

## New Commuter Trains & Transit Lines Opening in Denver Metro Area in 2016

By Ann J. Lockhart

Four new commuter and light rail lines, the A, B, G and R Lines, and a bus rapid transit are opening in 2016, as part of FasTracks of the Regional Transportation District (RTD) in the Denver [Colorado] metropolitan area.

The first 2016 addition was the Flatiron Flyer, the Bus Rapid Transit Service that started in January between Boulder and Denver, leaving every 15 minutes. Funding is not yet available for a rail line between the two cities, a point of irritation among some Boulder area residents.

The A Line opened April 22-23 with hundreds of people taking advantage of two free days trying out Colorado's first electric commuter rail line from Union Station in lower downtown Denver traveling 22.8 miles northeast through Denver and Aurora to Denver International Airport.



Denver's new commuter rail line whisks passengers past Coors Field, home of the Colorado Rockies. (Photo by Donald Yehle.)

The A Line is known officially as the RTD University of Colorado A line since CU officials purchased the naming rights as part of a marketing campaign. However, the A Line doesn't stop next to any of the four CU campuses. It runs somewhat close to the new Anschutz Medical campus in Aurora.

The idea for the rail corridor came when city officials decided to move Denver's air-

port from its old east Denver Stapleton location to a new site on the northeast outskirts of the city. The six stops on the A Line have 4,300 parking spaces.

The cost is \$9 (or \$4.50 for seniors, students, active military and disabled passengers), which is good for 24 hours. The train runs every 15 minutes from 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. and every 30 minutes at other times. It takes 37 minutes from the airport to *(continued)*

## IN THIS ISSUE:

### Page Three

Experience University of Colorado "A" Line First-Hand at NARP's Fall Advocacy Event

### Page Four

Denver Station a Role Model for Indy's Union Station

### Page Five

Meet Bob Garity, IPRA Board Member  
Indy's New Transit Center Is a Gem for Bus Riders

### Page Six

Hoosier State Train Setting Ridership, Revenue Records  
Iowa Pacific President Has Big Vision for Multiple Daily Trains

### Page Seven

Transit Study Encourages Focusing on All-Purpose Riders  
As We Go to Press-Amtrak's Cardinal Assisting West Virginia Flood Victims  
W. Virginia Residents Thankful

### Page Eight

Surface Transportation Board Issues Reversals Favoring RR Passengers  
Contributors  
For More Information...  
Member Discounts

*A steep escalator connects train passengers with Terminal Level 5 of Denver International Airport.*



***("New Commuter Trains and Transit Lines" continued from page 1)*** Union Station downtown. Travelers had frequently complained about the sizable distance between the airport and downtown Denver.

Electric commuter rail vehicles are faster than light rail, with a top speed of 79 miles per hour compared to 55. The rail cars are larger and carry more people, 200 at a maximum. The 85-foot vehicles have level boarding at all doors of the train and two wheelchairs spaces per car. These trains also have large seats, overhead storage racks, luggage towers and bicycle or multi-storage racks.

Since it opened, the A line has experienced a few glitches, including power outages and a lightning strike which caused train shutdowns. At one point, 80 stranded passengers had to be evacuated from a train stopped on a bridge. RTD officials have been working on the problems.

The B Line's first segment, Union Station to Westminster, a 6.2-mile stretch taking 11 minutes, is the second commuter rail line to open this year, on July 25. It travels northwest to W. 69<sup>th</sup> Ave. (the future Westminster Station Drive) and Grove Street. It has 350 parking spaces. A second segment, a diesel-powered commuter rail from south Westminster north to Longmont, will be constructed when funding becomes available.

The 11.2-mile G (Gold) Line starts at Ward Road in Wheat Ridge, making eight stops in Arvada, Adams County and northwest Denver to Union Station in downtown Denver. This 26-minute electric commuter

rail ride will open in the fall of 2016. There will be 2,300 parking spaces along the way. The train will run every 15 minutes from 6 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and every 30 minutes in the early morning and late evening.

RTD entered into a 34-year agreement with project concessionaire Denver Transit Partners (DTP) to build, operate and maintain the commuter trains on the A, B and G Lines for 34 years (and an N line north of Denver in the future.) RTD will pay back the private partner over that time period. DTP's Eagle P3 Project is the nation's first full public-private partnership for transit. DTP also built a commuter rail maintenance facility to repair, maintain, clean and store the vehicles.

The 10.5-mile R light rail Line within the city of Aurora will provide key regional connections from the Southeast Rail Line in Lone Tree swinging east and north along Interstate-225 through Aurora, with stops at the Aurora City Center, the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus and Fitzsimons Life Science District. The rail line ends at Peoria St. and I-70 on the north, where passengers can transfer to the A Line to go to the airport or to downtown Denver.

**Slated to open in 2016, the R Line will have eight stations and 1,800 new parking spaces. The service will run every 10 minutes at peak hours and every 15 minutes during off-peak times. Kiewit Construction Company made an unsolicited proposal to the RTD board in 2012, offering to build it.**

In the eight-county RTD, 58 percent of the voters agreed to a 0.4 percent sales tax increase in 2004 for the FasTracks initiative—the largest in the nation—providing funding for the rail and bus rapid transit throughout the area. RTD also received federal grants and other funding for the transit lines.

**"Our ability to bring this type of rail connection to the Denver area is ground-breaking and will change the way residents and visitors experience our great cities," said RTD's CEO and General Manager Dave Genova. "We have elevated the standards of transit by implementing an electric commuter rail system that is safe, quick and highly accessible."**

Since that 2004 vote, a West or "W" light rail Line opened in late April 2013 running 12.1 miles from the Jefferson County Government Center in Golden (*continued*)



(“New Commuter Trains and Transit Lines” continued from page 2) through Lakewood to Union Station downtown. The line has 11 stations, six with parking totaling 4,959 spaces.

The funding also supported the major redevelopment of Union Station, which was completed May 9, 2014, along with a 22-gate underground bus concourse and new commuter rail platforms. The free MetroRide bus from Union Station to the Denver’s Civic Center started May 12, 2014, to provide high frequency rush hour service.

Development around the rail stations has been closely coordinated among RTD, local officials and developers. The pedestrian-oriented development allows people to live, work, shop and play in places accessible by transit, near apartments, offices and retail shops. Each is planned within a fourth or half-mile radius of the transit stops, for a 5 to 10 minute walk for pedestrians. The benefits are reduced urban sprawl, reduced commuter times and traffic congestion and improved environmental quality.

**Work has begun on the 18.5-mile North Metro electric commuter rail line connecting Union Station with northern suburbs of Commerce City, Northglenn, Thornton and North Adams County. When completed, it will feature eight stations. Current funding will allow construction of the corridor from downtown Denver to Eastlake and 124<sup>th</sup> Ave.**

Rail extensions to several lines are planned in the future, as funding becomes available. Cost overruns have af-

fected the RTD FasTrack’s schedules and budgets. For more information and maps of the commuter and light rail lines, see <http://rtd-fastracks.com>.

## Experience University of Colorado “A” Line First-Hand at NARP’s Fall Advocacy Event

The National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) holds its 2016 Advocacy Symposium and Meeting in Denver this October (Friday, October 14, through Sunday, October 16). Join with rail and transit advocates from across the nation and the Rocky Mountain region for three exciting days of information sharing and networking.

Participants will find Denver (pictured above) to be a beautiful, vibrant, and culturally diverse city, which has embraced public transportation as the smart way forward to grow the economy and serve the nearly three million residents of the metro region. As Guest Writer/Editor Ann Lockhart has detailed in the previous story, this year’s opening of the new 23-mile electrified Airport Rail Line (along with other suburban lines expected to open later in 2016), marks a significant step towards completion of Denver’s voter-approved ‘FasTracks’ transit expansion program – the largest such expansion currently underway in the nation.

**For more details and registration information for the October 14-16 meeting, go to <https://www.narprail.org/>**



## Denver Train Station a Role Model for Indianapolis' Union Station

Photo/Editorial by Donald Yehle

Indianapolis city leaders, including those at the Department of Public Works, have asked the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) to help them identify the issues at Union Station. The need to carry luggage up steps to the train platform, the condition of the passenger waiting room, people sleeping on the station floor, and general cleanliness of the station are among those issues.

The lack of awareness by a bellman at a major downtown hotel (and likely others) knowing the Circle City has a downtown train station may be the biggest issue. Just five blocks away, the station welcomes either Amtrak's *Cardinal* or Iowa-Pacific's *Hoosier State* at 6 a.m. daily and 11:50 p.m. each night.

This is not the case in Denver, where the city has pumped massive dollars into its Union Station – and areas neighboring the station. Union Station has become a venue not unlike Coors' Field, the nearby home of the National League Colorado Rockies.

If Sunday, July 3, is typical, thousands of local residents and tourists were at Denver Union Station celebrating the 4<sup>th</sup> of July a day early. A local bank sponsored a Stars & Stripes Express Fest, beginning at 11 a.m. continuing until 7 p.m.

Live music was provided inside and outside of the station, by Phat Daddy and the Dixieland Express Train 45. Kids were running through a massive field of water sprinklers or enjoying having their faces painted. Parents and children alike were dining at any of a number of great restaurants. A representative from the city's local tourism bureau was busy passing out brochures inside the station.

IPRA President Steve Coxhead wants fellow Hoosiers to remember events like Denver staged on July 3<sup>rd</sup> bring people downtown – and expand the wallets of local business owners. "It has happened in St. Paul, Minnesota; Meridian, Mississippi, Denver and other nationwide locations. With vision, investment, and determination, we can be writing the same story in Indianapolis, as well," he said.



## Meet Bob Garity, IPRA Board Member

Merrillville's Bob Garity has 20 years of experience working in transportation, both with trucking companies and railroads. He has completed a two-year course in Traffic and Transportation Management, with an emphasis on pricing and transportation law. Bob's business experience includes rules, regulations and operations of railroads and trucking companies.



*Board member Garity*

Garity has traveled the rails throughout Florida and from the Midwest to New Orleans and Dallas. For five years, Bob was newsletter editor of the Alumni Association of College of Advanced Traffic, a 300-person group which he also chaired. He has utilized math and map skills throughout his working career.

His passenger rail vision is to see high speed rail – over 200 miles per hour --connecting major American cities. This would complement existing Midwest transportation systems including air, rail, bus and commuter lines. Bob maintains weekly contact with a Monorail developer, which looks to finance projects with private money in cooperation with government agencies.

He also understands passenger rail traveling at 110 miles per hour with more stops is hugely important, especially to compete with air. Extending rail service from Indiana to three Ohio cities (Cincinnati, Columbus and Cleveland) and Detroit is vital. Accomplishing these goals by minimizing the expenditure of public dollars can gain support for them from Indiana's governor and the state legislature. Involving container freight in these plans could assist in setting up such a system.

## Indy's New Transit Center Is a Gem for Bus Riders

**Editor's Note:** The last mile from a rail station to people's homes and businesses is key to success of passenger rail. While the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) sees a missed opportunity of placing Indy's

new transit center next to Union Station (it's five blocks away), we do tip our hats to the people behind the planning, construction, and opening of the below named facility.

The Julia M. Carson Transit Center opened to the public on June 26, 2016! It is the new hub for Marion County public transit. It includes a large, secure public indoor waiting area, bus bays with canopies to protect passengers from the elements, and a space for future retail. With its close proximity to the heart of downtown, the Cultural Trail, and YMCA Bike Hub, the Julia M. Carson Transit Center serves pedestrians, cyclists, and bus riders.

The Transit Center has numerous amenities:

- Indoor Waiting Area
- Free Wifi
- Public Restrooms
- Ticket Sales/Customer Service
- Small Retail Space (not yet occupied)

All downtown routes have changed to accommodate the Transit Center. These changes make the transit network more efficient, user friendly, and allow for smoother transfers.

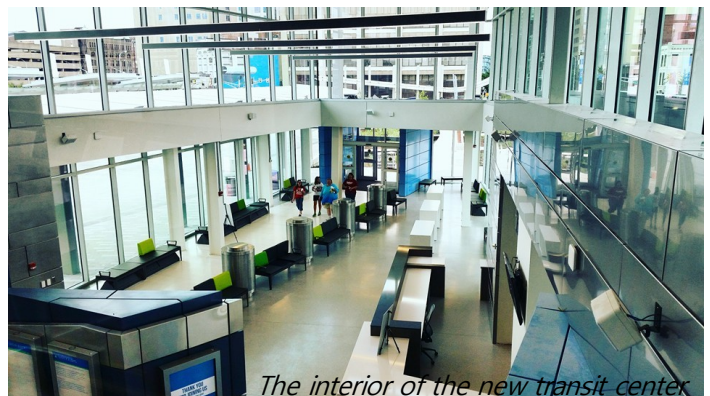
The Transit Center is applying for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver Certification. This means the building reduces its environmental impact during construction and operation. Some green features of the Julia M. Carson Transit Center include:

- Storm water management and curbside rain gardens
- Energy efficient lighting, heating, and cooling

Transit Center Hours are:

- Monday - Saturday:: 5:00 AM - 12:00 AM (midnight)
- Sunday:: 6:00 AM - 9:00 PM

*Above story reproduced with permission from Indy Connect!*



*The interior of the new transit center*



## Hoosier State Train Setting Ridership, Revenue Records

Ridership on the *Hoosier State* is up 13.5 percent in May 2016 versus one year ago. Track work by CSX Transportation/Rail has affected numbers the last two months (June/July), sources say.

Meanwhile, revenue on the train connecting Indianapolis with Chicago is up 65 percent. Several trains on Fridays and Saturdays are nearly sold out, it's been reported.

## Iowa Pacific President Has Big Vision for Multiple Daily Trains

By Donald Yehle

Ed Ellis is kept up at night wondering about many aspects of his railroad business, including what would it cost to have more than five to six trains a day on the *Hoosier State* line?

Ellis is a self-proclaimed customer evangelist. His goal is to convert people to riding the rails or stated differently, to create honest to goodness passenger train travel.

"I want to see honest to goodness train travel in honest to goodness Indiana," he says.

Knowing Indiana is a deeply evangelical state – and not passing judgement on that – the Iowa Pacific's head will do everything necessary customer service wise to make that happen.

For instance, *Hoosier State* passengers have been praising Iowa Pacific for its WiFi, food service, and the attitude of the crew on board.

Ellis, president of Iowa Pacific Holdings, knows getting younger people on board his trains is also part of where it all begins and ends.


Plug in Heather Hice, sales and marketing manager, for the train that connects the following city pairs – Chicago-Dyer, Dyer-Rensselaer, Rensselaer-Lafayette, Lafayette-Crawfordsville, and Crawfordsville-Indianapolis.

Hice keeps plugging away, seeking to interest students from Saint Joseph's College, Wabash College, and Purdue University among others to ride the rails. The Purdue University Office of International Students brings groups aboard every quarter.

Non-student groups traveling to Chicago include the Red Hat Society – ladies 40 and above – and sports fans following the National League Central Division leading Chicago Cubs.

While Ellis keeps pondering the cost of running five to six trains a day along the *Hoosier State* corridor, Hice continues to invite more and more groups to ride the train.

Do not be surprised if your group isn't the next one invited to dine aboard the *Hoosier State* business class dome car as it crosses the Indiana countryside between Chicago and Indianapolis!



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## Transit Study Encourages Focusing on All Purpose Riders

A study on how people use transit throughout the United States was released by the Transit Center. [The Who's On Board 2016 report](#) examined people's patterns of transit use to discover what riders value in transit and how that knowledge can be used to build ridership. There are a number of core findings that provide a guideline for agencies and elected officials to follow when considering options for improving transit.

The study identifies the three most common patterns of transit use: occasional riders, commuters and all-purpose riders. Their recommendation for transit agencies is to focus on growing the number of all-purpose riders, as they are the most reliable and financially efficient customers to serve.

All-purpose riders take transit regularly for multiple purposes and usually live within walking distance of a transit stop. This means transit-oriented development and providing frequent service to highly populated areas should result in increased ridership. The report also emphasizes that the main factors leading to people using transit is not whether or not they own a car; it is the speed, frequency and reliability of the transit system.

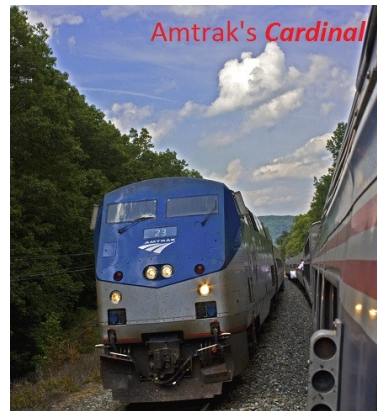
As we continue to invest in transit systems throughout the U.S. it is important to remember fast, frequent and reliable service in dense neighborhoods will have the greatest impact on overall ridership.

(Published as a courtesy of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association.)

## As We Go to Press— Amtrak's *Cardinal* Assisting West Virginia Flood Victims

Flooding in West Virginia devastated the community and left many families in need of basic supplies. As we have done in the past, the Amtrak family has reached out to provide assistance. Amtrak employees have donated items based on a list of items provided by the American Red Cross and Neighbors Loving Neighbors.

**Amtrak *Cardinal* Train 50** – which crosses through Indiana three times each week -- delivered items July 27 when it



made its scheduled stop in White Sulphur Springs. The items were transported on a baggage car.

White Sulphur Springs is an Amtrak-served community, and we saw a way to help our fellow Americans just by using what we have at-hand, which is an interconnected network between the major cities of the east coast and the rest of our great nation through Chicago. We had the equipment and the people on hand to make this happen, and the rest relied on the goodwill of our employees which, as you can see, was something we knew we could count on.

We collected donations at stations and Amtrak facilities in eight cities. We know no one is more impacted by these sorts of emergencies than the youngest community members, so we emphasized the need for back-to-school supplies, so even if the youth of West Virginia don't want to think about summer ending, they'll be prepared when September rolls around.

The work to provide donations is a testament to the kind of connectivity we bring to the regions on our national network. While we serve the big cities, it's equally important that we connect Greenbrier County to the rest of the nation as well. A lot of communities no longer have intercity bus service and never had regular commercial airline service, so having Amtrak can be a lifeline, sometimes quite literally.

We've also partnered with the American Red Cross for any of our employees that choose to make a monetary donation to the effort here in Greenbrier County. In addition, we want to recognize the efforts of the Red Cross and National Guard here as well.

Helping the communities in West Virginia continues our efforts to reach out and help. In March, Amtrak transported 35,000 bottles of water to Flint, Mich., to help ease the emergency residents have been experiencing.

### West Virginia Residents Thankful

A West Virginia television station aired the following stories lauding Amtrak for its flood disaster relief efforts. Click on the link below:

<http://www.wearewvproud.com/story/32558167/amtrak-wheels-in-help-for-flood-victims>

For those who want to help flood victims in West Virginia, visit [www.redcross.org/local/west-virginia/flood-information](http://www.redcross.org/local/west-virginia/flood-information)

## Surface Transportation Board Issues Reversals Favoring Railroad Passengers

On Thursday, July 28, the Federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) completely reversed its proposed regulation and policy statement that would have resulted in service delays of U.S. intercity passenger rail trains by altering the statutory preference that passenger rail trains are afforded under federal law when operating on freight railroad tracks and how to determine when passenger trains are "on time."

These two decisions are a major victory for the 84,600 passengers that ride more 300 trains a day as well as Amtrak, the Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Law and Policy Center and every one of you.

STB is finalizing a rule that will define passenger rail on-time performance based on a train's punctuality at all stations along a route, rather than when it arrives at its destination or endpoint as originally proposed.

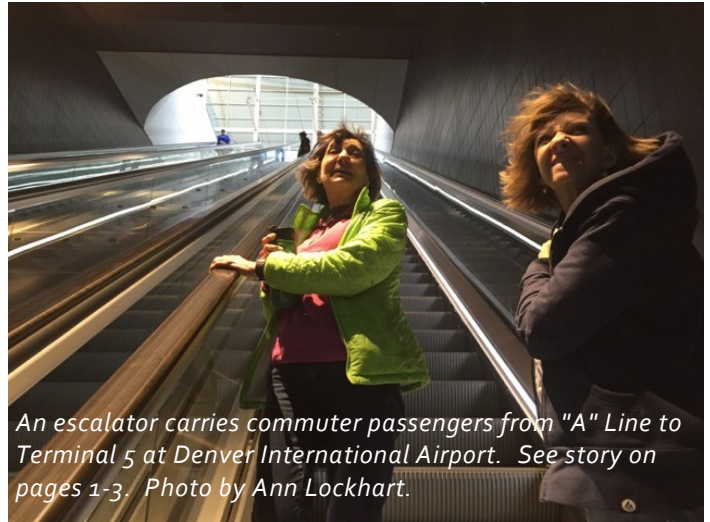
Much more importantly is that the STB is withdrawing its proposed policy statement that would have effectively rewritten the 40 year old federal statute that grants preference to Amtrak, over other trains operating on tracks owned by freight railroads. STB suggested because "preference" is not clearly defined in the statute, the Board was freed to define it in a such a way as to negate it.

Information provided by Karen E. Torrent, Esq., Federal Legislative Director, Environmental Law and Policy Center, 500 New Jersey Ave, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001, and Dennis Hodges, vice president, Business Relations, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance.

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**Midwest High Speed Rail Association**  
**National Association of Railroad Passengers**



*An escalator carries commuter passengers from "A" Line to Terminal 5 at Denver International Airport. See story on pages 1-3. Photo by Ann Lockhart.*

## 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](http://www.indianahighspeedrail.org)

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## Member Discounts

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

AAA and NARP members save 10% off Amtrak tickets at [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com) if booked three or more days in advance.