific
- Metra
- Amtrak tracks

Each railroad has a different dispatch center. For example, Union Pacific dispatches trains from Omaha.

A tour of the Amtrak dispatch center at Chicago followed on the October 1 event. Amtrak dispatches over 583 trains per day (including Metra). This includes the Michigan trains and Amtrak rail in New Orleans. The state of the art computerized control center was refurbished recently with ARRA funds. If it was an airport, it would be the 11<sup>th</sup> busiest airport in North America.



*An Amtrak representative aboard the October 1 whistlestop train explains the complex ownership of the train tracks traveled by the Hoosier State.*



*Amtrak's October 1 train stops in Dyer. (Photo courtesy of Jim Burd)*

## Amtrak Beech Grove Is Hiring

Amtrak's Beech Grove maintenance facility (which employs 500 people) has the following openings:

- Welder
- Journeyman
- Mechanic

Apply for these and other positions at [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com).

## Take Amtrak to Your Thanksgiving Destination and Save

A look at fares to various destinations shows rail travel is a bargain compared with air travel and even travel on MegaBus or Greyhound. On October 29, I found the following deals:

On November 18, travel from Indy to Springfield, IL. Leave at 11 a.m. on the Amtrak Thruways Bus for just \$45 and connect in Illinois. Also on November 19, Indy to St. Louis is just \$51. Leave at 11 a.m. on the Thruways bus and connect in Illinois.

For travel on November 19:

- \*Indy to D.C. on the Cardinal is just \$83
- \*Indy to Chicago is just \$24.
- \*Lafayette to Milwaukee is just \$46.
- \*Indy to Kansas City is just \$90.

Book three days in advance with your AAA or NARP card and save 10%.

For more travel ideas, go to [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com). For rail, hotel, and city stories, read Arrive Magazine (see [www.arrivemagazine.com](http://www.arrivemagazine.com)). Arrive is Amtrak's business magazine for Northeast travelers.

## Union Station Cell Phone Incident Causes Woes for Rail and Bus Travelers

The Amtrak/Greyhound station (aka Union Station or the bus/rail transportation center) continues to make life challenging for travelers. One lane of Illinois Street is closed due to structural repair needs. Worse, on October 22, a cell phone clogged the bathrooms causing



*Someone's lost cell phone became every traveler's headache in a recent Union Station incident.*

them to flood (see picture). Travelers were told to use the restroom in the White Castle across the street. Per John Bartholomew of the City, "In regards to Union Station, repair work is the reason one lane of Illinois Street is closed. We have no timeline on when work will be completed given we have yet to let bids out for the \$4 Million of work to be done.

*In regards to the restrooms the Greyhound folks tell us that the sewage had backed up in both restrooms late at night so they were closed off until a contractor could get on site. When they did, they found a cell phone stuck had clogged the pipes that caused the back up."*

Greyhound manages the station for the City of Indianapolis.

## Cardinal Featured in Song by The Tillers

By Steve Coxhead, IPRA President

A local Cincinnati band called The Tillers has written a song about the Cardinal, one of the two trains currently serving the Chicago to Indianapolis corridor. You can enjoy it online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCCg1zBK5k>

## News, Briefly Stated

Our own Dennis Hodges was profiled in a story on the plan to upgrade the tracks to Chicago from Porter (and the October 30 MI DOT hearing held in Gary) in the Sun Times Media Group *Post Tribune*. (continued)



*("News, Briefly Stated" continued from page 3)*

Our thoughts are with the passengers injured on October 28 when a semi attempted to cross tracks near Reynolds even though it saw the Hoosier State coming. The semi was cut in half and the driver was not injured. Several passengers were taken to a nearby hospital, according to media reports.

## Save 50% on Rail Travel in Canada

Enjoy 50% savings on VIA Rail in Canada. Our nearest station is Windsor, Ontario (across the river from Detroit via the Barons or Greyhound Bus). Via is having a 50% off sale through the end of February. From Windsor, travel to Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, or Quebec City. From Toronto, you can travel west to Winnipeg, Edmonton, Jasper, and Vancouver. Tickets at [www.viarail.ca](http://www.viarail.ca).

## Commentary: Balanced Transportation Plan Needed

By Don Yehle

"The passenger train didn't die of natural causes," says Phillip Streby, a Peru resident and long-time passenger rail advocate. Market forces caused by government intervention have reduced rail service through Indianapolis to one train each direction each day.

Where Indianapolis' Union Station served 60,000 passengers and 160 trains daily at the end of World War II, it now welcomes two trains—the Cardinal three days a week and the Hoosier State the other four days. Should we care about an underutilized and outdated mode of transportation? "Absolutely, for many reasons, including the most important: people can't ride what's not there," Streby says.

While Hoosiers enjoy the pleasures of four-lane divided highways and the speed of cross-continental airline travel, many forget how our transportation options got to where they are. Hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars have been and continue to be pumped into roads and airports, while many government leaders believe passenger rail should be self-supporting, he says.

Rail advocates like Mr. Streby want to see a better bal-

ance of public investment in all modes of transportation—air, water, and land-based highways and rail. "It's time to take the word subsidized out of our vocabulary when referring only to public dollars allocated to passenger rail," continues the Peru resident.

Rail opponents like to point out that only a few million ride trains compared with the tens of millions who travel by air or automobile. Literally thousands of millions of dollars have flowed into highway projects, and hundreds of billions more into airport and airways projects, while only about \$40 billion have been allocated to Amtrak in over 40 YEARS of its existence! "Just how many people can ride on the few trains over the barely skeletal rail route system currently available to Hoosiers and other Americans?" Streby asks.

Public officials need to be reminded of the true public cost of highways—initial construction, highway maintenance to include not just the road surface itself, but also the public dollars spent mowing the grass along the roads, snow removal, trash removal, and police presence. Likewise, these same lawmakers need to be reminded airport terminals and runways have been built with public dollars, and in today's political climate require more local police protection and hundreds of workers from the Transportation Services Administration.

"I'm calling on Hoosiers to speak up for transportation systems that make economic sense and are evaluated fairly from a cost standpoint. In understanding each transportation mode meets different needs, let's acknowledge that rail delivers its customers *(continued)*



*Passenger rail in the U.S. is not nearly as well-funded as highway and air travel.*

*("Balanced Transportation" continued from page 4)* between more city pairings than air," he emphasizes.

The Peru resident believes a stabilization of passenger rail can be accomplished through citizen involvement and advocacy. Consider joining one of the following rail advocacy groups: The Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance, the Midwest High Speed Rail Alliance, the National Association of Passenger Rail, and the Rail Users' Network. Information on each organization can be found on their websites, Mr. Streby concludes.

## Upcoming

January 31, 2015-Hoosier State INDOT funding agreement with communities ends, transfer to Corridor Capital is scheduled.

## Our Readers Enjoy Discounts

Crowne Plaza Union Station Indy reader discount: Ask for the All aboard Indiana discount. Steps to the Union Station Greyhound/Amtrak Station. Ask for corporate identification discount 100329414 and receive 12% off the best flexible rate.

Join the National Association of Rail Passengers and save 10% on rail travel and help with the national advocacy of passenger rail travel.

Amtrak Guest Rewards members receive of discount of \$20 off their first ride on Uber. Request, track and pay for your next ride with the Uber app. Learn more at [amtrakguestrewards.com/earn/cars](http://amtrakguestrewards.com/earn/cars). (Uber is a new type of taxi service.)

## Coming in December's Issue

- Summary of available comments filed with Michigan DOT on upgrading the tracks into Chicago from Porter and where the new NW Indiana station will be.
- Down to the wire on the fate of the Hoosier State:
  - *Will Indy agree to funding the train in 2015? (It is the only community not to agree to passenger rail support.)*
  - *Is Corridor Capital ready to take over the train?*
  - *Will INDOT agree to allow Amtrak to continue to operate the Hoosier State?*
  - *Will legislation be introduced to clarify the matter including eliminating the requirement*

*that local communities fund half the cost of the train to Chicago?*

- Update on Indy's beleaguered bus/rail station and the \$4 million in repairs needed
- Polar express train rides around the state celebrate the Holidays with excursions with Santa. Get on board.
- Update on corporate partners who support the Hoosier State

## For More Information:

*All Aboard Indiana* a monthly publication of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (formerly Indiana High Speed Rail Association).

To learn more or to join IPRA go to [www.indianahighspeedrail.org](http://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 Railroad Passenger Corporation.