

ALL ABOARD

INDIANA

The Official Newsletter of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

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Hoosier State Fate Again Down to the Wire

Corridor Capital's agreement with INDOT to operate the Hoosier State between Indianapolis and Chicago is off the table according to media reports including the *Lafayette Journal and Courier* which says talks between INDOT and the private operator have ended. INDOT has until January 31 to reach an agreement with Amtrak to continue operating the line, according to the reports. (It is also unclear if cities like Indianapolis will change their mind and agree to help fund the train beyond January 31, when the current funding agreement expires.) Legislation may be introduced to clarify the issues (requiring local communities to fund the train, funding the train, etc.).

Holiday Passenger Appreciation Events Planned

By Doug Yerkeson

As an encore to last year's successful "Thank You Indiana" events on board *Hoosier State* trains, the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) is again working with Amtrak to provide special passenger appreciation events over the Holidays. Enhanced food and beverages will be offered to passengers by IPRA volunteers during select trips of the *Hoosier State* in December. Go to www.indianahighspeedrail.org for updates.



Chicago's Union Station treats passengers to beautiful displays of holiday décor.

Hoosier State a Sell-Out

On November 25, the *Hoosier State* train between Indianapolis and Chicago sold out. The train boarded 138 passengers in Lafayette alone.

On-Board Service Improvements for Amtrak's Hoosier State

By Doug Yerkeson

On October 1, 2014, Amtrak instituted on-board service improvements (*continued*)

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Chicago Union Station's Metropolitan Lounge for Business-Class passengers provides comfortable seating and free snacks.

("On-Board Service Improvements" continued from page 1) to the *Hoosier State*, including a café car with Business Class, free Wi-Fi, and complimentary snacks and beverages. For a \$15 upcharge, Business Class provides wide comfortable seats in a 2-1 arrangement,

a private restroom, priority boarding, and travel-day access to the first class Metropolitan Lounge in Chicago Union Station.

Business Class appears to be growing in popularity. During a recent trip on *Hoosier State* Train 851 to Chicago, 13 of the 14 Business Class seats were occupied after departing Rensselaer, with many passengers taking advantage of the free Wi-Fi. The coffee was delicious and plentiful, and the free pastries a nice gesture. It is hoped that these new on-board services will continue to be warmly received by passengers and result in further improvements, such as a staffed food service car providing an expanded menu.

Amtrak Adds More Indianapolis-Chicago Corridor Options

By Doug Yerkeson

Amtrak has increased options for passengers between Indianapolis, Lafayette and Chicago.

Northbound, in addition to the 6 a.m. *Hoosier State* train and the 11 a.m. Thruway bus, Amtrak has added two new Thruway buses to Chicago from Indianapolis: at 4 a.m. and at 2:30 p.m.

Southbound, in addition to the 5:45 p.m. *Hoosier State* train and the 3:25 p.m.

Thruway bus, Amtrak has added three new Thruway buses to Indianapolis from Chicago: at 9 a.m., at 1 p.m. and at 11:05 p.m.

(There are also two Thruway buses each direction between Indianapolis and Bloomington-Normal and Galesburg, IL.)

Travelers start/end their journey on Greyhound or Trailways bus lines and get a guaranteed seat with an Amtrak ticket (a big advantage since Greyhound itself does not guarantee a seat with a regular Greyhound ticket). You can connect from/to Amtrak trains. See the IPRA home page for a link to a PDF schedule.

Polar Bear Express a Holiday Tradition

By Becky Cola, Indiana Transportation Museum

Join Santa and his friends on the Polar Bear Express train, a holiday tradition for families and kids of all ages from the Indiana Transportation Museum. Take a warmhearted, fun-filled trip to the North Pole on the Museum's Nickel Plate Heritage Railroad. Visit with Santa. Enjoy a holiday story and treats on the way. Share the holiday magic!

Polar Bear Express trains start Saturday November 29 and run Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through December 21. Trains also run Monday December 22nd and Tuesday the 23rd. Board and depart from Fishers, IN at 11:30; 1:30; 3:30; 5:30 and 7:30.

Tickets must be purchased in advance. Cost per person is \$30. Proceeds from the event support the work of the Museum, a private sector non-profit institution. For details and to purchase tickets visit **ITM.org**.



The Polar Bear Express is a delightful experience for the whole family. (Photo courtesy of the Indiana Transportation Museum.)

Season's Greetings to Rail Passengers

By Doug Yerkeson

Holiday wishes to all Indiana rail passengers, and the employees that help keep us moving 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, including the nearly 800 Amtrak employees who call Indiana home. We would also like to recognize the efforts of those who have helped keep the *Hoosier State* passenger train running in 2014, from the on-board operating crew, the maintenance employees at Beech Grove, the station agents in Indianapolis and Chicago, the volunteers and community leaders along the route, and the State of Indiana. Best wishes for a safe and prosperous 2015.

Jingle Rails Opens at the Eiteljorg

Jingle Rails: The Great Western Adventure, presented by The Indiana Rail Road Company, is now showing at the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art. Folks will experience an amazing adventure through a locomotive wonderland, filled with imaginative local and American West landscapes created from natural materials like leaves, twigs, mushrooms and bark.

Indiana Rail Road's Santa Train Celebrates 25 Years

For the 25th consecutive Christmas season, Santa Claus will be coming to towns in southern Indiana and Illinois by train. Children living in communities served by The Indiana Rail Road Company (INRD) will get a chance to see St. Nick on the company's Santa Train on December 5, 6, and 7. (For specific locations and times, please visit www.inrd.com/santa_train.aspx.) Folks are invited

aboard the festively -decorated train to visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus and be entertained by a full cast of costumed characters, brought to life by Indiana Rail Road employee volunteers, their families, and friends of the company.



Santa's helpers will also give away coats, hats, and gloves to help families in need of warmth this winter. For persons or companies interested in donating coats and hats: Cash donations will go directly to the purchase of clothing that will be distributed from the Santa Train. Checks can be made out to Indiana Rail Road (put "Santa Train" on the memo line) and mailed to INRD, Attn.: Shae LeDune, 8888 Keystone Crossing, Suite 1600, and Indianapolis, IN 46240.

Miniature Trains at Garfield Park in Indy

It's that time of year again when the Conservatory Crossing returns, transforming the Garfield Park Conservatory into a winter wonderland! Hundreds of vibrant poinsettias, running model trains, villages, lights and the annual scavenger hunt delights visitors of all ages. This is a holiday tradition not to be missed and made possible with support from employees of Indiana Rail Road Company.

Save on Travel for the Holidays and Relax—Take the Train

Going to Grandma's house for the holidays? Interested in seeing the Rockettes in New York City? Want to get some holiday shopping in on Michigan Avenue in Chicago? Take Amtrak from Indiana stations and relax. Don't worry about the lake effect snow. Let Amtrak handle it. Enjoy free WiFi and snacks on the *Hoosier State*. Get a sleeper or have dinner on the *Cardinal*. Take the Lake Shore Line east from South Bend for an overnight trip. Take the Amtrak Thruways Bus to Galesburg or Bloomington-Normal and then connect with trains west and southbound.

Sample fares:

South Bend to Washington, D.C. \$127 one way (lv 12/20)

Lafayette to New York City \$129 (lv 12/27)

Indianapolis to St. Louis \$118 (lv 12/29)

Indianapolis to Minneapolis \$97 (lv 12/19)

Tickets at www.amtrak.com. Book three days in advance and save an additional 10% with your AAA or NARP card.

Study to Examine Benefits of *Hoosier State*

By Don Yehle

The Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) is in the processing of funding a business case and economic development plan for the *Hoosier State* corridor. The study includes the entire corridor from Chicago to Cincinnati (and Louisville).

In the course of that, IPRA has had some conversations with Hamilton County in Ohio (Cincinnati) and the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Association of Governments about their interest in daily passenger rail service connecting Cincinnati with Chicago, via Indianapolis. There is a great deal of interest in that corridor in extending the *Hoosier State* into SW Ohio. Fayette and Dearborn Counties in Indiana are also seriously interested in the prospect.

New Tracks in Northern Indiana Could Speed Up Service to Chicago from Detroit

By Bill Malcolm and Don Yehle (and the Michigan Department of Transportation)

IPRA has filed comments with the Michigan DOT supporting upgrading the tracks from Porter to Chicago and establishing a new station stop in northwest Indiana. Our group recommends Hammond, site of an existing station.

Public comments continue to be accepted through December 19 on the Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Chicago/Detroit-Pontiac Passenger Rail Corridor Program. The Tier 1 EIS is being prepared by Federal Railroad Administration in cooperation with the Department of Transportation's in Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan. The EIS presents the proposed project's purpose and need, identifies reasonable route alternatives to improve intercity passenger rail service between Chicago and Detroit/Pontiac, and analyzes the potential environmental impacts of the alternatives considered, including the no-build alternative. The EIS is available at www.GreatLakesRail.org

At stake is a three hour, 46 minute train trip on a dedi-

cated double-track passenger rail corridor between Detroit and Chicago; 10 round trips daily between the two cities by 2035, and train sets with maximum speeds of 110 miles per hour. (Currently, travel time on Amtrak's Wolverine Service is posted as 5 hours, 36 minutes between Chicago and Detroit; there are three round trips daily, and only on portions of the route do trains reach speeds of 110 miles per hour.)

The preferred service alternative in the EIS proposes to use advanced diesel-electric locomotives for each end of the train sets, along with non-tilting, bi-level passenger coach seating. Train sets would include four bi-level cars, one bi-level cab/baggage car, and one bi-level cafe/business car. There would be 463 combined seats.

Annual ridership by 2035 is projected to be 2.83 million versus 500,000 in 2012 if the "South of the Lake" (SOTL) proposed improvements are made and a new dedicated double track passenger rail corridor is constructed and new train sets added. Passenger demand would include diversions from air, bus, and car, as well as induced demand and natural growth added to existing passenger totals.

At a public hearing in Gary, IN, last month, the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance called for the Wolverine service to make a stop in Hammond/Whiting—the 17th regular stop on the route.

A self-guided presentation of this Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement along with other information is available at www.GreatLakesRail.org.

Cincinnati Latest City to Restore its Union Station

Commentary by Don Yehle

As we struggle to know what to do with our own Union Station, consider taking a page out of Cincinnati's playbook. Voters there approved in November a one-quarter of one-percent sale tax levy to raise \$170 million in public funds over five years to help restore the city's iconic Union Terminal. Funds will be used to "cover a major structural makeover as well as critical updates to outdated mechanical, electrical, and plumbing infrastructure," the National Trust for Historic Preservation reports. Amtrak's Cardinal Line uses the 81-year-old facility today. An "Art Deco" structure, the massive building's primary use today is as *(continued)*

(*"Cincinnati...Union Station"* continued from page 4) the Cincinnati Museum Center. Five major Cincinnati museums—the Cincinnati History Museum, Cincinnati Historical Society Library, Museum of Natural History and Science, and the Robert Lindner Family OMNIMAX Theater—occupy the building that was described as a "temple to transportation," handling 34,000 daily passengers and up to 216 daily trains during World War II.

Other cities which have recently restored, repurposed, or revitalized their train stations include St. Paul (MN) and Denver. Many cities have gone to inter-modal transit hubs as well.

Purdue Students Hear about Rail Benefits

By Don Yehle

Twenty-five Purdue University transportation engineering students better understand the important role passenger rail plays in America, including in the State of Indiana. Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) Board Member Joe Krause visited with the students November 11 on Purdue's West Lafayette campus.

Krause, who volunteers each morning as a station host at the Lafayette Amtrak station, told students that passenger rail offers five important benefits over air and highway travel. Reduced traffic congestion, improved public safety, better air quality, work opportunities at Amtrak's Beech Grove maintenance facility, and the ability to work while traveling are rail benefits, Krause said.

Give an IPRA Membership Gift this Christmas

By Don Yehle

Looking for a different holiday present for a loved one? Consider taking out a tax-deductible membership to the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA). Student membership are just \$15 annually, while individual annual memberships go for \$30. "We're an organization of grass root citizens, professionals, and government representatives advocating for and dedicated to the development of safe, reliable, frequent, on-time, and pleasant passenger rail in Indiana," said IPRA President Steve Coxhead, Hammond. To join IPRA, please

mail your check to 3951 North Meridian St., Suite 100, Indianapolis, IN 46208. Checks should be made out to Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance.

All new members will automatically receive a copy of our monthly newsletter, *All Aboard Indiana*, mailed to your email address.

Crew Change, Other Problems Wreak Havoc on Lafayette Traveler

By David Drasin

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 4:03 A.M. -- "Well, I got home a few minutes ago (from Chicago). Train 850 (*Hoosier State*) took seven hours and 53 minutes (instead of the expected four hours and 15 minutes) to travel from Chicago to West Lafayette. Lots of things went wrong. And the crew situation is a mess, although they are working and certainly totally professional," writes David Drasin, a West Lafayette regular on the *Hoosier State*.

"It seems they (the crew) never go from Indy to Chicago and back in a day—which they are to do—no overnighting in Chicago without needing a relief crew, usually in Lafayette.

"For this particular trip, we had freight interference, and so the crew's time ran out somewhere between Rensselaer and Monon, and they had to wait over a half hour for the relief crew, during which time the freight in front of us came down with some kind of problem," Drasin continues.

"So we sat there from 10 p.m. to 12:20 a.m. before moving and then we followed the freight into the Lafayette yards. Often one could walk as fast as the train. It took from 12:30 a.m. to 2:38 a.m. to get from there (north of Monon) to the Lafayette Depot -- while the schedule allows a little more than an hour to go the full distance from Rensselaer to Lafayette," he reports.



Amtrak's shared tracks and new crew policies often cause delays. (Photo courtesy Bill Malcolm.)

Signing off for Now

By Bill Malcolm

It's my last issue as editor of All Aboard Indiana as I transition into my new job as Senior Legislative Representative for a nation-wide non-profit based in Washington, D.C. (tele-working from Indianapolis).

I hope you have enjoyed the issues as much as we have enjoyed producing them. Passenger rail in Indiana has so much potential and we've come a long way in the last 15 months, but as you can see from the stories in this issue, we have a long way to go.

See you on board and welcome to our new editor, Don Yehle.

Our Readers Enjoy Discounts



Crowne Plaza Hotel is all decked out for the season. (Photo courtesy Crowne Plaza Hotel.)

Crowne Plaza Union Station Indianapolis: Ask for discount 100329414 and receive 12% off the best flexible rate.

AAA and NARP members save 10% of Amtrak tickets at www.amtrak.com if booked three or more days in advance.

For More Information:

All Aboard Indiana is 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 or contact us at Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance, 3951 North Meridian Street, Suite 100, Indianapolis, IN 46208

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.