

New Metropolitan Lounge at Union Station a Big Hit

By Bill Malcolm

Amtrak's new Metropolitan in Chicago is a hit with travelers (see picture of Sandy and Doug from Virginia who are on their way to Colorado). The facility opened in late June by renovating an unused part of Union Station. The bright and airy facility, with plenty of seating and restrooms, offers a great alternative to Amtrak's normal boarding in the Great Hall.

The services offered include:

- Luggage storage
- Free shower and towel service
- Wine and cheese reception
- Complimentary snacks and soft drinks

The facility is on two levels and very spacious, airy, and uncrowded. On the day I was there train passengers were sampling various wines as well as being offered a vegetable platter.

The facility is free to those with a sleeper car ticket or a business class ticket.

Sandy and Doug (pictured) said they really enjoyed the facility.

This is actually the second premium lounge open in Union Station. Another facility is also open in the Great Hall and anyone can enjoy it by paying the \$20 fee.

Also about to open kitty corner from Union Station is the bus transit hub, which will simplify catching a bus from the station.

Virginia travelers Sandy and Doug enjoy the Metropolitan Lounge on their way to Colorado.



Indy Bus Rail Station Remains an Eyesore

By Bill Malcolm

Arriving back on an Amtrak Thruway bus from a trip to Springfield, Illinois, to the Indianapolis Bus Rail Station was not a pleasant sight. Passengers were sprawled out on the floor. Cleaning supplies (mops and buckets) were in plain display near the too small restrooms. The ancient buzz of the fluorescent lights gave the place the look of a poorly run homeless shelter. *(continued)*

IN THIS ISSUE:

Page Two

Amtrak Offers Seamless Connections
Coming Next Month

Page Three

MI's Accelerated Rail Program
Reliable Transit Creates Jobs,
Reduces Turnover

Page Four

Indianapolis: Read, Ponder,
Act on MS Mayor's Advice

Page Five

Rail, Transit Briefs

Page Six

IPRA at MIPRC Meeting as "Ally"

Page Seven

Meet Board Member Doug
Yerkson
Major Activity in Midwest to
Improve Rail Experience

Page Eight

October 8 RUN Meeting
INDOT's Will Wingfield Explains

Page Nine

Pay Attn. to Details, Meet
Expectations, Ellis Says
Lafayette, WL Mayors'
Remarks Warmly Welcomed
Three Other Leaders Talk
Positively About Rail

Page Ten

Connectivity to Chicago Also
Key Purpose of *Hoosier State*
IPRA's Short, Long-Term Goals
Contributors
For More Information...
Discounts

("Indy Bus Rail Station Remains an Eyesore" continued from page 1) No matter how much train service is improved, you are not going to attract passengers if they have to suffer through this sight.



Travelers sleep in Indy's Bus Rail Station.

The City of Indianapolis – which owns the station but contracts it out to an engineering firm which then uses Greyhound to run it – needs to run it like they run the Airport. Put the cleaning buckets away. Get the sleeping passengers off the floor and wake them up. Change out the lights. Indy can do better than this embarrassing eyesore.

Amtrak Offers Seamless Connections to both Springfield and St. Louis

By Bill Malcolm

You can connect to Amtrak in Urbana, Illinois, from Indianapolis using the Amtrak Burlington Trailways bus. The bus goes to Urbana, where you can connect to the Amtrak **Texas Eagle** or **Lincoln Service** to go to Springfield (IL) and St. Louis. The **Lincoln Service** train from Springfield leaves at 5 p.m. daily, arriving in Bloomington-Normal at 6 p.m. After an hour wait, you connect with the Burlington Trailways bus to Indy. You can even use the bus to connect to trains to Chicago. The Trailways bus goes on to Galesburg where you can also connect to other westbound Amtrak trains.

Traveling by bus and train has two advantages – you can leave Indy later (one westbound bus leaves at 12:50 p.m.). This certainly beats the 6 a.m. departure to Chicago. And you don't have to go to Chicago and back.

Amtrak issues one ticket good on both the bus and the train. Going to Springfield? Ask Amtrak to put you on the **Texas Eagle** to avoid a long lay over in Urbana.

If you find yourself in Urbana, nearby shops and restaurants allow for a quick bite or there is a Subway in the Normal inter-modal station (which also has other regional buses and also serves the local bus line).

Coming from Indiana where the **Hoosier State** averages 59 mph, while the Illinois trains go to 79 mph (before track upgrades) certainly makes one envious of our neighbor to the west.

Not to mention the new inter modal bus-rail stations at both Champaign-Urbana and Bloomington-Normal.

Indeed, Normal has made the new station part of the Uptown re-development, where a pedestrian friendly neighborhood has been re-created full of interesting shops and good restaurants (as well as new high end apartments). The neighborhood has one of the highest per capita concentrations of restaurants and now many new high end apartments are under construction.



Passengers relax in the sightseer lounge aboard the **Texas Eagle** between Bloomington-Normal and St. Louis.

Coming Next Month

CrossRail Chicago, an initiative of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association, seeks to "upgrade existing (rail) assets to create a high-capacity passenger-dedicated mainline to and through Chicago."

All Aboard Indiana (AAI) will take a close look at this concept that will benefit the **entire** region. Benefits to the entire region, start with:

- Electrified express trains linking O'Hare to Union Station, McCormick Place, and University of Chicago.

- Cross-town commuter trains linking the south suburbs to the northwest suburbs.

- The foundation for high-speed rail and more than \$13.8 billion in economic impacts.

Future AAI issues will focus on the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance's short-term and longer-term objectives as described by President Steve Coxhead in the lower left hand corner of page 10 (this issue).

Michigan's Accelerated Rail Program Discussed in Durand

By Phillip Streby

The 43rd Annual meeting of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers (MARP) took place at the historic Durand, Michigan, railroad station on Saturday, September 24th.

Following welcoming and introductory remarks by Larry Krieg, MARP Chairman, was Al Johnson, a graduate of Hillsdale (MI) College with a degree in economics and business administration/mathematics, who currently serves as Manager of Railroad Operations in Michigan's Department of Transportation (MDOT) Office of Rail.

Mr. Johnson presented an overview of MDOT's passenger rail program focusing on the idea that Michigan, having no benefit from Amtrak Long Distance, was required under the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) of 2008, to fund all intercity passenger rail services in Michigan, which includes three separate intercity passenger rail routes serving 22 station communities in Michigan.

Operated by Amtrak, these trains are providing safe and affordable transportation alternatives and include: *Wolverine* service - three daily round-trips between Chicago and Detroit/Pontiac, *Blue Water* service - one daily round-trip between Chicago and Port Huron, and *Pere Marquette* service - one daily round-trip daily between Chicago and Grand Rapids.

An important part of Michigan's Intercity Passenger Rail services is Michigan's Accelerated Rail Program, which is focused on improving the federally-designated Chicago Hub (Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac) High Speed Rail Corridor. Michigan has made significant investments to its passenger rail system and is committed to improve services on the federally-designated high speed rail corridor between Chicago and Detroit/Pontiac.

He especially noted that Michigan (MDOT) with its current efforts focused on the segment between Kalamazoo and Dearborn recently bought and renovated 135 miles of Norfolk Southern (formerly Conrail, New York Central, and Michigan Central) track from Dearborn to Kalamazoo. This reconstruction included relaying the second main between Wayne and Ypsilanti, which had been removed by Conrail in the 1980s, and making it 110 mph capable.

Together with Amtrak's ownership of the corridor between Kalamazoo and Porter, Indiana, this route includes over 235 miles of higher speed passenger rail from Detroit to Chicago.

This is being examined by Amtrak for a possible re-routing of the *Lake Shore Limited* from New York. By re-routing from Toledo through Detroit to Chicago, the new *Lake Shore* route would include an area with a greater population base, and enjoy a higher speed with far less congestion and delays. Mr. Johnson continued his description of this route by explaining that, as the signal work progresses eastward, the dispatching of trains for this segment will shift from Norfolk Southern to Amtrak dispatchers in Chicago.

He continued his commentary by proudly illustrating the numerous and various Michigan station improvements which have or will occur. Grand Rapids and Dearborn have new stations as do Troy, a Detroit suburb, and East Lansing, which serves Michigan State University. The Battle Creek station has had a major renovation and is even more capable of serving in its role as a transportation center.

Plans for a new Ann Arbor station and new location are being developed to better serve that city as well as the University of Michigan campus.

Mr. Johnson continued to present locally-led feasibility studies for "enhanced mobility for travelers while supporting economic development and environmental sustainability." Studies include efforts to restore rail passenger service between Detroit and Grand Rapids and Detroit and Traverse City. These are led, in part, by groups such as our own (Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers), and have also been included in MDOT's state rail plan on the MDOT website: www.michigan.gov/mirailplan.

He concluded by stating that MDOT has provided technical assistance to these locally-led efforts.

Reliable Transit Creates Jobs, Reduces Employee Turnover

By Phillip Streby

Alma Wheeler Smith was graduated from the University of Michigan with a degree in Journalism with advanced work in Political Science and Business Administration. She spoke September 24 at the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers' annual meeting in Durand, Michigan.

After having served 14 years on the State of Michigan Legislative Appropriations Committee, Ms. Smith now serves on several other boards including that of the Southeast Michigan Regional Transit Authority. She advocates funding for mass transit, which is on an upcoming ballot in Michigan. (continued)

("Reliable Transit Creates Jobs..." continued from page 3) The Metro-Detroit area once had what was considered a large transit system. It's transit system is now largely disconnected, underserved, and underutilized.

Ms. Smith is working for transit coordination with M1 Rail, a non-profit organization formed in 2007 to lead the design, construction, and future operation of a 3.3-mile streetcar circulator along Woodward Avenue in Detroit. She wants dedicated bus feeders -- serving the entire metropolitan area -- to connect with M1 Rail.

M1 Rail is a public-private partnership of local and state governments and local businesses. It wishes to be a new driver of economic opportunity to bring both "business and community" back to downtown Detroit by not only creating opportunity but connecting the people of Detroit to it. A survey of other American cities who invested in a curbside streetcar (light rail) service was "the single dominating factor which took their cities to the top", she explained.

Reliable transit not only creates job opportunity, but reduces employee turnover by connecting people with those jobs, Ms. Smith continued.

Currently 92 percent of jobs in Southeast Michigan cannot be reached within 60 minutes, and is a leading factor in the ongoing loss of young talent.

Transit is vital to a tech-based economy. Twenty percent of 65+ year old adults don't drive. Because of longevity, many seniors are outliving their ability to drive by an average of 7-10 years! The hassle of driving keeps 65+ year old people and their money at home.

This transit plan being advocated is projected to support 76,000 jobs, and increase the Southeast Michigan's economy by \$6 billion and personal wealth by \$4 billion.

It works out that a property tax increase of \$95/year will produce a four-to-one yield: \$1 invested yields a \$4 return, the Michigan grad concluded.

Indianapolis: Read, Ponder, Act on Mississippi Mayor's Advice

By Phillip Streby

John Robert Smith, former mayor of Meridian, Mississippi, for 16 years and now Chairman of Transportation for America as well as senior policy advisor to DC-based Smart Growth America, is a recognized authority on public and private transportation and development funding. The simple, yet striking theme for his presentation at the 43rd annual meeting of the



Photo of Meridian, MS courtesy of John Robert Smith

Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers (MARPP) was "[A Sense of Place: Passenger Rail – The Missing Link](#)". This is about economic development and the future of the cities.

He strongly recommends that we, as passenger rail advocates, don't just talk about the trains and the tracks, but add into the conversation talk about economic development and the people within the cities, which fell into decline following World War II.

Returning GIs starting families and buying homes were offered a better rate to build outside the city. Factories once again churned out consumer goods, and the auto industry was no different. The auto culture in America was born. Governments, local, state, and federal built good roads which helped to begin the exodus from the city to newly created suburbia. Zoning changes recreated the city layout from mixed use to single use further separating people from where they lived to where they worked and where they spent their leisure time as well as their dollars.

A new culture was also born, and it did not include transit or even walking! The current demographic, "boomers", is changing the culture once again.

They are ever rapidly entering a second adulthood with changing lifestyles and changing needs. They are downsizing their homes, and reducing their driving. Together with millennials, who increasingly choose lifestyle over job (They choose where to live before choosing a job.), boomers want to live an easier, less complicated, less stressful life.

Twenty-eight percent of millennials don't drive, and 20 percent of seniors over 65 can't drive.

They increasing turn to transit (and walking to get where they are going). With companies moving back to town because of mobility scores, both boomers and millennials are discovering that "sense of place" – tree-lined streets and *(continued)*

The new transportation center in Meridian, Mississippi. Photo courtesy of John Robert Smith.



("Indianapolis: Read, Ponder, Act..." continued from page 4) walkways and the shops and cultural venues which line them.

How do we get there if not there already? Incrementally. By spreading the cost over time, we can build or rebuild the city back to the shared use concept which people are demanding!

Mr. Smith uses Meridian, Mississippi, as an example.

City leaders parlayed \$1.5M of city monies with matching grants and loans into \$7M with which they built a new transportation center linking them with the rest of the nation.

It is the economic vitality brought about by the addition of passenger rail because the train station is a link in "the interstate interchange of steel."

This has led to \$135M in private investment within a 3-block radius of that station, which, in turn, has brought people back downtown to live, work, and play.

Three-hundred fifty-thousand (350,000) people now attend 250 annual events. There's a contract with the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., to bring their events to Meridian! The downtown enjoys a new city life with a new cultural center, city hall, stores, and housing.

This is the culmination of a critical, long-range vision to engage future generations in order to determine that quality of life for generations to come.



Meridian sidewalk before



...and after (Photo: JR Smith)

Rail, Transit Briefs from Milwaukee, Pax Rail, Chicago, and MegaBus

By Bill Malcolm

NEW PEAK FARES ON MILWAUKEE TRAINS – The *Hiawatha*, which runs 7 times a day between Chicago and Milwaukee, is instituting peak pricing fares for its busiest trains. Starting October 15, trains 330, 332, 337, and 339 will have higher fares than the other trains. All weekend trains will be off peak.

The (*Hiawatha*) train is jointly funded by the states of Wisconsin and Illinois. It runs at 70 mph and makes only three stops – Glenview, Illinois; Sturtevant, Wisconsin, and Milwaukee (WI) International Airport. My favorite part of the train is the quiet car.

PAX RAIL OFFERS EXCURSIONS ON STAMPEDE PASS TRAIN – Pax Rail offers rail excursions on its rebuilt car – the Stampede Pass. The company says the car is perfect for corporate parties or other special events. The rebuilt dome car is a relic of the heyday of train travel. For details, go to www.paxrail.com



PAX Rail Excursions



Windy City Bus Hub

CHICAGO UNION STATION BUS HUB OPENS – A new CTA bus hub has opened its new bus hub kitty corner from Union Station. The new hub makes it easier to catch a bus like the 151 which runs north along Michigan Avenue and up to the Lake View neighborhood. The fare is \$2.25 on CTA buses, which still accepts cash if you don't have a VENTRA card.

MEGABUS MOVES AGAIN – For those using MegaBus to connect with Amtrak, the Chicago MegaBus Station is now six blocks south of Union Station and to the west. It is a bit of a walk compared to their previous two street side locations and nothing is nearby to grab a bite much less use the bathroom.

The MegaBus in Indy now stops on the west side of City Market. It, too, has moved twice in the last year. My 9:45 a.m. Indy to Chicago bus on October 15 was 14 minutes late making for a tight connection to the 1:05 p.m. *Hiawatha* train to Milwaukee (where I connected to the 3:30 p.m. Badger Bus to Madison). (continued)

("Rail, Transit Briefs" continued from page 5) Going the train route avoided another four-hour bus ride on the Van Galder Bus to Madison and didn't take any longer. Amtrak will now sell you tickets connecting via Badger Bus, which runs 7 times daily between Milwaukee and Madison.

IPRA at MIPRC Meeting as "Ally"

By Steve Coxhead

The MIPRC is a nine-state interstate compact commission that promotes, coordinates and supports regional improvements to passenger rail service. Member states include Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and Wisconsin. Ohio was originally a part of the commission, but has withdrawn. However, there were observers from Ohio present at the 2016 meeting in St. Louis. The Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) has participated as an "ally", which gives it an observer status.

The delegation from Indiana consisted of the following individuals:

House Appointment – Representative Sharon Negele (R), District 13

Senate Appointment – Senator Phil Boots (R), District 23

Governor or Designee – Ms. Katherine England (INDOT), representing Governor's Designee, Commissioner Brandye Hendrickson

Private Sector Governor Appointee – Mr. Fred Lanahan, Northeast Indiana Passenger Rail Association

IPRA – Mr. Steven Coxhead, President

MIPRC meets annually to provide the various state DOTs the opportunity to report on developments in their state, and to coordinate activities where necessary or useful. Reports are presented on projects undertaken by the Commission and tasks assigned to it by the Federal or state governments. Finally, the administrative business of the Commission (elections, budgets, etc.) is addressed.

This Year's Highlights

Each state DOT presented a report on activity in their state. The Indiana report (presented by Katherine England, INDOT) included the Hoosier State project, the proposed Chicago – Fort Wayne corridor, and the South Shore commuter expansion in NW Indiana.

During the past ten years, ridership on Midwestern corridor routes has increased by 58 percent. During the same period, ridership on long-distance routes serving the Midwest increased by 14 percent.

In July, 2015, the Midwest was chosen – based on a statement of interest submitted by the MIPRC on behalf of the Midwest – as one of two regions that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will partner with to develop a long-term vision for a high-performance regional rail network. **IPRA submitted a letter in support of the MIPRC submission.**

A group of Midwestern states (sadly, not including Indiana) received \$268 million to buy Next Generation rail cars and locomotives to modernize the Midwest's fleet. The state/federal Next Generation Equipment Pool Committee developed standardized specifications for passenger rail equipment and helped initiate the first joint equipment purchases. Locomotives are being produced by Siemens, in California. The bi-level rail cars are being produced by Nippon Sharyo, in Illinois.

In December, 2015, Congress passed the FAST (Fixing America's Surface Transportation) Act. For the first time, intercity passenger rail and Amtrak reauthorization language are included as part of the comprehensive five-year transportation bill.

MIPRC conducted an online survey of students, faculty and staff at schools located along Amtrak routes (Purdue University included). The survey was conducted in November 2015, and February 2016. Response from over 19,000 individuals suggest that passenger rail service is an important resource to attend school, and that they would be more likely to take the train if more frequent service were available. Details can be found at www.miprc.org/news.

MIPRC submitted comments to the Surface Transportation Board regarding the definition of on-time performance (OTP) for passenger trains. The position assumed by MIPRC was that OTP should be defined so as to measure performance for intermediate station stops, as well as at the end points of a given route.

Attendees were given a tour of the *Missouri River Runner* service, and participated in a discussion of Missouri's Passenger Rail Advisory Committee (MORPAC).

The Illinois DOT (IDOT) presented a status report and overview of the ongoing project to upgrade the Chicago – St. Louis route to 110 mph service.

MIPRC and IPRA

The MIPRC appears to be the only multi-state, government to government, organization engaged in coordinating and planning the development of modern 21st Century passenger rail systems in the Midwestern region. It is an effective channel for Federal initiatives, and serves an important information clearing house role for the member state DOTs. As such, in cooperation with INDOT, it serves a useful purpose in facilitating the development of passenger rail systems in Indiana. *(continued)*

("IPRA at MIPRC Meeting as Ally" continued from page 6)

The IPRA Board believes it to be important and useful, to continue to be involved as a MIPRC allied organization at the organization's annual meetings.

Meet Board Member Doug Yerkeson

By Bob Garity

Doug comes to Indiana from his roots in southwestern Ohio. Doug enjoyed watching Norfolk & Western (now Norfolk Southern) trains from his childhood home east of Cincinnati. Doug loves to travel and has a great desire to see an improved transportation system in Indiana.

Doug has a BS in Mechanical Engineering and a J.D. During semester breaks in law school, Doug worked as a train attendant for Amtrak. After graduating, he worked as a reference attorney for Lexis-Nexis in Dayton, Ohio. He also practiced patent

Doug Yerkeson and his wife Michelle pose with the California Zephyr in Fraser, Colorado.



law in Dayton before moving to Indianapolis in 2001. Doug is now a patent attorney with Faegre Baker Daniels.

Doug became an active advocate of a balanced transportation network including efficient, modern passenger rail in 2013 when the **Hoosier State** train was threatened with discontinuance. At that time, Bill Malcolm and Doug through a newly-formed grassroots organization called Hoosiers for Passenger Rail, joined forces with the National Association of Railroad Passengers and the Indiana High Speed Rail Association (predecessor to the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance) to save daily passenger rail service between Indianapolis, Lafayette and Chicago.

Doug joined the IPRA board to continue efforts to preserve, improve and expand passenger rail throughout the state of Indiana. Doug is great to have with IPRA and his background of the transportation system is a great help in maintaining and expanding the Indiana Passenger Rail System.

Major Activity in Midwest To Improve Rail Experience

By Phillip Strebby

Richard Rudolph, president of the Rail Users Network (RUN), after making welcoming remarks, opened RUN's annual conference in Lafayette at 9 a.m. with a RUN Board meeting. Members were also able to attend telephonically as internal issues were discussed. Business was wrapped up by 9:30 a.m. at which time Marc Magliari, spokesperson for Amtrak Government and Corporate Communication, painted a thorough picture of Amtrak's current status.

Ridership is at historic levels, revenues have increased dramatically, debt has been cut, and funding may be more stable because of the FAST Act inclusion of Amtrak in a surface transportation authorization for the first time. Amtrak must now work through the new requirements to include account restructuring and reporting requirements, Magliari said.

He described this time for Amtrak as "pivot time" with the news of the incoming president – Wick Moorman. Everyone has been encouraged that Moorman has consented leaving retirement to lead Amtrak.

More regionally, major projects designed to improve the customer experience while in Chicago Union Station (CUS) include moving ticketing to the Great Hall, new baggage check-in (coming), a new Metropolitan Lounge for Business class and Sleeping car customers, Legacy Club for priority boarding coach customers, and new check-in for other coach passengers starts soon for a better customer experience in boarding groups, he continued.

Also, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) Union Station Transit Center is now open -- greatly cutting congestion outside CUS. Master Developer (retail) and Master Plan (rail) processes are now underway to renovate Union Station to raise revenues while reducing costs, the Amtrak spokesman said.

Other programs already initiated or being examined are Pets on Trains on nearly all services for travel for up to seven hours each, Pets on Trains for **Hoosier State** starting Oct. 17, train-side checked bicycle service expanding to more routes in 2017 (Amtrak carried more than 15,000 bikes this summer.), and more cellular-based and other Wi-Fi deployment in 2017-18.

Mr. Magliari also spoke of Indiana workers saying Amtrak has a payroll of about 770 Indiana residents, 500 in Beech Grove alone, earning about \$54 million. The Beech Grove facility outside of Indianapolis, maintaining and overhauling many types of rail equipment for Amtrak and others, spends more than \$24 million in direct Amtrak procurement, such as diesel engines manufactured in Columbus, Indiana. *(continued)*

("Major Activity in Midwest..." continued from page 7) **Total annual earnings in Indiana attributed to Amtrak is over \$136M by over 3,700 workers.**

Speaking toward the future of passenger rail in Indiana, Magliari referred to the CDM Smith study done for the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) calling for a daily **Hoosier State**, reduced travel time and including targeted capital improvements, and a larger state investment to create capacity for future additional frequencies.

Equipment to support added routes and frequencies is being acquired by Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, and Wisconsin, but has very long lead times. If ordered now, new cars would not be available until 2018-19, he estimated.

Other opportunities include underutilized or badly-located stations notably South Bend -- a left-over South Shore station built to serve industrial commuters working the Bendix plant nearby. The goal would be to provide South Bend with a newer intermodal station located downtown. Additionally, find funding to add a station track at Hammond-Whiting so more than two passenger trains would stop. Presently, 12 of 14 Amtrak trains pass the station daily, with 12 unable to stop due to freight traffic restrictions. These stations as well as others have potential opportunity for partnership with Indiana, Michigan, Amtrak, and other carriers [Uber, taxi, bus, etc]. The result -- more employment.

Finally, he turned to other Midwestern state issues: Illinois has increased frequency on the Chicago-St. Louis route, which has resulted in a 161% increase in ridership. "Increased frequency leads to much higher ridership," the company spokesman said.

Magliari also stated that there was no agreement concerning shifting the route of the *Lake Shore Limited* to Michigan stations, thus by-passing several Indiana stops.

Magliari then opened the floor to questions: Springfield, Illinois, rail realignment is under study at this time; freight railroads have benefitted from improvements requested by Amtrak such as raising of the rail-bed in North Dakota, which helped BNSF trains as well as the **Empire Builder**. Multi-state cooperation (Kansas-Colorado-New Mexico) has helped save the original route of the **Southwest Chief**.

Much Discussed October 8 at RUN Meeting in Lafayette

By Joe Krause

On Saturday, October 8, nearly 40 passenger rail advocates and interested private citizens met in the recently remodeled Riehle Depot in downtown Lafayette, Indiana. The primary organizer -- Phil Streby, treasurer of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) - contacted the speakers, provided the

physical arrangements for the meeting, and ample refreshments for all. (IPRA picked up the bill for the refreshments.)

One of the purposes of the meeting was to introduce the audience to the Rail Users Network (RUN), headed by Dr. Richard Rudolph. Dr. Rudolph described the organization as one which represents concerns of rail passengers, encourages members to join citizens' advisory boards, and encourages "best practices" by our nation's railroads. RUN is outspoken about passenger rail safety, and using the Lac-Megantic oil train rail disaster safety issues, supports the idea of two operating persons in each locomotive.

RUN produces four newsletters a year and has annual meetings with the next one planned for Seattle in 2017. There was a nominations' committee report and officers were selected for three-year terms.

INDOT's Will Wingfield Explains State's Interest in Passenger Rail

By Joe Krause

Will Wingfield, spokesman for the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), presented information about the state's interest in supporting passenger rail in Indiana. Wingfield reported that there was considerable progress on The Indiana Gateway, which was designed to reduce freight and passenger congestion in the northwest corner of the state. The federal government helped greatly with a \$71.4 million expenditure. Also, the State of Indiana through INDOT continues to support the South Shore Line known officially as The Northwest Indiana Commuter District with \$13 million annually for 20 trains on each weekday.

Turning to the *Hoosier State*, Wingfield reviewed the history of that train and Indiana's official role since 2008. He noted the peril of nearly losing the train caused by passage of the Federal Passenger Rail Reform and Reinvestment Act (2008), which required states to take over financial support of short-distance trains. Indiana's reluctance to support the train was met by various local leaders (Lafayette, West Lafayette, Tippecanoe County, Rensselaer, and Crawfordsville) and passenger rail advocates. After 23 months of negotiations, INDOT was able to reach an agreement with the Iowa Pacific Holdings, Inc. to operate the *Hoosier State* four days a week.

Wingfield showed a slide indicating responsibilities of the co-operating entities.

Indiana Department of Transportation

- Fixed payout
- Contract management
- Mechanical inspection

(continued)

(*"INDOT's Will Wingfield Explains..." continued from page 8*)

Amtrak

- Operating Crews
- Work with Host Railroads
- Ticketing and Reservations

Iowa Pacific

- Train equipment and maintenance
- On-board service
- Marketing

Wingfield also showed graphs indicating that *Hoosier State* ridership is beginning to climb after a rough start in the earliest weeks. Revenue has markedly increased. "On time performance" of the *Hoosier State* has much improved and customer satisfaction was recently ranked as highest of all short-distance trains in the Amtrak system.

Wingfield closed with a few remarks about INDOT's continuing interest and support of the *Hoosier State*. The CSX switch east of Crawfordsville (Ames) is being upgraded; INDOT is cooperating with a Purdue University engineering class in conducting a rider survey. The survey will be done both at stations and on-board the *Hoosier State*.

Pay Attention to Details, Meet Expectations, Ellis Says

By Joe Krause

Ed Ellis, president of Iowa Pacific Holdings, was the last speaker of the morning session. His generally up-beat presentation covered the following topics:

- Pay attention to detail to make the riding experience more enjoyable because other factors such as faster and more trains cannot be readily met.

- Meeting or exceeding expectations of business class service.

- Planning to add another coach for peak times; also a relief coach when others need to be serviced.

- Establishing a social media presence to increase ridership.

Then Ellis turned to the more long-term challenges concerning any attempts to increase frequency or operating speeds. This will be very expensive requiring many more miles of welded rather than bolted rail, improved signal systems, and additional sidings. He referred specifically to track sections between Indianapolis and Crawfordsville as well as at the rest of the route to Chicago.

As for a "daily" *Cardinal*, Ellis felt that would not be likely soon because of immense infrastructure needs particularly in the New River Gorge area of West Virginia. A "daily" *Cardinal* would require improvements going as high as one-half billion dollars.

Lafayette, WL Mayors' Remarks Warmly Welcomed by RUN Audience

By Joe Krause

In the afternoon, there were short appearances by Mayor John Dennis of West Lafayette and Mayor Tony Roswarski of Lafayette. Both expressed support for the *Hoosier State* and were encouraged by the increased ridership, revenue, and on-time performance. Mayor Dennis particularly referred to the greater number of international students who do not have cars and who do have a need and interest in public transportation. Mayor Roswarski congratulated those who had rallied to save the *Hoosier State*. He reported on on-going improvements in the Depot and the pedestrian ramp being completed on the west side of the Amtrak platform.

He also noted the \$26 Million development of the Old National Bank and hinted that a promenade on the west side of that property will be developed in the coming months with the help of a \$2.3 million grant from an unnamed Foundation. The mayors' remarks were warmly received because audience members knew that without their support the *Hoosier State* would not be running today.

Three Other Leaders Talk Positively About Rail's Future

By Joe Krause

The assembled group heard from three other passenger rail leaders -- Arvid Olson, Dylan Hayward, and Steve Coxhead.

Arvid Olson, chairman of the Transportation Committee of the Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, made a full report of a meeting he attended in Cincinnati dealing with building a *Cardinal* coalition. Ninety persons attended that meeting.

Then Olson turned to the historic efforts made in Indiana to save the *Hoosier State*. Amtrak needed to get locomotives and passenger cars to the Beech Grove shops and so it created a "hospital train" to move equipment back and forth from those shops. A revenue passenger car was added so that CSX could not delay the Amtrak train because it hadn't been carrying passengers. But the trains often ran late with a minimum of on-board amenities, Olson said.

Just about the time that the Chamber of Commerce was getting reports from a study entitled "From Good to Great," the community learned it might lose the *Hoosier State* — as feeble as it was. At this point, the Chamber of Commerce along with investigative journalism by the *Lafayette Journal and Courier* helped develop a major "summit" meeting drawing around 300 interested persons. Representatives from Amtrak, INDOT, several mayors, a Lafayette industrialist, and a Purdue student (*continued*)

("Three Other Leaders Talk Positively..." continued from page 9)
all made presentations, he continued.

That summit held in August of 2014 alerted State Representative Randy Truitt and State Senator Brandt Hershman that there could be sustained interest in the public for the State of Indiana to help rescue the **Hoosier State**. The results of that meeting and additional behind-the-scenes work caused the legislators to raise the issues in the next General Assembly. INDOT, formerly mostly a state road and highways department, also took notice. Some change in leadership there helped.

Olson has continued to emphasize that our community cares most about economic development and growth. Millennials are not as in love with private automobiles as previous generations. Olson concluded with a PowerPoint program indicating several next steps that should be taken to increase public use and support for the train. On June 9 of 2016, a "Hoosier Train Day," was held to celebrate how far we had come and how much further we needed to go.

Connectivity to Chicago Also Key Purpose of **Hoosier State**

Dylan Hayward of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association spoke about how the **Hoosier State** could funnel people into Chicago for connections onto the much improved Illinois passenger rail system. He reported on the on-going efforts in Illinois to develop a "higher speed" service between Chicago, Springfield, and St. Louis.

IPRA's Short, Long-Term Goals Outlined by Coxhead

Steve Coxhead, president of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA), closed the meeting with two messages:

Short-term objectives of IPRA

- Need infrastructure improvements
- Press for more frequencies and higher speeds
- "Incremental" -- not high speed

Organization's longer-term objectives

- Development of a 7 day a week **Cardinal**
- Expansion of daily service to Cincinnati and to Louisville
- Development of Chicago-Ft. Wayne-Lima-Columbus, Ohio, route.
- Examine other prospects for public-private partnerships in rail service.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Contributors

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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).

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