

Redeveloped Union Station in Denver Now Has New Hotel, Restaurants and Shops

By Ann J. Lockhart

Built six years after Colorado became a state in 1876, Denver's old Union Station in lower downtown has undergone a major redevelopment into a multi-modal transportation hub, reopening in 2014 with restaurants, bars, shops and a new hotel. It's bustling with activity after decades of slow decline.

Now a hub for Amtrak rail service, buses, light rail, shuttles, taxis and bicycles, it will soon get even busier in 2016 when the Regional Transportation District opens four new light rail line lines and a commuter train to Denver International Airport in April.

The spiffed up train station sports a new 112-room Crawford Hotel, occupying the upper floors of the north and south wings. It was named for developer Dana Crawford, renowned for saving and repurposing old buildings in the area, including nearby Larimer Square. The hotel's lobby faces the station's great hall with comfortable couches, chairs, desks and tables, wired for today's electronic devices. The station also now features 600 works of art.

New office buildings and condos around the site have brought ready customers to the nine restaurants and bars that opened in Union Station around the great hall (*continued*)



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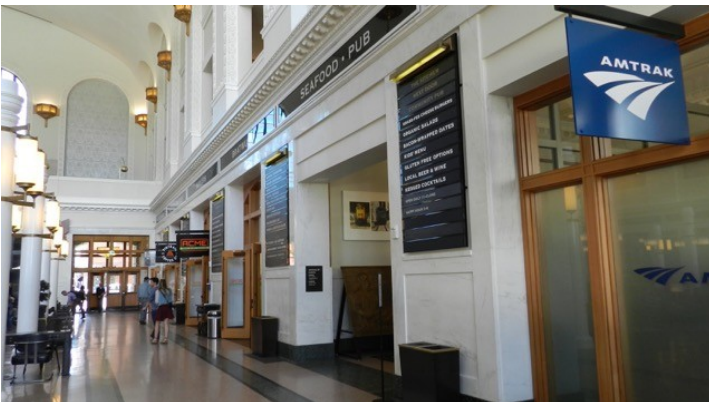
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Denver's Union Station

(clockwise, from top right):

A man reads the train schedule; the Terminal Bar is visible beyond the comfortable seating in the Great Hall; a train waits behind the bicycles at Union Station in Denver; the station's interior is bright, open, and clean; a small lobby for the Crawford Hotel at Union Station; stairs and escalators lead passengers to an underground bus depot behind Union Station. Photos courtesy of the author.



("Redeveloped Union Station in Denver" continued from page 1) along with a small branch of the Tattered Cover book store, a flower shop and craft store. The site has 40,000 square feet of outdoor plaza space as well.

Behind Union Station are train tracks and beyond them is the underground bus depot with 22 gates for city buses in a concourse lit by skylights. Passengers can hop on a light rail train near the train tracks or on the free 16th Street Mall bus close by, which transports visitors through the heart of the city toward the State Capitol.

The 5-year, \$500 million redevelopment was funded by a complex partnership of federal, state, city and private investment.

Union Station originally cost \$525,000 to build in 1881, as throngs of settlers were moving west. Then in 1894, fire destroyed its center section. The waiting room was torn down and was rebuilt several years later.

Around 1900, the depot was home to 110 trains a day. In 1902, Denver Police started enforcing a "no kissing" rule on the platforms since it slowed down the trains.

An ornate 70-ton, 65-foot high Welcome Arch was built in front of Union Station at 17th and Wynkoop Streets with 2,194 electric lights. Dedicated on July 4, 1906, it was expected "to stand as an expression of the love, good wishes and kind feeling of the citizens to the stranger who enters our gates." Then in 1908, one side of the arch was changed to read "Mizpah," a Hebrew word that refers to a biblical passage from Genesis 31:49: "The Lord watch between me and thee when we are apart one from another."

In 1914, the current Beaux Art Classicism and Italian Romanesque structure of Union Station was built. Trains chugged in and out of the station for years as Denver experienced World War I and then the Depression. By

1931, city officials said the Welcome Arch was a traffic hazard, so it was demolished and sold for scrap.

During World War II, traffic was especially heavy with 24,000 people a day going through Union Station. But gradually the number of trains diminished. Around 1950, the station hosted 37 trains a day. Red neon signs urging visitors to "Travel by Train" were installed in 1953. The old station got a major overhaul in 1956 with a cleaning, painting, a new roof, modern ticket offices and sidewalks.

But in 1958, passenger traffic at Stapleton Airport surpassed that of Union Station for the first time, marking a major transportation shift.

Only two Amtrak trains ran per day in 1971. In the late 1970s, there was a proposal to tear down the station to create a new multi-modal transportation center, but supporters wanted to save the station.

Finally in the 1980s, the city and RTD worked with Denver Union Terminal Railway Corp. to make improvements to the site, upgrading the rail platforms and canopies and installing a bus lane. Construction of Coors (baseball) Field in the 1990s, spurred more development in the area near Union Station.

RTD opened its first 5.3 miles, light rail line north of downtown to the Five Points area in 1994. A southwest light rail line opened in 2000 between Littleton north to downtown Denver, relieving some of the heavy traffic on I-25, which runs north and south through the city. A short extension of the line went to Union Station two years later. A southeast light rail line along I-25 from the new suburb of Lone Tree opened in late 2006. A west light rail line has since opened from Golden to Union Station.

RTD took over Union Station operations in 2001 and in May 2002, the Denver Union Station Project began when RTD, City and County of Denver, the Colorado Department of Transportation and the Denver Regional Council of Governments, partnered to develop a Master Plan and conduct an Environmental Impact Statement for Union Station.

Then in 2004, Denver voters finally approved the largest transit expansion in the country called "FasTracks" funded by a .04 percent sales tax increase and other sources. The multi-billion dollar comprehensive FasTracks plan involved building new commuter rail and light rail, bus rapid transit, new parking spaces at light rail and bus stations, and enhanced bus service across the eight-county district. (cont'd)



Passengers await their trains in the Great Hall of Denver's Union Station.

("Redeveloped Union Station in Denver" continued from page 3)

The renovation of Union Station was part of FasTracks, making it the center of the regional transit system in the heart of the city. From 2004-2008, the groundwork was laid: zoning changes were made, public hearings held, FasTracks (light rail lines) were approved and environmental impact statements completed.

Denver Mayor (now Governor) John Hickenlooper established the Denver Union Station Redevelopment Project in 2008, with construction beginning in 2009. The grand opening was held in July 2014.

Denver's Union Station was designated a City of Denver landmark in October 2004. It was named one of 10 international winners of the 2015 Urban Land Institute Global Awards for Excellence. These awards recognize real estate projects that achieve a high standard of excellence in design, construction economics, planning and management.

Author's Grandfather Used Denver Union Station in 1894


Ann J. Lockhart, the author, learned that her grandfather likely arrived at Union Station in August 1894 traveling from Iowa to Denver by train to attend the Wheelmen of America (bicycle) Conference. That bicycle organization was started in 1880 and was renamed League of American Bicyclists later. The nonprofit continues today for fun, fitness, and transportation and does advocacy and education.


The family found his bicycle membership card and a coin from the conference along with an Iowa newspaper article about his visit. The Elkader, Iowa, **Clayton County Register**, said he did the 100-mile bicycle race from Denver to Greeley and back and came in third. They knew nothing of this when he was alive.

The author is excited about the commuter rail line to the airport, which starts in April. While there's a commuter stop two miles from Lockhart's home, she's not close to any light rail. In Denver, RTD tried to get voters to pass creating light rail a number of times.


Finally, when the highways were clogged with traffic, people voted for the new transit.

"The first light rail lines were immediately full," Lockhart recalls.





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"More and more downtown parking lots have been taken over for hotels or condos. Denver had 100,000 more people move here this past year," she said.

"I think the redevelopment of Denver's Union Station was an amazing achievement and succeeded in part due to cooperation between lots of different agencies. The RTD website said Donald Trump's development company bid for that, but didn't win it," the long-time Denver resident said.

The Need To Pull It All Together

By J. Charles Riecks, Vice Chair--Government Relations,
National Assn. Of Railroad Passengers

In previous months I have urged all of us to remember that in formulating our passenger rail advocacy, we must remember that people are the reason for passenger rail in the first place. Next I reminded everyone that we must act responsibly from an environmental perspective. . .

"But wait," as the barker says on the late night infomercial for Mrs. Bixby's Crud Remover says; "There is more."
(continued)

For us, as advocates, to be talking about a concern for people in one corner of the room, and a concern for the earth, the environment if you would, in a separate corner, is not sufficient. Somehow, in our advocacy, in our way of life, we must draw these two possibly contradictory concerns together and make them as one within our Big Picture.

Now, how you make the connection, where you make the connection that is up to you. But do it you must! For when you do, you will find not only a certain inner strength of body, mind, and spirit, but your advocacy will be given an added dimension of strength and resiliency.

Other Advocates make the connection all the time.

Last fall a man from Rome came to town, to three towns to be exact, in, of all things, a 30-year-old FIAT! Yes, "Fix It Again Tony" was the mode of transportation. And he brought with him a message. In part this is what he said:

"... Any harm done to the environment, therefore, is harm done to humanity."

And he backed up his "therefore" with examples, lots of them.

That is, in part, what he said, and then he climbed back into his 30-year-old Fiat and drove away.

But countless thousands listened and were inspired. And more to the point, perhaps some minds were changed, and now hopefully some old ways of doing things will be discarded and replaced. And yes, from a Government Relations perspective, hopefully some new Laws will be placed on the books and enforced, because of what he said, and how he said it.

So we too must strive to grasp and express "The Big Picture" not in an effort to make our ideas seem more important than they sometimes are. But rather to provide that needed depth to our ideas:

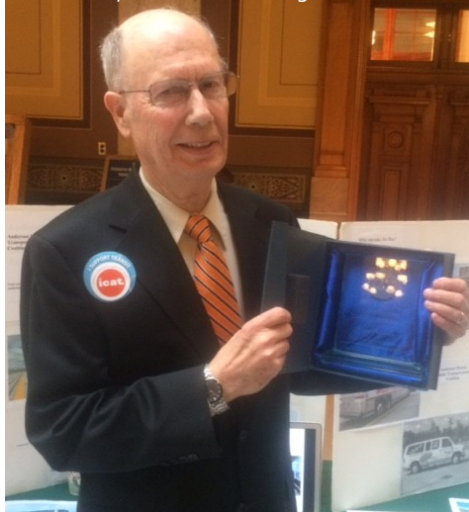
- about transportation, and the needs of people;
- about transportation, and the needs of our world;
- about transportation, and how connected to all of life it is.

And to present these thoughts in a clear, consistent, and cogent way to the rest of the world.

If each of us will do this, just think how much more effective our Advocacy, both as individuals, and as an organization, will be.

Hollands Among Those Honored at Transit Day

Transit Day award winner Roger Hollands



Roger Hollands, a transit advocate for the Anderson-Muncie Public Transportation Coalition, was among three people honored at the Indiana Statehouse on Thursday, February 11. The Indiana Citizens' Alliance for Transit presented Hollands with its "individual advo-

cate" award in recognition of many years of pushing for better transit in the Anderson-Muncie area.

Hollands was on hand to talk with state lawmakers and other transit advocates about his area's desire for commuter rail service to connect Indianapolis and Anderson/Muncie. During the morning long event, Doug Yerkeson, a board member of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance, met with individuals interested in learning more about Iowa-Pacific's **Hoosier State** train service. People said they like the affordability and comfort of the four-day-a-week train. Individuals with disabilities expressed a strong desire to ride the train.

Doug Yerkeson (at left) represented the Indiana Passenger Rail Association at Transit Day, bringing legislators, the public, and Transit folks up-to-date on the Hoosier State.



Amtrak Announces 20% Discount When Traveling with Saver Fares

The traveling public is encouraged to book early and take advantage of the "saver fare" option when riding Amtrak. By booking at least 14 days in advance, passengers will save 20 percent on the regular adult train fare. This promotion is available through April 30, for travel through June 17. The super fare option is available on the following 13 trains: *Southwest Chief, Empire Builder, Coast Starlight, Crescent, Cardinal, California Zephyr, City of New Orleans, Silver Star, Silver Meteor, Lake Shore Limited, Sunset Limited, Capitol Limited, and Texas Eagle.*

Up to two children, ages 2 – 12, may accompany each adult at half fare. Tickets are non-refundable. Seating is limited and may not be available on all days. The promotion is valid for coach seats only; no sleep upgrades are permitted. To learn about other restrictions and blackout dates contact Amtrak at 1-800-USA-RAIL.

Riding the Rails

By Donald Yehle

Trains Magazine in the March 2016 edition offered its readers a detailed look at what it took to salvage a train service that was threatened with discontinuance in 2013. Bob Johnson's article entitled, "*Hoosier State* Reflects a New Approach," spoke to the "advantages and challenges when a private operator replaces Amtrak."

While Iowa Pacific works on marketing the Chicago to Indianapolis train service to business people, college students, and tourists, passenger rail advocates see the need to raise further awareness of the route and build ridership through major changes to the four-day-a-week service.

The Midwest High Speed Rail Association (MWHSR) and Indiana Passenger Rail supporters meet in Lafayette at noon, Thursday, March 3, to discuss the next steps for expanding the *Hoosier State* passenger rail corridor.

In a meeting invitation, MWHSR's Mike Richards said "the *Hoosier State* Corridor is an ideal market for frequent train service. Chicago and Indianapolis are large cities with strong economic ties. The 190-mile trip, combined with unpredictable traffic congestion, makes driving unattrac-

tive and trip is too short to make flying worthwhile. The Lafayette area is home to a major university and manufacturers with strong international ties.

"Community leaders there seek a stronger connection to O'Hare.

"The recent launch of the new *Hoosier State* has reenergized local leaders and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) in support of enhancing the service. Ridership and revenue increases are expected to result from improved service levels and marketing.

"Now, it is time to invest in the track and signals needed to add more frequent service and gain competitive trips' times," Richards wrote.

Meeting attendees will discuss a potential action plan and learn how to help make it a reality.

Rail Users Network (RUN) will soon publish an article written by the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) detailing a set of short term goals for the development of the *Hoosier State* corridor. "The article is our first attempt to state these goals," said IPRA President Steve Coxhead.

"Since passenger rail service in the corridor is in many respects a public undertaking (with a strong private component of Iowa Pacific Holdings), we think it appropriate for us to state the goals," he continued.

"Everyone involved (in the *Hoosier State* corridor) would agree that there is only so much that can be done to build ridership in the corridor with the current schedule, frequency, and link to the *Cardinal*.

"At some point there must be a corridor schedule that fits the needs of the corridor. We are under no illusion that getting from the current situation to a more desirable one will be easy, quick, or inexpensive. However, we do believe it appropriate to set goals, and to start discussion of ways and means, with the various parties concerned," Coxhead said.

Among the goals outlined in the RUN article are:

- Separate schedules for the *Hoosier State* and *Cardinal*.
- Additional train frequencies.
- More Beech Grove equipment runs.
- Engineering Improvements.
- Extension to Cincinnati.

(continued)



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("Riding the Rails" continued from page 6)

BECOME AN 'AT-LARGE COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE –

Are you passionate about giving Americans better transportation choices? Are you ready to play a greater role in the movement of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) efforts to make that happen?

"Serving on the council of representatives is a wonderful opportunity to collaborate with others who share a common interest in improving passenger train service and public transportation systems across the country. Representatives serve two-year terms and are responsible for their own travel expenses and meeting fees to attend these gatherings," NARP said

Persons who have been NARP members for at least one year may compete for "at large" seats on the council, which holds its spring meeting April 11-13 in Silver Springs,

Maryland. Go to the NARP's website to review position descriptions for representatives at-large. You'll be asked to complete and submit an "at-large" representative candidate information statement form. Deadline for submission is March 31.

ANOTHER REASON TO RIDE THE TRAIN – Mega Bus issues have been written about in past issues of *All Aboard Indiana*. A scary bus incident in late February made national news. [Click here to read the story.](#)

NARP's FEBRUARY 26 HOTLINE covers public comment on the U.S. Surface Transportation board "in regards to preference between freight and passenger trains"; the Gulf Coast Inspection Train trip to explore reintroducing passenger rail service between New Orleans and Orlando; a study to create daily passenger service (*cont'd*)

(*"Riding the Rails" continued from page 7*) between Detroit and Holland, MI, and the latest on California's high speed rail project.

The HILL reported that Amtrak, as well as NARP, filed comments in response to the Surface Transportation Board's "policy statement" on preference for freight trains. Overall, the proposed statement would reverse a federal mandate, which currently gives Amtrak preference on rail track over freights. Amtrak and NARP shared comments that highlighted that a change in preference will result in delays for passengers, especially those traveling long distance.

STB Public Comment on Definition of Preference

On February 22, 2016, NARP provided the U.S. Surface Transportation Board with its comments in regards to preference between freight and passenger trains. The STB sought comments from the rail-riding public through February 22, 2016. In its comments, NARP contended that the STB overreached their administrative powers by issuing a "Policy Statement" on how it will view the need for a right to preference without any input from any outside parties – even though "preference" has already been defined, and periodically reaffirmed, by elected legislators who make the law on behalf of the voting public. The Dept. of Justice and the Dept. of Transportation have also addressed preference on numerous occasions.

Following the deadline for submissions regarding preference, commenters supported NARP's position by nearly 10 to 1, recognizing that STB's issuing of a policy statement was an overreach that should be withdrawn. In addition, in less than 24 hours more than 60 members of NARP have written to the STB on Amtrak's behalf to voice their concerns and support passenger rail service.

Following the **Gulf Coast Inspection Train's trip** last week, supporters of reintroducing passenger rail service from New Orleans to Orlando encouraged the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee to support grants that would boost capital. The effort was for the funding of two discretionary grant programs that were included in the \$325 billion long-term transportation bill from 2015 - the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement program and the Restoration and Enhancement Grants program. The push was led by Knox Ross, a Southern Rail Commissioner and mayor of Pelahatchie, Miss.

A study released by the **Michigan Environmental Council** revealed that a daily passenger railroad service between Detroit and Holland could cost up to \$540 million, but that the

service would generate \$14 million in annual revenue. The report also noted that with increased train frequency traveling at higher speeds, ridership and revenue would grow, with expectations that up to 1.71 million annual riders will use the service by 2040. According to the study, a 110-mph, 8 daily trip route through Jackson showed the greatest potential ridership and revenue.

Officials of the California High-Speed Rail Authority met with federal partners this week to discuss how the state will now build the first stretch of the train to the Bay Area, as opposed to its original plan of Los Angeles. Among the officials meeting on Capitol Hill was Dan Richard, chairman of the California High-Speed Rail Authority who stated that the change to San Jose was "all about getting a train up and running the fastest way possible." With the change underway, it's expected that the train will be completed within the next 10 years.

Rail Infrastructure Improvement: The Next Step

By Arvid Olson, Greater Lafayette Commerce

In late February, a Greater Lafayette delegation representing business, industry, government, and community enhancement spent three days visiting elected officials, agencies, and other organizations in Washington, D.C. Sponsored by Greater Lafayette Commerce, the nearly 3-dozen individuals brought position papers on a variety of issues of concern in an effort to benefit Greater Lafayette and the State of Indiana.

One meeting with the Federal Rail Administration centered on taking the initial steps toward rail infrastructure improvement primarily on track owned by CSX railroad in Western Indiana. Through a series of discussions at the state, corporate, and local levels it has been determined that there is a heightened possibility of federal funding for enhancement and rehabilitation of existing rail assets. The passage of the FAST Act (*continued*)



Arvid Olson pauses during a recent train trip.

("Rail Infrastructure Improvement" continued from page 8) in December 2015 is a welcome sign. After 35 distinct extensions of the 2004 omnibus transportation bill, it provides a 10% overall increase in funding for highways, transit, and rail. The bill also recognizes that to some degree, rail has been underserved in previous legislation. To that end, a diverse number of funding initiatives have been codified to address improving our freight and passenger rail infrastructure.

One of the new programs is the Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair. The bill provides nearly \$1 billion dollars to address capital projects that replace existing assets with assets to increase usage capacity or provide a higher level of service. The funds are first-come and give preference to projects that involve a number of cooperating applicants.

This funding program, among an array of potential funding opportunities, may address improvement to the existing passenger train route used by the INDOT/IPH *Hoosier State* and Amtrak's *Cardinal*. The funds could go a long way toward ensuring the safety, speed and on-time reliability of daily passenger service to and from Indianapolis-Chicago. First for a possible upgrade would be the trackage from Avon to Crawfordsville, Indiana. Known historically as the P&I (Peoria and Indianapolis) the nearly 40-mile route is single track with no passing sidings and is not currently signaled. The infrastructure limitations restrict the route to one train at a time over the line. Multiple trains operating at route speeds could be permitted in part with a 2-mile long automatic passing siding near Jamestown, Indiana. Also, the installation of signaling would allow for more than one train to operate safely on the P&I at one time. While the (old Monon) route between Crawfordsville and Dyer possesses signaling and sidings, the sidings for the most part do not permit trains to pass at route speed. The plan would be to rehabilitate a number of these sidings for at-speed train meets and utilize automatic switches.

The end result of the asset rehabilitation would be for consistent route operation at up to 60 miles per hour as well as to increase the overall train capacity along the entire Western Indiana route (passenger and freight). Over the years there have been a number of rehabilitative proposals to allow for increased route speed and an increase in the number of trains operating on the Indiana route of the *Hoosier State*. What has held these proposals back is that the total investment is cost prohibitive for CSX Railroad based on the line's estimated freight traffic.

This more modest proposal has a stronger chance of receiving federal support (50%) and has gained a number of key supporters required for a robust joint proposal. There is much to be done before a grant proposal is submitted, but possibilities are indeed looking better 'up and down the Monon'...

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All Aboard Indiana is a monthly publication of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA), formerly the Indiana High Speed Rail Association (INHSRA).

To learn more about IPRA, visit
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