

Corridor Chosen for South Shore Alternative Rail Line

By W. Dennis Hodges

Michigan City - As part of the proposed double tracking project of the South Shore rail line, the 10th and 11th Street corridor has been chosen as the alternative route that would connect the line between Chicago and South Bend. Two other corridors were considered, but the City of Michigan City and Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) came to an understanding for this corridor through an operating agreement.

According to John Parsons, marketing director for NICTD, the 290 million dollar project will be funded with fifty percent coming from the federal government and the other coming from Indiana state and local sources. "We are hopeful this funding request will be a part of President Trump's 2019 federal budget, which would begin in October of 2018," he said.

The double tracking project will extend from Tennessee Street, just west of the Miller section of Gary, to Michigan Boulevard in downtown Michigan City. "Our studies are showing that this project will be a boom to economic development in the communities impacted by the expansion, and will measurably cut travel time to downtown Chicago," said Parsons.

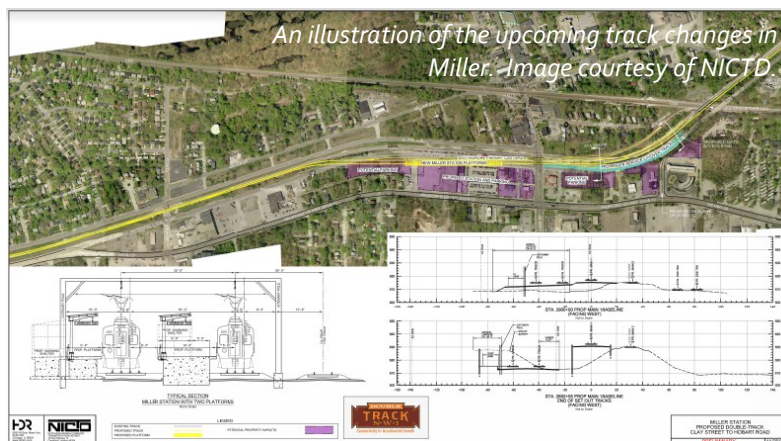
NICTD is also working with Metra on joint improvements to the Metra Electric District to improve time and travel convenience in the Illinois section of the Indiana commuter service.

Also, a part of the project is to realign US Highway 12 in Miller on to US Highway 20 east of Lake Street. "Doing so will create sufficient tangent track to enable the construction of two 8-car high level boarding platforms near Lake St and 2 storage tracks east of Lake St. allowing faster and more frequent service from Miller to Chicago. Realigning US12 will also provide tremendous opportunities for further real estate development along the new US12/20 corridor and dramatically redefine the entrance to Miller."

The Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority, LaPorte County, and Northern Indiana Cities RDA are looking for ways to fund the South Shore Line double track project. Efforts are also underway to capture tax revenue that would be generated from Transit Development Districts created along the South Shore and West Lake projects.

Parsons said that Michigan City's 11th St. passenger rail station is less than a mile from Amtrak's lake-front station, which will be serviced by a city bus line.

More will be discussed about this project at the March 23rd board meeting of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance. That meeting will be held at the Michigan City Public Library, starting at 11 AM.



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New Push to Rehab Indy's Bus Rail Station

By Bill Malcolm

City officials, tourism leaders, Indy Go, and Amtrak officials met on February 8 at Indy's City Market to discuss how to improve the passenger experience at Indy's beleaguered bus rail station, 350 S. Illinois. The facility is plagued by outdated lighting, bus passengers sleeping on the floor, outdated signage, and cleaning supplies not put away.

The goal would be to transform the facility into an intermodal station like in Milwaukee, St. Louis, or Denver.

The event was covered by WRTV, Channel 6 (The Indy Channel) and Fox 59. WRTV also ran a background story the night before the meeting.

City officials noted that they had just spent \$4.7 million on structural repairs to the tracks above the station which are primarily used by CSX trains. Also, the lighting (which makes a loud buzz) is being replaced.

Visit Indy said an intermodal station was a long run goal.

Other ideas were adding a rail stop at the airport. (The tracks go by the northern end of the run way.) The Airport Master Plan envisions a rail connection.

Ideas for follow up including inviting Greyhound, the Capital Improvement Board, Convention Center officials, and politicians to future meetings.



Bill Malcolm speaks on WRTV.

Bullets from the Board

By Steve Coxhead

The IPRA Board met on 1/19/17, at the downtown Indianapolis offices of Faegre, Baker, Daniels.

Highlights of meeting include the following:

The Governor's budget proposal was discussed.

There is a "High Speed Rail" item (\$22,000). The Board was unclear as to what that represented, and resolved to investigate.

Members are urged to advocate with their General Assem-

bly members, and continue to monitor the budget process. NIPRA members have been doing so, with northern Indiana legislators. The final budget will be adopted in April.

It was suggested that IPRA assemble a tool kit of studies illustrating the benefits of rail development.

The Missouri River Runner (Missouri state supported service) was suggested as a model for **Hoosier State** funding.

It was observed that it is important to have support from all communities along the **Hoosier State** route. To that end, the possibility of arranging a meeting with Mayor Hogsett, of Indianapolis, was explored.

Developments on the South Shore commuter railroad were reviewed.

Initial studies necessary to begin the 9-mile spur connecting Hammond and Dyer have begun. The first trains are expected to arrive in Dyer in ten years.

The Board was presented with information regarding the proposed Michigan City reroute. The intent of the reroute is to double track the line through Michigan City and eliminate street running. One proposal is to rebuild the line through the city largely parallel to the existing line. Another is to route the line through the northern end of Michigan City, close to Lake Michigan. The Board was presented with the thesis that the northern route would be less disruptive and facilitate greater transit oriented development, while the parallel rebuild would cause significant disruption through the south central part of the city. The City appears to be favoring the parallel rebuild. The Board resolved to further investigate the situation, and take appropriate supportive action.

The FRA-led Midwest Planning Project is moving forward, with the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) designated to coordinate the Midwest work. IPRA participates in the work of the MIPRC as an observer organization.

New INDOT Commissioner is Joe McGuinness, former Mayor of Franklin, Indiana. Mr. McGuinness has served as Mayor of Franklin since 2012. He has been actively involved in transportation and infrastructure planning in central Indiana, and currently serves on the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization Administrative and Policy Committees. He serves on the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan Steering Committee. Mr. McGuinness has degrees from Franklin College and Indiana Wesleyan University.

The Board returned to the subject of the (continued)

("Bullets from the Board" continued from page 2) **Lake Shore Limited reroute.** It was originally reported that Amtrak would reroute the Lake Shore Limited for one month on a "trial" basis, so as to go through southern Michigan instead of Northern Indiana. This would eliminate service to South Bend, Elkhart and Waterloo (Fort Wayne) for the duration. According to Jim Brzezinski, Amtrak Central Region Director of State Supported Services, the "trial" has been postponed to the Spring of 2017. The Board is attempting to develop more information about the reroute, and what it might indicate for the future of passenger rail in northern Indiana.

The next meeting of the Board will be on 3/23/17, at the Michigan City Library. The May meeting is tentatively set for Fort Wayne. Both meetings are open to the membership. Watch your e-mail for meeting details!

Also, please remember to pay your 2017 IPRA dues, if you have not already done so. Dues are \$30 per year, and can most conveniently be paid via the website (www.indianahighspeedrail.org). Checks should be sent to Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance, 2017 Membership, 7032 Olcott Avenue, Hammond, Indiana, 46323.

IPRA Speaks Out About National Rail Issues

By Donald Yehle

In the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance's effort to bring 21st Century Passenger Rail to our state, we are increasingly reaching out to governmental agencies and politicians. In recent weeks, your organization has sent congratulatory notes to Vice President Michael Pence and Governor Eric Holcomb on their respective, successful bids to help lead our nation and state, respectively. When Iowa-Pacific stepped down as a partner in the *Hoosier State*, a statement was issued to 170 media outlets in Indiana and Illinois praising Amtrak, IN-DOT, and Iowa-Pacific for their cooperative efforts to continue the 196-mile passenger train between Chicago and Indianapolis. (See next story.) The letter below to Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao encouraging high speed rail in California is yet another example. It reads:

Date: February 9, 2017

To: US Department of Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao:

On behalf of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA), I would like to stress the importance of the California High Speed Rail Program, and urge that Federal support for the program be continued. We in Indiana have two potential

high speed rail corridors. One traversing the northern part of the state, from west to east, and the other cutting diagonally across the state from northwest to southeast. No progress has been made, to date, in implementing those corridors.

We are watching the California project with interest, in as much as its success would pave the way for similar projects in other parts of the country, including the corridors through Indiana. While California would enjoy the direct benefits, there would also be indirect benefits to the Midwest, including Indiana. It is our belief that the completion of the California project would point the way for Midwestern developments, benefiting Indiana. Valuable experience would be gained regarding the finance, construction and transit oriented development associated with the development of high speed rail.

The California project would move everyone up the learning curve, facilitating additional developments in other parts of the country. So, again, we urge you to continue to support the California project, as being in the national interest.

Incorporated in 1994 as an Indiana not for profit corporation, the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance is a grassroots, volunteer citizen organization dedicated to making available to both the general public and state and local governments, information about the issues and benefits of the development of modern, 21st Century, passenger rail systems in the state of Indiana. This includes, but is not limited to, the connection of Indiana communities with the national transportation system by passenger rail.

Sincerely,
Steve Coxhead,
President, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

Members: If you know of similar messages for the public and/or state and local government officials, please contact any board member or our president.

Many Praised for Continuing Hoosier State Rail Service

Editor's Note: Dennis Hodges, IPRA's Vice President-Business Development, sent the following news release to 171 news organizations (radio, television, and newspapers) in Indiana and Illinois. This is an example of IPRA's increasing efforts to make your voice known about the urgency for 21st Century Rail in Indiana.

INDIANAPOLIS – The Indiana Passenger Rail *(continued)*

("Many Praised for Continuing..." continued from page 3) Alliance (IPRA), an Indianapolis-based passenger rail coalition, issued a statement praising Amtrak, the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), and Iowa-Pacific Holdings for their commitment to the four-day-a-week **Hoosier State** passenger train.

"Iowa Pacific Holdings has done a tremendous job in building awareness of the train, including growing ridership, improving on-time performance, and customer satisfaction for a new generation of rail users," said Steve Coxhead, president of IPRA.

Speaking on behalf of its 19 board members, Coxhead particularly had high praise for Iowa-Pacific's President & CEO Ed Ellis. "It has been an honor to have Ed Ellis as an advocate for improved passenger rail in the state," he said.

While acknowledging regret that Iowa-Pacific can't continue to provide service on the Western Indiana rail corridor between Chicago and Indianapolis, IPRA board members have joined with other Hoosiers who are grateful that Amtrak has been responsive in its willingness to complete the biennial agreement between INDOT and Iowa-Pacific, on March 1, 2017.

Jim Brzezinski, Amtrak's senior regional director state supported service – Central Region, has especially been singled out along with other members of the Amtrak team, for agreeing to provide railcars, locomotives, and on-board services on the 196-mile route. The route begins in Indianapolis with stops in Crawfordsville, Lafayette, Rensselaer, Dyer and terminating in Chicago.

"IPRA also wants to acknowledge INDOT's hard work in continuing to develop efficient, safe, and reliable intrastate passenger rail service in Indiana," Coxhead continued.

Coxhead also said that the public-private partnership business model has been successfully demonstrated in Indiana. There's renewed commitment from rail passengers and the stakeholder communities along the route.

He added, "Our Thanks also to Venetta Keefe, Katie England, and the rest of the INDOT staff." Keefe is the passenger rail contract manager for INDOT, while England serves as INDOT's director of multimodal planning and programs.

"IPRA is optimistic that passenger rail services have a promising future in Indiana. That is our primary goal, along with bringing 21st Century Passenger Rail to this state," said Coxhead.

Give the *Hoosier State* Back to Amtrak

Opinion by Bill Malcolm, IPRA Board Member

Let the demise of the Iowa Pacific service be a teachable moment.

I like cooked-to-order salmon and a glass of wine as much as the next person.

Unfortunately, the business model did not make sense.

Let's push INDOT to give the **Hoosier State** train back to Amtrak instead of looking for yet another bidder.

Let's focus on needed improvements like changing the too early 6 am start time from Indy, the over 5-hour run time, the beleaguered Indy bus rail station, and the need for more than one train a day before we worry about amenities.

Assuming Amtrak can provide a café car or equivalent, let's not complicate life further with a separate operator 4 days a week.

Amtrak provides 600 high paying jobs at its Beech Grove facility. The state should recognize that and encourage it -- not insult the company with outsourcing.

Let's move on.

MWRRI Key Information Source for Passenger Rail Advocates

By Phillip Streby, IPRA Board Member and Treasurer



As we go to press – The Federal Railroad Administration is in the process of updating the MWRRI which is a guide for improving the Midwest rail network (see full story below). As passenger rail advocates we should be requesting that the new plan include faster trip times, more frequent departures and greater coverage. This is also a great opportunity to reengage local leaders throughout

the Midwest to advocate for federal funding.

(continued)

("MWRRRI Key Information Source..." continued from page 4)
Some of us who advocate for more and better passenger rail service argue on an "emotional level." Some of us advocate on a "benefits level" using information we've obtained from various sources. All of us are often hard-pressed to substantiate our claims when challenged by those who don't also believe that passenger rail is, can be, or should be a viable and economically justifiable means of transportation.

I suggest that, to be better, more informed advocates, we become more familiar with some of the information sources available to us.

One source rich with information is a study commissioned by nine Midwestern states. That study is known as the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRRI). Indiana is one of those nine states which co-authored the study. Working with the Federal Railroad Administration, the group seeks to provide a means to help meet future regional travel needs by improving the level, speed, and quality of regional passenger rail service. In October 1999, MWRRRI member states joined together to evaluate the potential for implementing MWRRRI by creating a business plan for its success.

The proposed plan envisions a Chicago-hub network encompassing 3,000 rail miles through Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Indiana.

Here is an illustration of what the MWRRRI might look like. (Courtesy of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association.)



A full implementation of MWRRRI's planned passenger rail routes and complementary feeder bus services would bring nearly 90 percent of the Midwest region's population

within an hour's ride of a MWRRRI rail station and/or 30 minutes of a MWRRRI feeder bus station. Transportation planners recommend it be a "phased in" system, starting with implementing corridor segments with the highest ridership potential per dollar invested.

Three, Phase 1 corridors are Chicago-Milwaukee-Madison, Chicago-Detroit and Chicago-St. Louis. Each provides an opportunity to quickly implement improved reliability and amenities that are attributes of the MWRRRI. All three would serve as "models" from which to implement future MWRRRI corridors. Benefits and costs associated with such a "true passenger rail system" have been thoroughly studied. A synopsis of that analysis follows.

Benefit Cost & Economic Analysis of the Midwest Regional Rail System

The MWRRRI would provide a wide range of benefits that contribute to economic growth. The region's manufacturing, service, and tourism industries would be strengthened. Mobility and connectivity between regional centers, smaller urban areas, and the rural Midwest would be enhanced. Train stations would be multimodal, as rail and bus systems would be available in one, central place.

A new passenger travel alternative would be available to 65 million people.

To determine expected economic benefits, an analysis of three distinct assessments was made. They are:

A Consumer Surplus Analysis looked at passenger rail system user benefits, other-mode user benefits, and resource benefits.

An Economic Rent Analysis measured how user benefits translated into supply side benefits such as increased employment. Income gains were measured by increased productivity in the Midwest accomplished by improved connectivity and regional mobility provided by the MWRRRI.

An Input-Output Analysis, performed by the Bureau of Commerce, identified benefits to the economy in terms of temporary construction and permanent operating jobs. The construction impacts of the MWRRRI would constitute a significant investment in the Midwest by the Federal government. This Federal investment would comprise a major transfer payment to the Midwest that would significantly increase total spending within the Midwest economy. While the spending of federal dollars cannot be expressed as a benefit to the U.S. economy, such an investment choice on the part of the Federal government would have a significant economic impact on the local Midwest economy. (continued)

("MWRRI Key Information Source..." continued from page 5)

User Benefits

The expected user benefits are many, including a reduction in travel times by rail users of the MWRRI. Users of other transportation modes would see travel time reductions and lower costs due to lower congestion levels. With more people riding the rails instead of airplanes, buses, and automobiles -- there would be reductions in emissions. A rail transportation system that leads to improved mobility reduces the generalized cost of travel, which in turn leads to an increase in consumer surplus. The estimated value of this benefit to air travelers is \$1.6 billion, while highway users would see a \$2.7 billion gain over 40 years.

Resources Benefits

The implementation of any transportation project has an impact on the resources used by travelers. MWRRI service and the consequent reduction in airport congestion will result in resource savings to airline operators and reduced emissions of air pollutants for all non-rail modes. Air Carrier Operating Costs Benefits to air carriers in terms of operating costs savings resulting from reduced congestion, and subsequent delays, at airports are calculated in much the same way as the time savings benefits to air travelers, yielded a discounted 40-year benefit of approximately \$0.9 billion. The resulting auto vehicle miles saved yields a benefit of \$0.6 billion.

Costs

In the economic analysis, costs were separated into three primary components:

- Capital costs for infrastructure improvements and rolling stock required are calculated to be approximately \$6.1 billion. Funds would be used on an as-needed basis in accordance with the implementation schedule.

- Track maintenance costs associated with the long-term infrastructure replacement and operating and maintenance costs calculated at \$0.3 billion.

- An additional cost of equipment replacement is considered; however, because of the uncertainty of the actual implementation year, this cost was not included in the economic analysis.

Operating and maintenance costs for trains and tracks over the project's 40-year lifespan is estimated to be \$6.5 billion, at a discount rate that reflects the cost of long-term government bonds. This rate reflects the real cost of money for a project like the MWRRI and as such shows the real value of the project.

The user benefit analysis estimates that implementation of

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the MWRRI would generate more than \$23 billion in economic benefits to the region.

MWRRI infrastructure improvements would enable both commuter and long-distance passenger rail services to achieve faster trip times on shared (MWRRI) track. The time savings is expected to generate new business as passengers are attracted to these services.

Economic Rents Analysis

Economic rent is generated from a transportation investment that improves the level of accessibility to a market or resource base. In urban areas, businesses and developers have typically been interested in locating new development in accessible areas. A high level of accessibility makes the property more desirable and allows the developer to charge higher rents. Accessibility also increases income potentials and job opportunities as transport costs are reduced. The impact of a new transportation investment can be measured by identifying changes in accessibility that increase the long-term demand for goods and services, and create new business and commercial development opportunities.

A critical element of an Economic Rent Model is an understanding of the local economy and the interdependence of cities, towns and urban areas along the rail corridor right-of-way. For the entire Midwest Region, an estimated 58,260 jobs would be created, joint development potential would increase property values by nearly \$5 billion, while urban household income would increase by over \$1.0 billion.

To obtain state results, the overall results were disaggregated to the zone level and then state totals were estimated by summarizing the zones in each state.

(continued)

(“MWRRRI Key Information Source...” continued from page 6)
Indiana gains from the MWRRRI are:

- 4,450 new jobs.
- \$86 million in new household income.
- \$350 million of new development along/near rail rights-of-way.

While the study is 16 years old, Illinois and Chicago specifically remain to gain the most from full implementation of the MWRRRI. Nebraska, with the fewest miles and stations, would obtain the least community benefit.

The size of the economic impact of the MWRRRI is considerable. Some 100 communities would benefit. Look for a one percent overall growth to the region’s economy. Some see a fundamental change to the character of business in the nine states including “New Economy” businesses. Improved access between communities was, is, and would to be the key.

Existing manufacturing and service industries would benefit. New small businesses would benefit. Large businesses would benefit by being able to distribute their operations more widely across the Midwest. Large businesses would “back stop” operations more efficiently in highly accessible, smaller communities. It’s proven smaller communities can boast a high quality of life featuring lower cost housing, good schools, friendly secure neighborhoods, and less congested highway system, per the MWRRRI study.

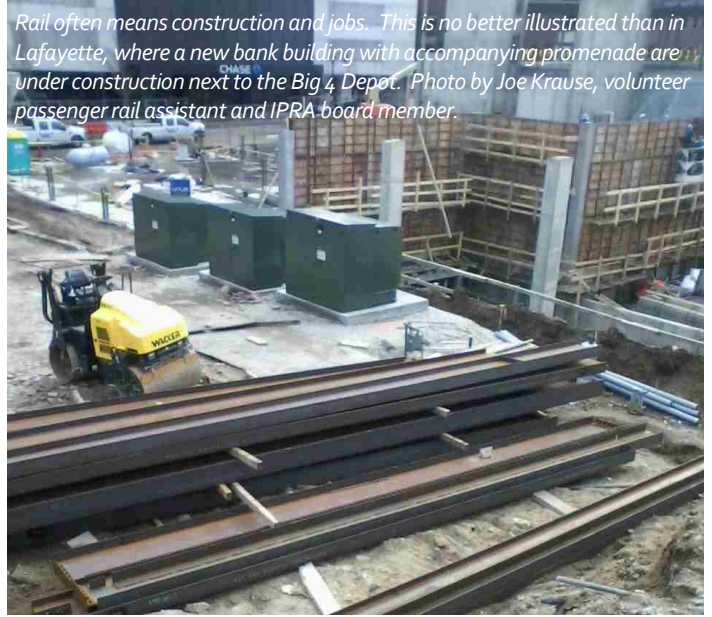
Station Development

MWRRRI stations would be the gateway to communities and provide the “front door” to the MWRRRI system. Joint commercial and residential development potential would exist. Increased train operations would encourage the service industry to locate in and around railroad stations. Industries looking for a home along the MWRRRI system would see it as a good “seeding” ground for business. Again, a key output of the community analysis is the increase in property values that can be expected at station locations throughout the MWRRRI.

In the same way that large department stores anchor a shopping center and create trips that stimulate activity in nearby shops, a multimodal transportation center has the potential to stimulate retail, office, and residential development in an urban center. Connectivity is critical to success in the station development effort. (A bank/residential development is currently being built in Lafayette.)

The characteristics of the local economy (i.e., the types of industry present) determines exactly how much extra impact an investment would generate in that region.

Rail often means construction and jobs. This is no better illustrated than in Lafayette, where a new bank building with accompanying promenade are under construction next to the Big 4 Depot. Photo by Joe Krause, volunteer passenger rail assistant and IPRA-board member.



Develop An ‘Elevator’ Speech

I encourage passenger train advocates to develop an “elevator speech.” Be brief by keeping remarks “no longer than a short elevator ride of 20 to 30 seconds.” Persuasively tell others the following:

The MWRRRI would result in significant economic impact for the Midwest.

Communities and the traveling public would benefit.

Nearly 58,000 long-term jobs would be realized across all nine states.

Income growth would be \$1 billion annually.

15,200 of construction jobs would be created over the 10-year construction phase.

Economic impact from just building the system would be \$23 billion.

State income and sales tax benefits would amount to over \$750 million.

Meet Board Member Fred Lanahan

By Bob Garity

Fred Lanahan was born in New England where his grandfather was a conductor on the Rutland RR (Vermont Central). And his uncle ran the freight office for many years.

His family moved to New Jersey by the Jersey Central commuter RR where he got the fever for railroads. In college, Lanahan specialized in economic geography with a keen interest in railroads and their impact on the economy and geography of the Midwest. His family used Amtrak out of Ft Wayne to the east coast when he lived there the first time. Fred returned to Ft Wayne from Terre Haute to have access to Amtrak. On his return to Ft Wayne, he discovered Amtrak ended service in 1990. He continued to use Amtrak from (continued)

("Meet Board Member Fred Lanahan" continued from page 7) Waterloo, IN, frequently each year and now uses the South Shore RR out of South Bend to Chicago.



Fred Lanahan, photo by Neal Bruns

Ft Wayne is the second largest city in Indiana and has no rail passenger service. The people of Ft Wayne want to see the restoration of passenger rail service and a strong desire and willingness to use it.

Fred is retired Regional Manager with the Indiana Department of Work Force development with 33 years of service. He also resides in Ft Wayne, and formerly resided and worked in Huntington, Lawrenceburg and Terre Haute. Fred is a graduate of St Cloud and Mankato colleges in Minnesota and is a USMC veteran with service in Vietnam.

Fred holds numerous transportation titles, including President, Northern Indiana Passenger Rail Association (NIPRA); founding member of NIPRA in 2009; current board member of Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA); Indiana Commissioner (Private Sector Representative), Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission, and Board member and Secretary of the Fort Wayne Public Transportation Corporation (Fort Wayne Citilink).

Fred is a great asset to Northeastern Indiana. He continues to work hard with NIPRA and IPRA to bring passenger rail service back to Fort Wayne.

Riding the Rails

By Donald Yehle

Airport Connection -- In Texas, construction company Archer Western will build a new TEX Rail station at the Dallas Fort Worth International Airport. The new station will be built for Terminal B at DFW, and will be the last stop of TEX Rail's proposed 27-mile commuter rail project. The project is designed to connect Fort Worth's downtown area to the airport to help reduce commuting. The new station will cost \$28.5 million, and service is expected to begin next year. It's estimated that the new line will carry 8,000 riders a day in its first year. Is this an idea for Indianapolis? (Courtesy of National Association of Railroad Passengers.)

Texas legislators trying to put brakes on Houston-to-Dallas bullet train.

<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/transportation/article/Texas-legislators-trying-to-put-brakes-on-10948975.php?t=c414331c83438d9cbb&cmpid=email-premium>

Will the Texas bullet train really happen?
<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/transportation/article/Will-the-Texas-bullet-train-really-happen-10941015.php?t=186e276c44438d9cbb&cmpid=email-premium>

Save the Date – The Midwest High Speed Rail Association (MWHSR) invites passenger rail advocates to its 2017 annual meeting on April 1st in downtown Chicago. Its 2017 program features speakers that will be sharing ideas, innovations and progress related to passenger rail in the U.S. and around the world.

Speakers Include:

- Eugene Skoropowski, former Senior Vice President of Passenger Rail Development at All Aboard Florida
- Derrick James, Director of Government Affairs, Amtrak
- Tim Hoeffner, Director - Office of Rail, Michigan Department of Transportation
- Katie England, Director of Multimodal Planning & Programs, Indiana Department of Transportation
- Mark Walbrun, Vice President, Practice Leader - Rail Transit, US East Mott MacDonald as speaker

When: Saturday April 1, 2017 - 9:00am to 3:00pm, Check in will start at 8:30am

Where: Maggiano's Little Italy, 516 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60654

Cost: Single Ticket: \$60.00; Student Ticket: \$20.00 *Cost includes lunch

To register, go to <http://midwesthsr.org/2017-mhsra-annual-meeting>

Lack of 'Fast Trains' – Top airline executives from Delta, United, Southwest, Alaska, and JetBlue heard President Donald Trump comment on the lack of 'fast trains' in the United States. "I don't want to compete with your business, but we don't have one fast train," the president is reported as having said. For more, see <http://thehill.com/policy/transportation/318680-trump-laments-lack-of-high-speed-rail-in-us-during-meeting-with>.

IPRA AT TRANSIT DAY – Transit companies from throughout Indiana gathered at the Indiana State House on Tuesday, February 21. Various organizations talked of the need for additional funding to support bus transit and rail. Participants were reminded that many individuals, especially millennials, choose to live where they don't have to own an automobile. Five members of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) attended the event – Fred Lanahan, Tim Maloney, Russell Menyhart, Phil Streby, and Doug Yerkson -- as did Curt Sylvester from the Northern Indiana Passenger Rail Association (NIPRA).

The two Indiana rail advocacy groups shared a table at the event. Hoosiers visiting the "rail booth" were told how passenger rail enhances local economies and reduces greenhouse (cont'd)



(*"Riding the Rails"* continued from page 8) emissions, while providing needed transportation. Rail-related literature and train schedules were distributed, as well.

Amtrak Ranks No. 6 -- When included among U.S. airlines, Amtrak ranks No. 6 in domestic passengers carried. In the Northeast Corridor (NEC), Amtrak now has a very strong position in many markets that were previously dominated by air carriers, according to Amtrak National Facts, found on the National Railroad Passenger Corporation's website. "The name 'Amtrak' results from a blending of the words 'America' and 'track.' It is properly used in documents with only the first letter capitalized," Amtrak says.

Are People Listening? -- Repeated cries about the 'civic embarrassment' that is Indianapolis Union Station has finally attracted some attention. Fox59 interviewed Board Member Bill Malcolm, while WRTV6 spoke with IPRA's Doug Yerkeson. Listen to this Fox59 piece: <http://www.theindychannel.com/news/local-news/meeting-scheduled-for-civic-embarrassment-union-station>

Of the Malcolm-organized meeting: "Outstanding turnout. Representatives from the City of Indianapolis, INDOT, Amtrak, Indy Go, and Visit Indy were present," Yerkeson said.

Budget Trip to D.C.

By Bill Malcolm

Insiders Guide to DC-Union Market, U Street/Shaw Neighborhoods

Early spring is the best time to visit DC.

You can take Amtrak's *Cardinal* three days a week right to DC's fabulous Union Station.

Winter ends here on March 1. I just spent a week here and wanted to share some new fun things to do in Washington that you won't find in the tourist guides. DC has changed dramatically and new trendy neighborhoods abound. Millennials have transformed neighborhoods and I keep discovering new places to visit on every trip.

Dolcezza has the best coffee in DC. It's in City Center on 9th Street and they feature Stumptown Coffee from Portland (ok Brooklyn). (City Center is a new upscale shopping center-mall outdoor plaza space.)

Compass Coffess is another local favorite. (Metro Gallery Place Chinatown).

Explore U Street neighborhood (U Street /Cardozo or Shaw Metro) including the area around Howard University. It's home of the Howard Theatre and the Duke Ellington Memorial. The African American Civil War Museum is another must in this neighborhood which has a lot of interesting old Victorian houses.

For lunch, head over to Union Market. Think of Indy's City Market on steroids. It's filled with great food shops for an informal picnic-style meal. I tried the Korean and had the half and half salad and rice bowl.

Then I went over to the new REI Co-op in a historic building that was also once a concert hall. It's a signature sports store experience complete with climbing wall and outdoor garden. If you want to see the future of retail, a trip to the REI Co-op is a must.

It's all in the new "No Ma" (north of Mass. Avenue) district which also includes the new Metropolitan Branch 8-mile bike and hike trail. If you haven't been to the area in a while you won't recognize it. You can hop the Metro back to your hotel at Union Station. Or hop a shared bike rental known as Capital Bike share. The new NPR building is also in this neighborhood.



All the Smithsonian museums are free. I like the National Portrait Gallery which also has a great cafe in a huge courtyard between the two buildings that comprise the museum (Metro Gallery Place Chinatown).

My favorite hotel is the Comfort Inn on 13th Street NW (continued)

("Budget Trip to D.C." continued from page 9) near Mass Avenue. Other budget choices are the Washington Plaza and the Beacon House Hotel. All are steps to the trendy 14th Street neighborhood.

My conference was at the Renaissance Hotel which is another good choice (999 9th Street).

Getting there is half the fun. I took Southwest on their non-stop for an incredible \$64 on the flight out. You can then hop on the Metro for the quick 20-minute trip into DC. Tickets at Southwest.com (and you never pay to check your luggage or to change your flight). You can fly one way and take the train back. Or take the *Cardinal* both ways!

Did I forget to mention the cherry blossoms?

In any event, DC makes for a great weekend or week away from the Circle City.

For more ideas on nightlife or things to do, pick up a copy of The City Paper.

Mega Bus No More? Coach USA Takes Over Operations with Single Deck Buses

By Bill Malcolm

Mega Bus has been taken over by its parent company, Coach USA.

Gone or soon to be gone are the colorful double-decked buses proclaiming tickets for a \$1. Gone was the free wi-fi and \$1 tickets.

Instead traditional buses are replacing the Mega Buses, according to the driver of my 12 noon bus to Chicago from Indianapolis a month ago.

They still will sell tickets on line on the Mega Bus website and still will leave from the west side of City Market in Indianapolis (and drop off at the Polk Street location in Chicago which is several blocks south of Union Station).

The website still shows 7+ departures daily.

I paid \$28 plus a \$2 fee on my trip although the later departures were running \$37 including the fee.

Chicago media reported that Mega Bus was cutting service to and from Chicago but did not mention the new buses which are painted white with the Coach USA logo and a small sign "now accepting Mega Bus tickets".



One of the new Mega Bus vehicles stops at Chicago's Polk Street.

Coach USA will still require you to buy your ticket ahead.

Mega Bus had several high profile accidents (including several in Indiana) over the years. I had numerous delayed trips with the company and a quick google search and reviews on Yelp detail the myriad of issues. However, it was hard to argue with their frequent service and rock bottom fares. Plus the crowd on Mega Bus was more high tech and millennial since you had to buy your ticket online.

Other options to Chicago besides the train are:

Airline flights to O'Hare on cramped regional jets with one way fares from \$209 to \$500 on the day I travelled. (United has one regular departure a day each way --the rest are operated by regional carriers. American only uses regional carriers.)

Southwest flies to Midway at 8 am and 8pm. Two days before I left both flights had long delays and the fare was \$209 as well but at least you are on a 737 and they don't charge luggage fees or ticket change fees

Midway is a quicker CTA ride to downtown than is O'Hare. I still considered bus travel.

Greyhound and Miller Bus also go to Chicago with a few non-stop runs although many stop in Lafayette and a few stop in Gary. I like the Greyhound since you don't have to stand in the cold but the fare was higher the day I was traveling.

Fellow Rail Advocate,

Just a reminder that the time has come, once again, to pay your 2017 Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance dues. IPRA dues are \$30 per year, and may be paid either online or by check.

We have seen significant progress in Indiana over the last year. The *Hoosier State* service (Chicago-Indianapolis) is on a more solid footing, progress has begun on the environmental impact studies for the Northern Indiana & Ohio Passenger Rail Project, and expansion of the South Shore commuter railroad is moving forward. Your contribution will assist IPRA in the work of building awareness and support for these issues with the general public, and governmental leaders.

The easiest way to make a contribution is to go to the website (www.indianahighspeedrail.org), click on the "join" tab, and follow the on-screen directions.

Checks may be sent to: Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance, 2017 Membership, 7032 Olcott Avenue, Hammond, Indiana, 46323.

If you are uncertain whether your 2017 dues have been made, please send us a message at: info@indianahighspeedrail.org.

If your 2017 dues have already been paid, you have our thanks! In that case, please disregard this message.

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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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 if booked three or more days in advance.

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