

Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance Aligning Itself with National Rail Users' Network

By Richard Rudolph, PhD; Chairman, Rail Users' Network



The board of RUN would like to thank the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance for joining the Rail Users' Network. Thanks, also, for encouraging individual members of IPRA to join in our common effort to improve and expand passenger and transit rail services in North America.

The Rail Users' Network is a relatively new concept based on the successful British Passenger Focus model, created by an act of Parliament, which has been serving passengers throughout the United Kingdom since 1948. RUN is different, however, in that it represents many different types of rail passengers, including long distance, commuter, and transit riders.

The organization isn't sanctioned by an act of U.S. Congress, but some of our representative groups are legislatively mandated by their respective states and municipalities.

The idea for creating the organization grew from the experience that I, as Vice Chair and then Chair, and others had as members of Amtrak's first Customer Advisory Committee which was established in 1997. We made hundreds of cost-effective recommendations for improvements to benefit rail customers. Most of these, however, were never acted upon.

We soon realized that many other passenger rail / transit rail citizen advisory committees also served as mere "window dressing" to convince politicians and the public that rail and transit agencies were listening to their customers' concerns.

In response to this situation, we organized a national conference which was attended by many of the established North American rail passenger advisory and advocacy groups, key rail policy makers and executives, and a large number of interested individuals.

By acclamation the conference, attendees voted to create a planning committee to establish a national organization which would assist transit rail advisory committees and rail advocacy groups at the state and local level.

While RUN is a small 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, dependent on dues and donations to carry out a variety of activities on behalf of passenger rail and transit rail users, we represent millions of transit and commuter rail passengers through board members, who also serve on transit agencies' Citizen Advisory Boards.

Our board of directors currently consists of 15 members and includes representatives from Cleveland's RTA Citizen Advisory Board; Corridor Capital, LLC; Empire State Passenger (*cont'd*)

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("Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance Aligns Itself..." continued from page 1) Association; Greater Four Corners Action Coalition; Hampton Roads for Rail; Lackawanna Coalition; Ohio Rail Tourism Association; New York Transit Riders Council; Maine Rail Group; Rails Inc.; Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority; Transport Action Ontario, and the Tri-State Citizens' Council on Transportation. RUN network passengers, their advocacy organizations, and their advisory councils also serve on our board.

We are working to build a strong, unified NATIONAL voice for intercity, regional / commuter, and transit rail passenger interests and to secure an interconnected system of rail services that passengers will use with pride. By joining together, sharing information, best practices, and resources through networking, all passengers have a better chance of occupying a vocal and meaningful seat at the decision-making table that ultimately determines the quality of their passenger rail services.

We seek the views of all rail passengers, including potential passengers and those with special needs. RUN represents rail and rail transit passengers' interest to the industry, and to those who regulate or influence it. We encourage rail and rail transit operators to become more accountable by including their customers in all levels of evaluation, decision-making, and planning.

We also advocate for the development and use of customer-friendly rail passenger services that are affordable, efficient, and reliable. This includes expansion of existing services, as well as new starts to promote greater mobility and to improve the economic vitality of cities and regions. Our forums provide an opportunity to share "best practices" among existing advocacy groups and to assist start-up groups in becoming legislatively-mandated.

RUN has accomplished a great deal over the past decade. We have held international and regional conferences each year in a number of cities including Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, New Haven, Philadelphia, Toronto, and Washington, D.C. We also hold board and annual meetings in New York and in other cities to keep members abreast of what's happening at the national / local level and to provide an opportunity for members of other advisor groups and advocacy organizations to participate in RUN activities.

By all accounts this year's conference held in Boston on April 29 succeeded in answering the question of "Who's Looking Out for You?" in the Boston area and New England regarding passenger rail / rail transit issues. The roster of speakers included managers from the MBTA, Keolis Commuter Services, Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Amtrak, advocates and planners.

All provided invaluable insights regarding current services as well as efforts underway to expand passenger rail and rail



transit in New England. The conference room was filled to capacity and included participants from all of the New England states, Ohio, Oklahoma, Montreal, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

Former Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis spoke at the Rail Users' Network regional conference in Boston, April 29. The governor told conference participants that rail was part of his original plan for Boston's "Big Dig" project, which would have connected the North and South rail stations.

RUN also publishes a quarterly award-winning newsletter which is sent to individual RUN members, to State and Federal policy makers, to regional transportation advisory boards, and to passenger rail advocacy groups that are RUN members. We now also publish *Short Runs*, a monthly email feature sent to our members highlighting several current major news items.

We have taken a stand on a number of controversial issues, including:

- Calling for the preservation of the Adirondack Scenic Railroad.
- Supporting the continued operation of the Southwest Chief on its present route.
- Supporting National Transportation Safety Board's recommendations first issued on March 2, 2012. (That recommendation called for the existing fleet of 111 Department of Transportation tank cars that carry crude oil and ethanol be retrofitted to meet new standards. The standards are extra protective head shields at both ends of tank cars, additional protection for the top fittings, higher flow capacity pressure release valves, and thicker, puncture-resistant shells.)

RUN has recently responded to the Surface Transportation Board (STB) proposed rulemaking in Docket EP-728 regarding on-time performance of intercity trains. Currently on-time performance for intercity rail is a mixture of 10 minutes, 20 minutes, or 30 minutes within scheduled arrival time, depending on the length of the route, and is measured only at the scheduled arrival time at a train's final station. (continued)

("Indiana Passenger Rail Association Aligns Itself..." continued from page 2) With some intercity routes lasting two hours and others lasting two or three days, there is much variety in the traveling distance of trains in the U.S. In addition, the current practice of adding 45-90 minutes of extra time (between the final two stations) can result in a train that is operating well over an hour late at most stations, to then be on time at its final station, if it arrives at the final station within 30 minutes of schedule.

We submitted several options to the STB which it should consider including using a passenger-weighted average for on-time performance, by measuring the number of passengers getting off the train at each stop, and whether the train is on-time at the station. This is more complicated option; however, exact station arrival times and passengers at each specific train stop are tracked today allowing for this calculation to be made.

RUN has also sent an open letter to Amtrak's Board Chairman regarding its search for a new president to replace current President and CEO Joe Boardman, who retires this September. Based on a discussion held at our most recent board meeting, we identified a number of qualities we deem necessary for the success of a new Amtrak president.

First and foremost, the successful candidate should be customer-focused and committed to long distance, regional and state supported passenger rail service as a vital component of our national transportation network.

Greater mobility for all, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions is the goal the new president must pursue.

The new president also needs to be committed to developing an equipment plan to replace its aging fleet, as well as to expand frequencies to increase Amtrak's share of the transportation market.

The president further needs to develop and implement plans for expanding Amtrak service such as a daily train from Chicago to Indianapolis and Cincinnati; a second train between the Twin Cities of Saint Paul/ Minneapolis and Chicago, and restoration of service from New Orleans to Jacksonville and on to Orlando.

As our work is supported through individual as well as organizational memberships, please consider joining our organization. Dues are \$40 a year.

Don't be left behind at the station. Make your voice heard in the fight for better rail and transit service! For more information about the organization and to join us, go to Railusers.net

Muncie's Progress Rail Praised at Delaware Co. Commuter Rail Meeting

By Roger Hollands, Anderson-Muncie Transportation Coalition

An important meeting was held at Muncie City Hall on April 26th to discuss public transportation options for travel within Delaware County and for commuter service from Muncie and Anderson to Indianapolis. Dennis Tyler, mayor of Muncie since 2012, provided a very warm welcome for those attending.

Progress Rail, a Muncie manufacturer, was recognized for its production of the F125 Diesel Locomotive Engines that soon will be powering commuter trains in the Los Angeles, California, region. Praise came from the Anderson-Muncie Transportation coalition.

Next was a brief overview of existing transit services in Delaware County. An excellent discussion of the issues and the challenges was provided by an eight-person panel, including Indiana State Representative Sue E. Errington (Democrat, District 34).

Others on the panel were Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Plan Director Marta Moody; Ball State Telecommunications faculty member Chris Flook; Disability Advocate Linda Muckway; Indiana Citizen's Alliance for Transit leader Addison Pollock; Central Indiana Regional Transportation Authority Mobility Director Philip Roth, and Delaware County Commissioner Sherry Riggins.

Three specific steps discussed include the need to bring more people and resources into the discussion, the need for surveys and studies of potential commuters in the region, and the need to work toward the establishment of a broad-based transit forum similar to the one in Hamilton County.

Indiana's car culture as exemplified by Hoosiers' attachment to their personal vehicles was noted as the most overwhelming challenge faced by transit advocates.

Encouraging more people to understand that city transit, commuter systems, and passenger rail are services everyone can use and benefit from is critical. All systems should be fully accessible, affordable, safe, reliable and provide frequent service. People of all income levels should feel comfortable riding and enjoying the benefits of good public transportation.

For commuter bus service and perhaps someday commuter rail to be effective, there has to be good transit service in cities along the route. While Muncie has an outstanding small city bus system in place and Anderson has the City of Anderson Transit System, Indianapolis has long (continued)

("Muncie's Progress Rail Praised..." continued from page 3)
had very low per capita funding for transit.

Thus it is important that the Indianapolis City-County Council passed a resolution on May 9, 2016, to put a referendum on the November ballot that would provide for an increase in the local option income tax for the Indy Go Transit System.

Passage of the referendum would mean increased bus frequency on routes and longer service hours, both of which will complement a federally-funded bus rapid transit line.

Good city transit service, park and ride lots, and feeder bus lines connecting to commuter transit stops are important precursors if commuter systems are to be successful. We support the people and community leaders in Indianapolis as they work for passage of the transit referendum this November.

At present, there are only two round-trip buses operated by Miller Transportation between Muncie and Anderson to Indianapolis. Unfortunately, there is no morning bus from Muncie so for most bus riders, an overnight stay in the capitol city is required.

In the short run, we will talk with Miller about better schedules. In the longer run, commuter bus and someday commuter rail systems would require some changes in the legislation.

According to commuter statistics from 2013 Indiana Individual Income Tax returns, there were 6,878 people commuting from Delaware (Muncie) and Madison (Anderson) Counties to Marion County (Indianapolis) and about 1,300 people commuting from Marion County to Delaware and Madison Counties. Source: STATS Indiana

The following groups also benefit from these affordable, safe, and frequent public transportation options. They are: People who can't drive; people without cars; college students; senior citizens, and people traveling to other cities.

It is clear to many of us that Central Indiana needs improved public transportation options to connect regional cities and Indianapolis. The Anderson-Muncie corridor is an ideal one in which bus or rail modes would benefit many people.

If Indianapolis is to be a world-class city and become more economically competitive in the future, it would do well to examine commuter rail and bus systems in metropolitan areas across the country that already support commuter rail systems in place.

Indiana's own South Shore Line from South Bend to Chicago is a good example of what's needed in our part of the state. Nine other American cities of Indianapolis' size with

strong commuter rail systems are Albuquerque, Baltimore, Boston, Denver, Minneapolis, Orlando, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City and Seattle. While the Chicago metropolitan area is much larger, the METRA system there can also offer useful planning ideas.

Important first steps are now underway in Indiana. Future progress will require a long-term plan to build community awareness, broad-based coalitions of activists, as well as the support of federal, state and local elected officials.

The challenges are real, but these discussions and efforts will help the people of Delaware and Madison Counties and strengthen connections among all Central Indiana communities in the years ahead.

Editor's Note: Roger Hollands was honored with an individual advocate award at Indiana's 2016 Transit Day, February 11, at the state house. In bestowing recognition on Hollands, the Indiana Citizens' Alliance for Transit cited the transit advocate for many years of pushing for better transit in the Anderson-Muncie area.

A Sunday on the *Hoosier State*

By Donald Yehle

Strangers, all of us were strangers, around 5:25 p.m. Sunday, May 1. We were at Chicago Union Station. We had just boarded the business class coach on the *Hoosier State*. Our destinations were Lafayette or Indianapolis.

Each of us had different reasons for being on the train.

Max Andrew, age 4, on his first-ever train ride.



Max the Storyteller

Take Max Andrew Taylor, age 4, as an example.

Traveling with his grandparents, the Indianapolis resident had visited Shedd Aquarium, Navy Pier, and the Chicago Children's Museum over the weekend. When we caught up with him, Max was staring out the windows of Train 850 as it was heading to Rensselaer, Lafayette, Crawfordsville, and finally the boy's hometown of Indianapolis.

Later, while eating a grilled cheese sandwich, the youngster talked of stingrays, sharks, and Shedd Aquarium's 4D Experience – Monsters of the Deep. The swimming pool *(continued)*

("A Sunday on the **Hoosier State**" continued from page 4) at their Chicago hotel also supplied Max with some wonderful memories, which he would be sharing with his parents on Monday.

Julie Mann, the gardener

Julie Mann (center) and the author's wife, Karen, receive the "red carpet" treatment when boarding the train in Chicago.



Julie Mann, a graduate of Lafayette Jeff and Purdue University, was returning to her Lafayette roots to garden, to see family, and to meet for the first time, a great niece. A chemical engineering graduate who has spent most of her working career in IT, Julie commented, "Riding on the Hoosier State was a wonderful 'accident.'"

"It was a lovely train and the food and service were incredible.

"I so hope this train is a success and expands service," she said on her way to Lafayette.

Currently of West Chicago, Illinois, Julie enjoyed the dinner on the train and ordered a salad, salmon, and peanut butter pie for dessert. As a special treat, shrimp cocktails were made available to guests that Sunday evening. "Lovely company made the time fly by," said Julie, who was also looking forward to recognizing people as she walked Lafayette's sidewalks over the next several days.

Dave Topp, Purdue Administrative/Professional



Earlier this Sunday, Dave Topp had delivered an automobile to his son in Chicago. Throughout the train trip back to Lafayette, he took advantage of the **Hoosier State's** WiFi to catch up on professional responsibilities with Purdue's Military Family Research Institute.

The Ph.D. staff member also conversed with other passengers, telling people that his Purdue work includes tracing overseas deployment of National Guard troops. "These deployments have been over the last 13 years," he said while eating a delicious **Hoosier State** dinner.

Famous People Aboard the Hoosier State

Persons ride the **Hoosier State** for many reasons.

Numerous couples -- this Sunday included -- attend the theater between arriving at Union Station mid-morning and the 5:45 p.m. departure. It's a full day, starting with a full breakfast, and ending with dinner. One unnamed couple also worked in attending a Michigan Ave. church, a long walk along Michigan Ave., and later *The King and I*.

The **Hoosier State** staff was asked to name the "most famous passenger they've seen since the train was launched last August." The owner of the Chicago Bears took the train to the NFL Combine at Lucas Oil Stadium several months ago, one staff member said. How appropriate is this, considering Four-Year-Old Max dreams of the "Monsters of the Deep" and the Bears' official was seeking another "Monster of the Midway" by riding the rails to the NFL combine in Indianapolis prior to the league's upcoming draft.

Brakeman Duties, Restaurant Management Prepared Bradburn for **Hoosier State** Post

By Donald Yehle

Andy Bradburn has been preparing for a lifetime to be passenger service manager on the **Hoosier State**.

The Indianapolis resident -- a veteran of 30 years in food service -- once served Rick's Boathouse at Eagle Creek Reservoir as its restaurant manager. Much earlier in his life, he worked for five years as a Conrail brakeman switching train cars and throwing switches for local industries.

As with all **Hoosier State** hospitality workers, Andy's current work day is long -- 20 hours. He does this at least twice a week, often more.

Six hours of rest -- 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at a Chicago hotel -- breaks up the day, which begins at 4 a.m. and ends long after midnight in Indiana's Capitol City. Four other people -- a bar tender, chef, server, and steward -- work with Andy in providing personalized food service during the 196-mile train trek between Indianapolis and Chicago or Chicago to Indianapolis.

Admittedly, **Hoosier State** ridership is softer than desired, but "the quality of the passenger has partially made up for the lack of quantity," he said. There is time to talk with Hoosiers to learn what they want from their state-funded railroad, which was launched last August. (continued)

("Brakeman Duties, Restaurant Management Prepared Bradburn..." continued from page 5) The low cost of gasoline continues to adversely affect passenger count on all trains across the country, including the *Hoosier State*. Bradburn is expecting ridership to spike with the summer vacation season here. "We're looking for families to take to the rails," he said.



Andy Bradburn, customer service manager, *Hoosier State*

Rail Baron Club memberships boosts ridership and introduces passengers to business class. Coach customers are learning they can receive 100 points every time they get on the *Hoosier State*. "Two trips allow for an upgrade from coach to business class, which comes with a complimentary breakfast or dinner in our dome car," he explained.

Bradburn and his customer service staff are happy to assist passengers in signing up to become Rail Baron Club members. While "on line" sign up is also possible, the important thing is to take advantage of the program's benefits that includes riding in the dome car and enjoying a delicious breakfast and/or dinner, the customer service manager said.

Iowa Pacific is building ridership the old-fashioned way – one customer at a time. People slowly are learning the advantages of riding the *Hoosier State* corridor. It beats driving on congested highways and dodging freeways crowded with trucks. There's no expensive Chicago parking charges for *Hoosier State* riders, Bradburn said.

Assisting with food service is one part of the job. An equally important task is communicating with the company's dispatcher in Janesville, Wisconsin. Dispatchers are told how many people get on and off at each stop -- Indianapolis, Crawfordsville, Lafayette, Rensselaer, and Dyer. Informing dispatch of delays, also matters. For instance, on a recent Sunday morning, there were bad signals, caused by an object across the tracks at mile marker 132.4, he said.

"Passengers help us monitor the quality of our service through the completion of comment cards. An overwhelmingly large number of people give us an overall satisfaction scores of 5 out of 5, especially on food quality.

"We rely on these comments so as to continually make the train trips better for all customers," Bradburn said.

Food served on the *Hoosier State* is trucked each Thursday from Chicago to Indianapolis. What's served on the train varies by the season. Shrimp cocktail was on the menu the first Sunday in May. It was served along with hanger steak, salmon, oven-roasted potatoes, and asparagus. Brownies and peanut butter pie were the dessert choices.

"In describing our food, we remind everyone that everything is prepared from scratch. There's not a single microwave on board," Bradburn said.

Positive reviews on social media will ultimately drive *Hoosier State* ridership. Iowa Pacific is counting on kind words on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook from student riders who attend Butler, IUPUI, Purdue University, Saint Joseph's College, the University of Indianapolis, and Wabash College.

The Iowa Pacific *Hoosier State* consist can carry up to 132 passengers, plus as many as 50 business class customers.

Indiana Dignitaries to Experience *Hoosier State* on Thursday, June 9

Iowa Pacific Holdings and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) in partnership with on-line communities and Amtrak, are inviting 100 to 125 dignitaries from throughout Indiana to experience the enhanced *Hoosier State* aboard an exclusive special train between Indianapolis and Lafayette on Thursday, June 9.

Guests will enjoy the following:

- An up-close view of the train equipment and amenities,
- An informal presentation and Q&A,
- Networking opportunities with INDOT and elected leaders.
- Food and beverages provided by Iowa Pacific.

Invited guests are picking one of three meeting times and locations to join the excursion and to allow for a prompt departure. They are:

11 a.m. Eastern in the historic Indianapolis Union Station Grand Hall at 39 Jackson Place.

12:45 p.m. Eastern at the Crawfordsville Amtrak station, 400 N. Green St.

Following the **2 p.m.** Eastern public celebration at Lafayette's renovated Big Four Depot, 200 N. 2nd St.

Optional return travel by train or chartered motor coach will be available to Crawfordsville by 3:45 p.m., to Indianapolis by 5 p.m. and to Lafayette by 6:30 p.m.

IPRA Boasts 54 Members; Six from Out-of-State

Fifty-four individuals are putting their money behind the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA), which continues to work for the development of 21st Century Passenger Rail in Indiana. Members come from 23 Indiana cities and six communities outside of the state.

Indianapolis leads the way with 12 members, while Greater Lafayette (Lafayette, West Lafayette) is represented by nine people. Fort Wayne has three members, while Fishers, Merrillville, Muncie, and Portage all have two each.

Individual members also hail from Battleground, Bloomington, Crawfordsville, Hammond, Kokomo, LaPorte, Munster, Nashville, New Albany, Noblesville, Peru, Shelbyville, St. John, Valparaiso, Warsaw, and Westfield.

The six out-of-state member are from Cincinnati; Detroit; Columbia, Maryland; Kalamazoo, MI; Tinley Park, IL; and Pflugerville, Texas.

IPRA encourages all members to invite other rail advocates to join the cause. The organization is also seeking a membership director. Like with any non-profit organization, "the task can take as much as time as you'd be willing to spend," says IPRA President Steve Coxhead.

"Growing membership isn't difficult. It's a matter of belief in the cause, knowing people with a similar belief system, and reaching out," Coxhead continued.

IPRA membership dues are paid annually – just \$30 dollars – or for students, \$25. Member discounts include 12% off the best flexible rate at Crowne Plaza Union Station, Indianapolis.

For more details on IPRA and our memberships, please visit www.indianahighspeedrail.org. Individuals interested in helping recruit new members should contact Coxhead at scoxhead@comcast.net or 219-741-8053.

Multi-State Support Powers Vermont Trains

By Carl Fowler, President (Retired), Rail Travel Adventures

Editor's Note: June's **Riding the Rails** column takes us to Vermont, for an in-depth look at two state-supported Amtrak trains – *The Vermonter* and the *Ethan Allen*. Enjoy!

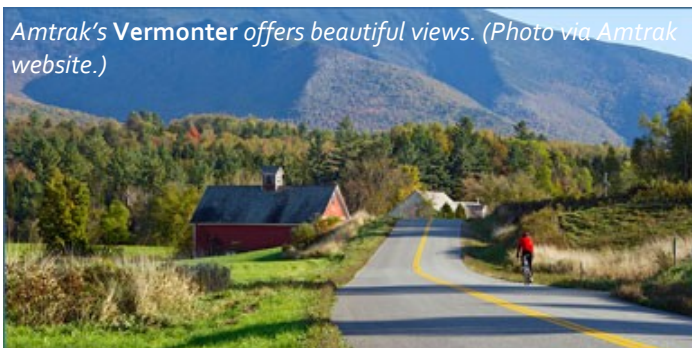
The little state of Vermont has one of the most interesting state-supported Amtrak networks. Two routes provide ser-

vice within the state -- *The VERMONTER* operates from St. Albans, near the Canadian border, south to New York, and Washington, D.C. *The ETHAN ALLEN* provides service from Rutland to Albany and New York. Today both trains are run with multi-state support, but for most of their history Vermont alone supported the majority of their costs.

A little history: One of the first services to be restored early in the Amtrak era in 1972 was a cross-border run from New York to Montreal. Both New York and New England competed for this award, which was to be a fully Amtrak supported train and ultimately New England/Vermont prevailed.

This was something of a surprise, as the last surviving pre-Amtrak train from New York to Montreal ran on the Penn Central/Delaware and Hudson route through New York state (a line ultimately restored in 1976 with direct New York state support as the ADIRONDACK). The 1972-1995 MONTREALER was an overnight train, serving the Northeast Corridor from Washington D.C. and New York, before continuing via New Haven, Springfield and Vermont to Montreal.

The service ran over the Amtrak/Penn Central, Boston and Maine, Central Vermont and Canadian National routes. Initially it was very successful, even featuring a winter thru sleeper from Montreal to Miami, transferred to the SILVER STAR at Washington. Sadly, deteriorating track conditions led to an extended "bustitution" in 1984, which undermined ridership. But this marked the beginning of Vermont's strong state support for the line.



Legally, Amtrak had the authority to condemn the routes of freight railroads that refused to maintain track to passenger standards. The refusal of Guilford Railroads (the B&M's holding company) to fix deteriorated track between Windsor, VT and Springfield, MA led to the only time to date when Amtrak exercised this authority.

With a \$5 million appropriation, obtained primarily with the bipartisan support of the Vermont Congressional delegation for purchase and repair, Amtrak bought the line, resold it to the pro-passenger Central Vermont Railway and restored service. But ridership never really recovered after four (*continued*)

(*"Multi-State Support..." continued from page 7*) years of bus service north of Springfield and in 1994 Amtrak announced it would end Vermont service at the spring timetable change on April 30, 1995.

At this point Vermont really stepped up. I'm proud to have played a part in this. I wrote an open letter to the governor, the Vermont Department of Transportation and our DC delegation proposing a much less costly service than *the MONTREALER*, which required sleepers and diner service.

Instead I suggested extending an existing Northeast Corridor frequency as a coach train north to St. Albans, with a dedicated Ambus from there to Montreal, as the Canadian National—alas—demanded \$1.5 million per year for the right to run north of the border, a section of under 60 miles. By contrast the Central Vermont, had been charging only \$1.2 million for the over 200 miles from St. Albans all the way to New London, CT! The day train would regain the historic route through Springfield and Hartford, CT, by doing a directional reverse at Palmer, MA. To my amazement the idea struck gold!

Vermont Governor Howard Dean and our then Congressional delegation of Democrat Senator Leahy/Republican Senator Jeffords /Independent Congressman Bernie Sanders lobbied aggressively for the state-supported "Section 403B" Amtrak service. Dean had required an initial subsidy of no more than \$1 million per year.

The negotiations were tough. Amtrak had claimed the *MONTREALER* was losing over \$4 million per year. Ultimately, when then Amtrak President Graham Claytor became convinced Vermont was sincere, we got the train initially for just over \$700,000 the first year.

Twenty-one years later this has climbed to over \$4 million, but we now have two trains on different routes, a completely rebuilt railroad with the first 79-mph track in Vermont history south of White River Jct., 250% of 1990s ridership and real plans to return to Montreal by train.

In 1996, the *VERMONT* was joined by the New York-Rutland *ETHAN ALLEN*. In 2019, long-term track repairs will allow this train to extend to Middlebury and Burlington, directly serving seven colleges. We expect ridership to more than double on the "Westside" line.

Much of Vermont's success derives from the long-term bipartisan support for rail at both the state and Federal legislative levels and from the on-going pursuit first of "earmarks" and since their demise of direct Federal grants, matched with major support by the state and the freight "host" operating railroads.

The New England Central (successor to the Central Vermont) and the Vermont Rail System have essentially rebuilt their mainlines with passenger service grants which obviously expedited their freight services, as well. Both have put real dollars into matching funds.

Vermont is not Switzerland. While we support an extensive network of local bus lines, virtually none are integrated with rail. We lost the St. Albans-Montreal bus connection when Greyhound dropped service at St. Albans and foolishly failed to replace it with a chartered Ambus. But these are issues that can be fixed. The Vermont Rail Advocacy Network, National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) and the state Rail Advisory Council continue to push for multi-modal integration.

But for such a tiny state to enjoy so much service is something we are justly proud of. The State Rail Plan foresees added frequencies, the installation of block signals (and 79 mph running) over currently dark track, the extension of the *ETHAN ALLEN* to Essex Jct., where it could then share the *VERMONT* route to Montreal and a quadrupling of ridership.

Ambitious, indeed, but we have shown a willingness to support rail and to use it. "If you build it they will come".

Round the Track: News Update

By Bill Malcolm, IPRA Board Member



A rendering of the soon-to-open Metropolitan Lounge hangs in Chicago's Union Station.



The new CTA bus hub in Chicago

Chicago Union Station adds free wi fi, new first class lounge -- This month, Amtrak will offer free wi fi in the Great Hall at Chicago's Union Station. All trains except the Hiawatha now board out of the Great Hall. Also this month the new Metropolitan Lounge opens in Great Hall. Across the street, Chicago CTA is building a new bus hub (see picture).

Amtrak is seeking to further develop the facility which has enjoyed strong passenger growth. (continued)

("Round the Track: News Update" continued from page 8)

City mum on improvements to Indianapolis Bus Rail Hub --

IPRA board members and Iowa Pacific met with the City of Indianapolis last month to ask that the beleaguered Union Station be better maintained. Poor signage, passengers sleeping on the floor, outdated lighting, and other issues make the facility a less than welcoming place for bus and rail passengers.

The City responded it was spending \$4 million on needed structural repairs and asked that we contact them when we see any incidents. They hinted Greyhound wanted to leave the facility altogether. We re-iterated our concerns about letting passengers sleep on the bare floor and the other issues which give it more of an appearance of a homeless shelter.

The City owns the facility but contracts with Browning to maintain it. Browning outsources operations to Greyhound. Greyhound allows any ticketed passenger to sleep on the floor.

City officials asked for a list of what other cities offer. (St. Louis, Milwaukee, East Lansing, Champaign-Urbana, Bloomington-Normal, St. Paul, Denver, and Kansas City are among the cities offering upgraded, revitalized Union Stations.) While Indy's Union Station is the oldest building in the city, the Bus Rail Station across the street needs improvement when compared to our world-class city-owned airport. Given the station's proximity to hotels, museums, Lucas Stadium, and the convention center, it has tremendous potential.

New security patrols and updated cleaning procedures have helped.

IPRA Board members also met with Visit Indy officials at the Union Station bus rail hub to discuss the beleaguered facility and needed improvements.

In a nutshell, the bus rail station is not a welcoming place. Hopefully the new administration can help.

Indy offers several bus options with service on several carries from Indy -- Greyhound has outsourced service to Detroit to Barons Bus. The daily service goes to Ft. Wayne, Toledo, and Ann Arbor before going to Detroit. Miller Bus offers service to South Bend, Chicago, Muncie, Terre Haute, and other cities. The Chicago bus also serves Merrillville, Gary, and Hammond. Greyhound outsourced many local routes to these companies.

Amtrak uses the Trailways Bus Company to provide service to Normal (IL), Urbana (IL), and Galesburg (IL) where you can connect with Amtrak trains.

All buses leave out of the Union Station terminal, 350 S. Illinois, in Indianapolis.

Interestingly, Greyhound has exited the local bus service mar-

ket and contractually outsources the local runs to Chicago and Detroit to Miller and Barrons Bus Companies. Greyhound still handles the loading of the buses and ticketing. It is similar to the airline model where the major carriers outsource flights to smaller cities using regional airlines but still handle the ticketing, marketing, etc.

The Miller and Barons Buses are nicer than the typical Greyhound bus. The service is better, too.

I found a lower cost ticket to Chicago on Miller using WanderU, a third-party website that searches for bus rail travel combinations. The price on the Miller website was higher.

In any event, you can get to Nashville, Louisville, Columbus, Cincinnati, Detroit, Chicago, and many other cities using the Indianapolis Bus Rail Station.

TSA tells passengers to arrive three hours early -- Flying to Chicago this summer. The 29-minute flight requires you to get to O'Hare or Midway three hours early! Take the train instead. There is no TSA. You can bring any size toothpaste you want and you arrive downtown. TSA lines have grown throughout the country as the agency cut staff.



New IndyGo transit hub opens --

The new IndyGo bus hub opens this month across the street from Indianapolis City County Building. The

Indy Union Station bus rail station serves numerous bus lines which go to cities such as Detroit, Chicago, and Normal/Champaign/Galesburg (IL).

state of the art facility also means no waiting in the weather by the State Capitol. Unfortunately, it is not close to the Union Station bus rail hub nor are there any connecting buses.

Going to Milwaukee or Madison? Take the train -- Amtrak has added an 8th late night round trip between Milwaukee and Chicago. All runs take 90 minutes and go 90 mph. They operate on CP and Metra tracks and are rarely late. Also, the Badger Bus now uses the Milwaukee intermodal terminal so Madison bound passengers can easily catch a ride to Madison (and avoid the 4-hour Van Galder bus trip from Amtrak's Union Station in Chicago. Madison-bound passengers can take the train to Milwaukee instead and then hop on the 8 times a day Badger Bus. Also serving Madison are the Jefferson Bus and the Lamers Bus.

Editor's Note: Bill Malcolm is a IPRA board member. He also writes the "Round the Ripple" column in the *Broad Ripple Gazette* and covers travel and sports news for another publication.



An Amtrak train on the Hiawatha route awaits passengers at the newly-remodeled Amtrak boarding platform in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Fourteen trains run daily (Monday through Saturday) on the 90-minute trip between Chicago and Milwaukee. Many business travelers like the train, which features a "quiet car," says IPRA Member Bill Malcolm.

Other than Chicago, the train stops in Glenview, IL; Sturtevant, WI; and Milwaukee's General Mitchell International Airport, he reports.

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For More Information

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 www.indianahighspeedrail.org

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