

ALL ABOARD

INDIANA

The Official Newsletter of the

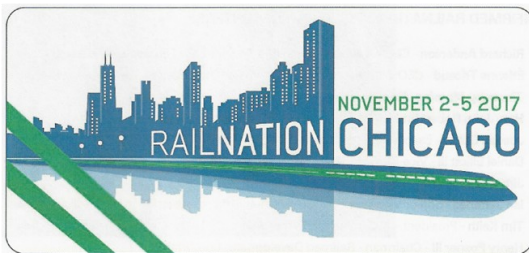
Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

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RailNation Chicago 2017

NARP's 50th Anniversary Celebration!

By Tod Bassler, Contributor



The RailNation Chicago 2017 event was an extended weekend packed with information, people networking, food, rail day trips and other fun things to do and see in Chicago! Chicago, where the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) was founded in 1967, was the PERFECT place to come back to 50 years later and celebrate accomplishments.

RailNation Chicago was held in the **Millennium Knickerbocker Hotel**, an historic 1927 jewel of a building. The meetings were held in Crystal Ballroom on the main floor and the Tower East and West room on the top (14th/13th) floor. The WiFi Internet connection was very good. However, the challenge in moving attendees between meeting rooms was complicated by the hotel's very small old elevators. Hotel staff opened an additional freight elevator for our use between sessions, which eased the wait!

Some new things were introduced during the meeting but NARP's new logo, unveiled during the meeting, was an immediate topic of conversation. Here are the four NARP logos (& first year used):



You may ask... what is this apparently odd new logo's rectangle? Many of us asked the same question. Once NARP President & CEO Jim Mathews explained it, it made perfect sense. People don't ride on the outside of trains; they ride on the inside with windows being their "picture frame" to the amazing scenery moving by. In support of this change, attendees were able to pick up [fridge] magnets with interchangeable inserts depicting a few scenes from places in our beautiful country.

We had a food treat...literally! Chef Daniel Malzhan, Amtrak Corporate Executive Chef, talked about creating, preparing and serving meals for train travel. He prepared a salmon dish (including a salmon cleaning demo) with Thai red curry sauce and all attendees were offered a sample and the recipe. Delicious! By the way, Amtrak stopped serving ice cream due to quality (freeze/thaw) issues (Auto Train is the exception). *(continued)*



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The presentations were well done. Between all the speakers, attendees were presented with a wealth of information. Some sessions were simultaneous breakout sessions so not all event information is discussed here. Here are some key learnings:

Opening Keynote address was by Etienne Tricaud, CEO & Co-Founder of AREP, a Paris based design firm specializing in urban development. He mentioned that there are over 3000 towns/cities in France with improved development, commonly called Transit Oriented Development (TOD). TOD shows that passenger rail investment is contagious (in a good way)!

Richard Anderson, President/CEO of Amtrak, showed a video of two women, Kaitlin & Victoria, who recently traveled coast to coast on rail. He highlighted three things that need focus: (1) the Northeast Corridor, (2) the capital deficit & (3) the host railroad interference. Only 6% of passengers travel end to end so all stations must be useful and inviting. Since airlines have abandoned 400 to 450-mile travel segments, this must be passenger rail's focus. Infrastructure maintenance must be a high priority (he referenced a still in use tunnel in Baltimore dedicated by General Ulysses S Grant!). Enforce the 1971 law (that gives Amtrak priority on freight railroads)!! He discussed many more useful topics affecting Amtrak.

A panel of four experts moderated by Jim Mathews, discussed topics ranging from (1) Next Generation Train Control to improve safety of PTC to (2) using drones to inspect track & bridges to (3) the Texas Bullet Train using Japanese Shinkansen stock to (4) replacing conductors with [electronic] semi-conductors (a joke).

Jim Loomis, author of "All Aboard: The Complete North America Train Travel Guide" gave many good ideas on how to best experience train travel in North America. For example, ride the Canadian eastbound if you wish to see the Rocky Mountains (during the day). Visit Jim's website <http://www.trainsandtravel.com/> for a wealth of useful information.

Panelists Joe Szabo, Executive Director Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, and Daniel Elliott III, Past Surface Transportation Board (STB), discussed legal activities important to passenger rail advocates. Advocacy is very important. Go face to face with your Senator or Congressman... it works. Millennials are avoiding cars and choosing places to live that are connected.

In the all-important battle for On-Time Trains (OTP), Kevin Brubaker later dug deeper into the laws and lawsuits related to passenger rail in the USA.

Panelists moderated by Rick Harnish, Executive Direc-

tor of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association, discussed utilizing a Phased Network Approach for advancing High Speed Rail in the USA. In other words, modernize our passenger rail in manageable phases, each phase building on the previous. For example, the Pennsylvania Turnpike in the 1930s was a test... now see what we have. A good book, High Speed Rail by Michell LeBoeuf, is good but difficult to find.

Ross Capon, NARP President Emeritus, discussed how we're going to get the \$300 billion in capital needed to improve our passenger rail.

Finally, Kirk Dillard, Chairman of Chicago Regional Transportation Authority, discussed a wide range of topics, some being:

**Chicago's "El" is at all time high utilization
Public/private partnerships work (Example: Chicago's Metra)**

Every \$1 in transit = \$4 in TOD

CTA & Metra have very old equipment

Uber & Lyft can complement transit (i.e. the last mile solution)

More people use Chicago's Union Station than Midway Airport

**To try to sell Millennials a city without transit is like selling them a phone without a camera
Metra has a 96% on time rate!**

A networking reception was held the evening of the first day was well attended and many attendees built relationships which can further promote passenger rail in our country.

On Saturday, attendees were able to sign up for either a morning or afternoon round trip ride to Milwaukee on the *Hiawatha*. Tours of rail and station improvements in both Milwaukee and Chicago were held. Also, Amtrak equipment, including a new Viewliner II Dining Car, were on display. In the evening, attendees had two great food/fun choices: (1) Ride the 'Pioneer Limited' in a Dome Car to Milwaukee and back with a light dinner or (2) attend the NARP 50th anniversary celebration dinner and program, which included a salute to NARP Founder Tony Haswell.

On Sunday, tour choices included (1) a guided tour on the *South Shore Line* between Millennium Station to Michigan City, (2) CTA Loop and elevated rail, and (3) the Museum of Science and Industry.

This was a weekend to remember!



IPRA's Phil Streby suggests building passenger railroad advocacy through joint national, state memberships.

***Hoosier State* Among Issues Discussed by IPRA, INDOT**

By Bill Malcolm

On November 17, IPRA met with staff of INDOT to discuss issues relating to the *Hoosier State* as well as improving the passenger experience (i.e., dealing with the Amtrak Greyhound Union Station Terminal at 350 S. Illinois in Indianapolis).

INDOT's inter-modal group has replaced several staffers who departed so it was good to share ideas and updates.

INDOT is offering several specials for travel on the state supported *Hoosier State* (which gives Amtrak \$300,000 a month to run the 4 day a week train). These include a special winter rates for the period January to March 2018.

The on-time performance issue of the *Hoosier State* was also a topic. On-time performance continues to be a problem and the train to Chicago was 1 hour and 16 minutes late the day we met with INDOT.

CSX dispatchers apparently continue to put freight traffic ahead of the passenger trains on the route causing frequent delays. On time performance fell from the 80 percent + level in 2016 to the 60%+ level in 2017 on the route.

We noted even "die hard" rail supporters are complaining. (The writer suffered 6-hour plus trips twice this summer on the route which normally takes 4 hours and 45 minutes to go just 186 miles.)

INDOT is working on the bus rail terminal issue as well and Amtrak is aware of the problem since their new CEO recently visited Indy.

Amtrak has re-organized and now has a Midwest marketing group according to INDOT.

They were also interested in attending our tour of the Cummins plant in Seymour which is building engines on new Amtrak equipment being used in Illinois, Michigan, California, and other states (but not Indiana).

INDOT has also met with Visit Indy and other groups to promote the *Hoosier State* train.

Peru Site for January IPRA Board Meeting

By Steve Coxhead

IPRA board meetings in 2018 will be held every other month. Meetings will be held on Thursdays or Saturdays throughout the state. The January meeting is set for the Peru City Hall (in the conference room) on **Thursday, January 25th, at 10:00 am, Eastern time**. At that time, we will meet with the Mayor of Peru and have a presentation concerning the past, present and future of passenger rail in Indiana.

IPRA is a state-wide organization. Various sites are being considered for Board meetings, including Anderson, Bloomington, Fort Wayne, Hammond, Indianapolis, New Buffalo (Michigan, possibly with the Michigan Association of Rail Passengers), South Bend, and Terre Haute. Send us a note at info@indianahighspeedrail.org, with your preferences and comments.

IPRA President Offers Different Take on RailNation Conference

By Steve Coxhead

The Rail Nation conference (held in Chicago, November 2nd thru 5th) was presented by the National Association of Rail Passengers (NARP), to mark the founding of NARP, 50 years ago, in Chicago. At the time, both the passenger and freight rail system in the northeast quadrant of the United States was in a state of collapse, and it had become obvious that something had to be done. NARP was founded to give the rail passenger a voice in what was, and would be, happening.

The effort was successful. The national rail passenger network exists, to this day. It was never certain that would be the case. As the sixties gave way to the seventies, one possibility was that intercity rail passenger service would disappear. We are all thankful that reality was otherwise.



Steve Coxhead participates in a discussion at the RailNation conference

And some of the same problems remain. Funding is a problem. On time performance requires attention, and replacing over age equipment still presents a problem. Additionally, states are now responsible for many intercity routes (this was not originally the case), and most states are still critically short of funds. (continued)

("IPRA President Offers Different Take" continued from page 3)

A couple of presentations at Rail Nation were particularly interesting in as much as they give a hint as to which way thought is heading. They addressed the questions of how much would it take to bring the passenger rail system up to modern standards, and where (how?) could private funding be marshaled to get the job done.

The question of actual cost is important, because it gives a specific place to stand when discussing funding with legislators, and the press.

Private funding is an interesting idea, but this writer believes it to be a chimera. The Brightline project in Florida is privately funded, but the FEC railway's parent company owns substantial real estate, that can be opened to development by the development of modern rail services. Other states do not have this happy conjunction of circumstances. Texas Central Railway plans to construct their proposed Houston to Dallas high speed line using substantial private funding, but it has not yet materialized. I would dearly like for the folks in Texas to prove me wrong about private funding! But I await developments.

So, for the foreseeable future, the development of a modern, 21st Century passenger rail network in this country will depend on government funding. Federal and state funding happens when legislators become aware that funding is important to their constituents, and could affect their chances of continuing in office.

I would like to reach out to the IPRA community with a simple request. It is not expensive and not time consuming. Communicate with your Congressman, and both Senators, to let them know that it is essential that a modern national rail passenger system (Amtrak) be developed.

Let them know that you will consider their response at the next election. Indiana has state-supported rail, so send the same message to your State Senator and State Representative. Whatever you feel comfortable with – e-mail, phone call, letter, short personal discussion. The important thing is to raise the visibility of the issue, and to let the office holders know that votes and campaign funding are dependent on it.

And then, after a period, follow up to politely ask what action has been taken. Get political! We are faced with a problem that is political. It is not technical, and it is not financial.

If we can get the political leadership to the point of considering passenger rail a necessity, the technical and financial details will have a way of solving themselves.

So, those are my thoughts suggested by NARP's 50th anni-

versary. To succeed, we must change the political climate, at least in this one way.

IPRA would be interested in your thoughts on the subject. Please let us know by sending a message to info@indianahighspeedrail.org.

All Aboard Indiana The Year in Review

By Donald Yehle

January 2017 – Proposed Chicago-Fort Wayne-Columbus, Ohio-passenger rail line gains support from the Federal Railroad Administration. Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) comments in writing and at public meetings on Indiana State 2017 Rail Plan. The *Hoosier State* train touted by NUVO Newsweekly of Indianapolis as great public-private partnership.

February 2017 – Regional rail advocates push 7-day *Cardinal*. Board Member Doug Yerkson and his family take the train for a family weekend in the Windy City. Chicago's Union Station seeing more improvements to benefit traveling public. Indy Bus Rail Station continues to be a downtown civic embarrassment. Passenger ramp now open at Lafayette train station.

March 2017 – Corridor chosen for South Shore alternative rail line. IPRA speaks out about national rail issues. Amtrak, IN-DOT, and Iowa-Pacific praised for commitment to the *Hoosier State* line. Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI) key information source for passenger rail advocates in nine Midwestern states, including Indiana.



Noblesville's Joe Hughes (left) serves a *Hoosier State* customer.

March 2017 (Special Issue) – Indiana food and beverage products offered on the new (Amtrak-operated) *Hoosier State*. Amtrak's "Ocean View" dome car travels Indiana's Western Corridor during March. Free access to Legacy Club at Chicago Union Station (also in March) for

Hoosier State passengers. Indiana among 18 states providing short-distance intercity rail.

April 2017 – Large crowd at public forum says keep Nickel Plate tracks between Noblesville and Fishers. IPRA Board Member updates Indy Mayor Joe Hogsett on the *Hoosier State*, Amtrak, and the Indy Bus-Rail station. Rail (continued)

("Year in Review" continued from page 4) advocates asked to hammer congress with phone calls to save the national long-distance network. Last run of Iowa-Pacific's **Hoosier State** documented.



The Iowa Pacific **Hoosier State** stops in Rensselaer on its last run. Photo by Doug Yerkeson.

May 2017 – Six million dollars are included as "line item" in new biennial state budget for the **Hoosier State**. Twelve million dollars budgeted to the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority for South Shore construction projects. **Hoosier State** and **Cardinal** eastbound departure times tweaked. IPRA Board Members Duane Chatten and Phil Streby share passenger rail knowledge with Indiana congressional delegation in Washington, D.C.

June 2017 – IPRA encourages Hoosiers to join both the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) and our own state organization. Members told **Hoosier State** needs more frequencies; how a seven-day **Cardinal** might benefit our state, and the need to consider extending train service beyond Indianapolis to both Louisville and Cincinnati.

July 2017 – IPRA Board Member Bill Malcolm offers readers a "budget" air/rail travel idea to the Pacific Northwest. Lafayette State Representative Sally Siegrist appointed to the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission. She now serves the commission alongside IPRA Board Member Fred Lanahan. Former Delta Air Executive Richard Anderson named Amtrak president/CEO.

August 2017 – Dispatching decisions and freight-train interference de-prioritized Amtrak trains on the **Hoosier State** corridor. State to lose potential commuter rail corridor (Hoosier Heritage Corridor). NIPRA, Amtrak hold discussions on Chicago-Fort Wayne train. Special Amtrak Eclipse Express connecting Chicago with Carbondale, Illinois, sells out quickly.

September 2017 – IPRA President Steve Coxhead urges patience with CSX as heat "turned up" on freight railroad.

Seven-day **Cardinal** idea taken to Indiana State government officials. "Last mile" made easier with Amtrak mobile app and new ridesharing service (Lyft). Young train lover among those urging his community to Save the Nickel Plate train. (See adjacent picture.)



October 2017 – Tennessee rail advocate favors hourly train service between Indy and Chicago. Muncie-based Progress Rail builds passenger rail locomotives. Midwest Rail Conference in Kalamazoo explores future of freight, passenger rail. Rail crossing safety, **Hoosier State** among Indiana topics discussed at conference by Indiana Department of Transportation. IPRA writes politicians regarding woes with CSX.

November 2017 – Effective intercity passenger rail service should be safe, frequent, reliable, convenient – and pleasant, says Lafayette train station volunteer Joe Krause. Train through Fort Wayne three to five years away. Opinion/Editorial: Let Indy Airport Authority run the bus-rail terminal. Interest high to restore rail throughout the Midwest, IPRA President Steve Coxhead learns.

December 2017 – Rail Nation Chicago 2017 terrific event. NARP introduces new logo which makes sense – people don't ride on the outside of trains, rather they ride on the inside with windows being their "picture frames" to the amazing. INDOT has new inter-modal staffers working hard on issues of concern to IPRA, including Indy bus rail terminal issue.

Indiana Transportation Museum

Your Trip to the North Pole

By Santa's Helpers

Reprinted from Indiana Transportation Museum Website

Experience a historic passenger train straight out of the history books as it thunders into the station for a grand entrance. As soon as the train stops, the Conductor calls "All Aboard!" for your boarding of the Polar Bear Express. The train is decorated for the holiday season, and Santa as well as his helpers are filled with excitement.

The magic begins at the boarding site for your adventure where you will pick up tickets at will-call and visit the Museum Store, which will also be open for gifts and stocking stuffers. Your journey to the North Pole awaits!

(continued)

("Your Trip to the North Pole" continued from page 5) Upon departure, your party will travel through the Indiana countryside to the North Pole, the home of Santa Claus. The North Pole features a holiday scene as Santa and his helpers eagerly prepare for the holidays. The North Pole will be seen from the warm comfort of the passenger cars. Santa and Mrs. Claus will be on-board the train, and will lead an interactive experience along with Snowflake the Polar Bear.

The train ride lasts approximately one hour and fifteen minutes.

Passengers will receive hot chocolate, a cookie, and a candy cane; children will receive a small gift from Santa. A holiday themed story will also be read as part of the magical experience.



Tickets for Polar Bear Express are sold online. Reservations are required as trains will sell out. 2017 trains depart from Kokomo or Logansport, depending upon the day of operation. **Trains will not be offered from Fishers or Noblesville.**

All Polar Bear Express trips, except for select dates, begin in Kokomo, Indiana* at the Allied Tube and Conduit parking lot – 1000 N. Main St. Kokomo, IN – near the intersection of N. Main St. and E. Broadway St.

*All trains on **Thursday, Dec. 14, and Thursday, Dec. 21, only** will depart from Logansport, IN at the Anoka United Methodist Church south of Logansport along US Highway 35 – 4890 E County Road 300 S, Logansport, IN 46947. **All other excursions will depart from Kokomo.**

The Polar Bear Express does not board at the museum site in Noblesville, Indiana at Forest Park nor Fishers, Indiana. All passengers board at Kokomo, Indiana or Logansport, Indiana*

Reserve tickets at ITM.org.

Opinion/Editorial: Some Holiday Thoughts Worth Considering

At birth, we boarded the train and met our parents, and we believe they will always travel on our side.

However, at some station our parents will step down from the train, leaving us on this journey alone.

As time goes by, other people will board the train; and they will be significant (i.e. our siblings, friends, children, and even the love of your life).

Many will step down and leave a permanent vacuum.

Others will go so unnoticed that we don't realize they vacated their seats.

This train ride will be full of joy, sorrow, fantasy, expectations, hellos, goodbyes, and farewells. Success consists of having a good relationship with all passengers requiring that we give the best of ourselves.

The mystery to everyone is: We do not know at which station we ourselves will step down.

So, we must live in the best way, love, forgive, and offer the best of who we are.

It is important to do this because when the time comes for us to step down and leave our seat empty we should leave behind beautiful memories for those who will continue to travel on the train of life.

I wish you a joyful journey on the train of life. Reap success and give lots of love. More importantly, thank God for the journey.

Lastly, I thank you for being one of the passengers on my train.

(By the way, I am not planning to get off the train anytime soon but if I do, just remember I am glad you were part of my journey.) – Author Unknown



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Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance – Tod Bassler, Steve Coxhead, Bill Malcolm, Doug Yerkson

Special Contributors -- Earl Crown, Santa's Helpers

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.

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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