

Are you up for amazing? **Illinois by Train Perfect for a Spring Visit**

By Bill Malcolm*

Spring has almost sprung in Chicago and March is perfect for a long weekend trip by train. Catch the *Cardinal* or *Hoosier State* to Chicago.

The Chicago Flower and Garden Show runs from March 14-18 at Navy Pier. This year's theme is "Flower Tales - Every Garden Has a Story to Tell". Details at www.ChicagoFlower.com.

The architecture of Chicago is amazing and the boat tours on the Chicago River describing the varied buildings have resumed running. Shoreline Sightseeing is one of the several companies that run such. Or try a free walking tour (www.FreeChicagoWalkingTours.com).

The Art Institute of Chicago is another must which has a new exhibit, "Saints and Heroes-Art of Medieval and Renaissance Europe" opening March 20.

Michigan Avenue is a must for shopping and people watching.

Stay - I always stay at the new Hotel Versey, 644 West Diversey Parkway. It's a music themed hotel in the cute Lakeview East neighborhood full of shops and restaurants. There is a Trader Joes across the street and the hotel allows free use of the LA Fitness in the Century Plaza Mall around the corner.

There's the new and trendy Stan's Donuts on the corner and a Landmark Art Movie cinema in the mall. Everything needed is just steps away. You can get there by taking the 151 Bus from Union Station or walk over to the Quincy L Station and take the Brown Line north to Diversey station and walk 5 blocks east to the hotel.

Reservations at www.WyndhamRewards.com. AARP members and AAA members save even more.

Other Lakeview hotel options I like include the Best Western Hawthorne Terrace on Broadway Street and the Willows Hotel on Surf Street. See LakeviewEast.com for more lodging ideas in the neighborhood.

Head over a few blocks east to enjoy the bike path that runs along Lake Michigan north to Evanston and south to the Loop and beyond. Bring your bike helmet and rent the shared Divvy Bike. (continued)

*The Windy City is a great destination,
offering something for everyone.*



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The rates in Lakeview East are usually much lower than the Loop. Plus, you are mingling with the locals.

For those that want to stay downtown (aka the Loop), I like the Palmer House Hilton. It is a historical gem in mint condition and one of the oldest continuously operating hotels in the country. Don't miss the famous Peacock Door and the murals on the ceiling of the lobby.

There are lots of nearby theatres which you can walk to when you stay downtown.

Finally, the new River Walk which runs along the Chicago River is very nice. You can even rent a kayak.

Eat - Renaldi's Pizza at 2827 Broadway has great pizza (eat there or to go). Tedino's Stuffed Pizza at 5353 N. Sheridan is also very good. It is hard to find bad pizza in Chicago.

For more information, pick up a copy of the Chicago Reader or New City — both weekly magazines.

If you want to take a different way home and check out Springfield. Take the *Lincoln Service* or *Texas Eagle* to Springfield. The *Lincoln Service* goes 109 mph on upgraded track for much of the route. (If you take the *Texas Eagle* to Springfield, the train goes 79 mph although the track is ready for 109 mph. They are waiting for Positive Train Control and no date is anticipated. It is up to Union Pacific.)

The Springfield Amtrak station is right downtown. I like the State House Inn and Wyndham Springfield when I visit (both are steps to the train station).

I got a glimpse of the new Siemens built locomotive which is in service in the Midwest (except for Indiana). The engines were built by Cummins in Seymour, Indiana.

Springfield is all about Abraham Lincoln including a historical village just south of downtown run by the National Park Service.

Illinois is celebrating its 200th



Springfield offers interesting history, like Jesse Dubois home. (Photograph by Bill Malcolm.)

birthday this year. Check out www.Illinois200.com for all the events.

A special exhibit celebrating the Bicentennial opens March 23 at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. Entitled "From Illinois to the White House" Lincoln, Grant, Reagan, Obama," it analyzes the ties these 4 Presidents have to Illinois. You will find it at 212 N. Sixth Street in Springfield.

From Springfield back to Indianapolis, hop on the train to Bloomington-Normal and connect with the Burlington Amtrak Thruway Bus back to Indianapolis. It leaves at 5 p.m. and returns to Indy around midnight.

Illinois is an amazing state which has invested heavily in passenger rail and transit in general. You can take the train to Carbondale, Champaign-Urbana, and many other cities. The new Amtrak stations in Normal and Champaign-Urbana are very nice. The service is frequent and the tracks have been upgraded to allow 109 mph service on many of the routes.

For more Illinois travel ideas, visit www.EnjoyIllinois.com.

**Bill Malcolm is on the IPRA Board. His syndicated travel column appears in the on-line version of the Windy City Times and other publications.*

He also writes the Round the Ripple column in the Broad Ripple Gazette. He recently attended the Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism and Travel at the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago.

He wishes to thank Cory Jobe, director of the Illinois Office of Tourism. Jobe turned state travel marketing on its ear with Illinois' new targeted "Are you Up for Amazing" ad campaign. You can view the catchy ads on You Tube which ran in the Indianapolis market last year.

March 12 Next Key Date in Save the Nickel Plate Project

By Donald Yehle

Efforts have been relatively dormant throughout the winter months to Save the Nickel Plate (STNKP) tracks between Tipton and Indianapolis. "Planning and preparation work for the next steps in the process are well underway," reports Logan Day of the STNKP organization.

Concerned individuals are encouraged to attend a March 12 meeting at the Noblesville Baptist Church (6:30 p.m.) to hear how you, your friends, your neighbors, and your relatives can make a difference in this important passenger rail advocacy project, Day adds. (continued)

("March 12 Next Key Date..." continued from page 2)

The Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) supports preserving the train corridor – rather than converting it to a trail – as it also offers a commuter rail corridor, says Steve Coxhead, IPRA president.

Let's Spend Transportation Dollars Wisely, Streby Says

By Phil Streby

Transportation drives this nation's economy, and scarce transportation dollars must be spent wisely. It has been shown time and again that too often our Federal transportation money has been foolishly spent on wasteful projects meant to satisfy contractors and congressmen in a district. Yes, some was even spent continuing passenger rail where, *at that time*, it wasn't perceived as useful. That was then, over 40 years ago!

Today, people are driving fewer miles. The coming generations want to live where they don't even need to own cars, and a third of them don't bother to get drivers licenses! The Federal transportation budget needs to respond to that message by properly funding alternative forms of transportation which have been shown to be safer than driving, more environmentally friendly (noise pollution being just one of those aspects), and even helps to **pay back the dollars spent** on those projects!

Passenger rail meets those demands with fewer dollars per mile than any other major highway project. Just one such proposed project in Milwaukee several years ago was nearly equal to the entire annual Federal operating subsidy for the entire Amtrak national system, and Amtrak's fare-box recovers nearly 90 percent of its own expenses!

Passenger rail stimulates the economy wherever it is present. Cities and regions where investment has been made in passenger rail have recovered many times the initial public investment with private development surrounding and along the rail line. Again, I emphasize *private money following public investment*.

Public money was and continues to be invested in transportation projects around the country. Because of the privately held nature of America's railroads, this public money was invested in government projects such as the Interstate Highway System, which we all



Phil Streby speaks at Rail-Nation Chicago.



Want to learn how you can help Save the Train in 2018?

Join us on March 12.



Who: Save the Nickel Plate
What: Community Meeting
When: 6:30PM on Monday March 12, 2018
Where: Noblesville Baptist Church

Why: Learn about what we will be doing in 2018 to Save the Nickel Plate railroad between Tipton and Indianapolis and how YOU can help.

RSVP on Facebook (optional): <https://goo.gl/HmxRzN>

*Don't forget to invite a family, friend, or neighbor to join you.

enjoy except near major and some minor cities at rush hour which now appears to be all day long.

Other such monies also helped develop today's modern air transport system which is often threatened by both natural (weather) and man-made (terrorist or computer glitches) causes. Both of those forms of transportation were once praised, just as rail, as the most modern of ways to go. No longer.

Huge amounts of public dollars were spent to build the competition which relentlessly pulled passengers and revenue away from privately-held railroads. It is time to reverse that course of action and restore the choice of transportation this country once enjoyed. (continued)

("Let's Spend Transportation Dollars Wisely..." continued from page 3) Passenger rail is and should be considered an **investment** in this country's future. Public money spent to make it both grow and flourish is public money wisely spent to give our citizens the choice they need for both business and pleasurable travel. It will also be the seed money needed to develop the corporate mindset needed to re-tool and re-employ for the private investment in passenger rail many want to envision as the future transportation.

Passenger rail, as an additional transportation choice, could, as demonstrated in cities and towns around the country, very well be the driver necessary for enhanced national mobility as it would promote those modes needed to not just travel city to city and town to town, but get someone from his initial point to his final destination, true point to point.

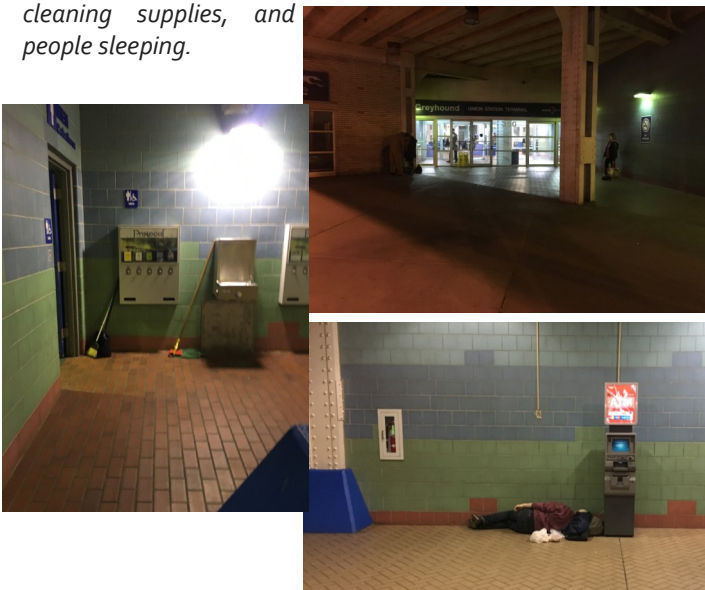
Where passenger trains run today, these routes should be developed into rail passenger corridors with a vision toward higher speeds and more schedules. Feeder routes (bus or rail) should be planned for even more connectivity be it among cities and towns, regions, or even nationally. The **service** should be viewed as that, a *service*, which provides both travel choices and economic stimulus.

Are First Impressions of Indy's Train Station Lasting Impressions?

Photos by Bill Malcolm

Would you feel safe entering the Indianapolis Union Station Terminal at 350 S. Illinois (pictured below)? Would you want to relocate your business here? Are first impressions lasting impressions?

Union Station in Indianapolis features poor lighting, abandoned cleaning supplies, and people sleeping.



Key Advocacy Lessons Can Be Learned on Promoting Rail

Editor's Note: *Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) Treasurer Phil Streby and Donald Yehle, editor of All Aboard Indiana, will attend the Rail Passengers Association's 2018 Advocacy Summit and Day on the Hill event, April 15-18. Those IPRA members who can't attend and especially those of you who hold dual memberships with the Rail Passengers Association can learn a lot about passenger rail advocacy by reading the letter below. It was authored by Sean Jeans-Gail, vice president, government affairs and policy, Rail Passengers Association.*

As we head into April, I wanted to touch base with everyone about scheduling your Capitol Hill meetings for [RPA's April 17th 'Day on the Hill'](#).

If you haven't already initiated the process of scheduling your Congressional meetings, we would encourage you to begin contacting your elected official's D.C. offices as soon as possible. If needed, you can search for and connect with your member's offices via these links - [House](#) or [Senate](#)

Many of you are ahead of the curve on this and have been reporting your scheduled meetings to the D.C. office. Special thanks to the Division Leaders, who will be playing a key role in coordinating this work.

Once you have scheduled your appointments, please fill out and submit [this form](#) with your appointment information (*a separate form submission form for each scheduled meeting please*). We will be compiling all scheduled meetings into a master tracking document which will be available to all attendees via a link we will distribute to you.

This link will take you to [an online list of all currently registered attendees](#) that will be helpful for those looking to organize their meetings by state and regional delegations. This is especially important for the Senate, as we don't want 'Day on The Hill' participants scheduling multiple meetings with the same senator.

The RPA staff is strongly encouraging everyone to schedule their own meetings! This will help you create a more durable impression on congressional staffers, since you won't be communicating with them for the first time on April 17th. It will also free up RPA staff resources to respond to requests for information and organizing support from our Congressional rail allies on the Hill. Also, we will be following the White House's budget proposal to eliminate long distance trains and several key transit capital investment programs. These requests have been considerable!

(continued)

("Key Advocacy Lessons Can Be Learned..." continued from page 4) To help guide you in the scheduling process, we've posted "[A Beginner's Guide to RPA Day on the Hill](#)" by Board Director Thomas Girsch of Massachusetts. It describes the process from a volunteer's perspective, provides a sample scheduling request letter and offers several helpful tips and insights.

If you feel you are unable to schedule meetings on your own, the RPA staff will be able to assist you. Please reach out to us at: Sean Jeans-Gail - sjeansgail@narprail.org; Samantha Brown - sambrown@narprail.org or Alicia Guinn - aguinn@narprail.org if you need help.

Thank you in advance for all your hard work. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Sean Jeans-Gail | Vice President - Government Affairs & Policy
Rail Passengers Association

Pittsburgh-Columbus-Chicago Study to Benefit Fort Wayne Passenger Rail Train Project

By Ken Prendergast, Executive Director, All Aboard Ohio

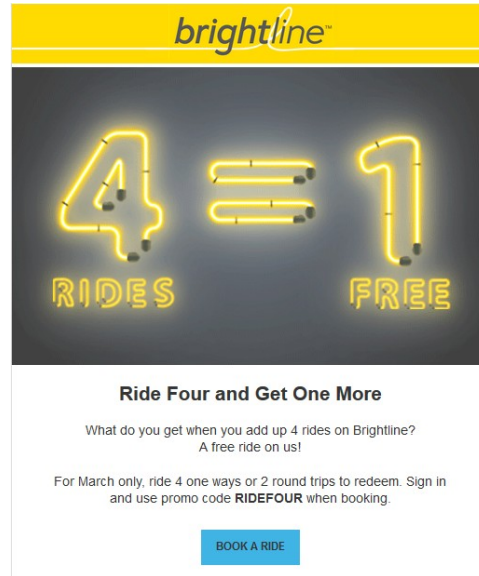
All Aboard Ohio welcomes the Pittsburgh-Columbus-Chicago high-speed transportation [study announced today](#) (last month) by the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission of passenger rail and Hyperloop. This important study will extend to Columbus and Pittsburgh the [planning work already occurring between Gary, IN-Lima, OH](#) of 110-mph high-performance passenger rail and add Hyperloop as an alternative technology for consideration.

Because Hyperloop is an unproven technology that does not operate in revenue service anywhere, a feasibility study of its practicality is warranted. It remains to be seen whether this technology is better suited to moving passengers or shipping time-sensitive freight between regional distribution centers.

"Because of this and because Hyperloop, if built, is unlikely to serve any cities between the major cities of Pittsburgh, Columbus, Fort Wayne and Chicago, it is important to also advance the planning for and development of proven, modern, high-performance passenger rail," said All Aboard Ohio Executive Director Ken Prendergast.

High performance passenger rail, when combined with station-area real estate development in major urban centers and small cities alike, is a growth industry for public-private partnerships throughout America and around the

world. [Brightline](#) in Florida, [Acela Express](#) in the Northeast Corridor, [Texas Central](#) in the Lone Star State, and higher-speed (90-110 mph) passenger rail in the [Midwest](#), [California](#) and [Pacific Northwest](#) are all models for Ohio.



"Brightline is leading a disruptive renaissance in passenger rail," Prendergast said. "It's a private-sector initiative that creates and captures value and positive synergies between transportation and supportive land use to eliminate the need for ongoing operating subsidies."

A similar initiative between Columbus and Chicago could capitalize on both cities' economic growth as well as a [reported fire sale of CSX-owned rail corridors](#) and the state's ownership of a significant portion of the rail corridor between Columbus and Pittsburgh."

Columbus-Chicago is already part of a [Midwest Regional Rail Plan](#), sponsored by the [Federal Railroad Administration](#), that considers this travel corridor as viable for passenger rail. This plan is scheduled to be released this spring. Envisioned for Columbus-Chicago are limited-stop express trains taking less than four hours to reach downtown Chicago regardless of weather, and local-stop trains boosting local economies in smaller cities in between.

Fares will cost less than flying or driving while on-board comfort and business travel productivity will be superior to all other forms of transportation. The planning funds contributed by the City of Marysville, City of Lima and Union County demonstrate the interest by these en route communities in being served by this transportation corridor.

Riding the Rails

By Donald Yehle

CHICAGO O'HARE -- The Midwest High Speed Rail Association (MHSRA) wonders "where are the trains" in the City of Chicago's \$8.5 billion O'Hare airport expansion plan. The plan includes building new terminals and demolishing an old one. In a recent e-newsletter, MHSRA wrote "the proposal falls short of improving access to O'Hare, and not just (*continued*)

("Riding the Rails," continued from page 5) from the west."

"Businesses and travelers around the Midwest, from Schaumburg, Cedar Rapids, Lafayette or Kalamazoo, want easier access to O'Hare on a fast train, instead of clogging our highways or occupying precious airport gates with tiny short-haul jets," MHSRA added.

MHSRA 25TH ANNIVERSARY -- Saturday, March 24, is the 25th anniversary celebration meeting of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association. It takes place from 9:00am - 3:00 pm at Maggiano's Banquets, 111 W Grand Ave., Chicago, IL [Click here to register](#)

Since 1993, the organization has grown from a small group that could fit around a conference table, to tens of thousands of supporters around the Midwest. "We are now the nation's largest high-speed rail advocacy organization, and we've brought together lawmakers, businesses and advocates to support and improve passenger rail around our region," said Rick Harnish, executive director.

Martin Ritter, CEO, Stadler USA, is the keynote speaker. The Stadler FLIRT is the first trainset to use modernized safety regulations that make trains safer, more cost-effective, and more attractive to passengers.

Eight other speakers will participate in the all-day meeting. Feel free to call MHSRA at [773-334-6758](tel:773-334-6758) with any questions.

HAMMOND – "Let me say that I am truly grateful for your support of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA), and the ongoing effort to nudge Indiana to the 21st Century, in respect to the development of modern passenger rail systems," writes IPRA President Steve Coxhead to 2018 dues paying members.

"You should know that the INDOT budget request for the current state budget included a line item to allow the *Hoo-sier State* to continue operation. I believe that is the first time INDOT has included a line item of that type in its budget request," he adds.

"Also, our governor (Eric Holcomb) is an enthusiastic backer of the modernization and expansion of the South Shore commuter railroad, in NW Indiana, as an engine of economic growth in that region," Coxhead continued.

"Finally, we have reason to believe that the Old Nickel Plate right of way, from Indianapolis to Tipton, may be preserved for future commuter rail use," he concludes.

Donations to IPRA may be made through our website (www.indianahighspeedrail.org), or by check mailed to Coxhead's office in Hammond (7032 Olcott Ave., Hammond, Indiana 46323-2040).

PERU, IN – Seven hundred (700) copies of *All Aboard Indiana* were printed last month for distribution to Rail Passengers Association (RPA) members in Indiana who don't have e-mails and to attendees at Model Railroad meetings. "The idea is to build interest in passenger rail and attract new IPRA members," said Treasurer Phil Streby.

Last month's distribution included all four pages of the February rail "safety" issue and *All Aboard Indiana's* 2017 "year in review" article. Individuals who desire a hard copy of *All Aboard Indiana* should send an email to info@indianahighspeedrail.org

ADVOCACY IN ACTION -- Mayors and city managers of communities that would lose long-distance trains (including along the *Cardinal, Lake Shore Limited, and Capitol Limited* corridors) are being contacted to fight the Trump Administration proposed canceling of funding for these trains. Each mayor is being asked to contract their representative in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate and advocate for the continuation of Amtrak service to their city. Individuals wanting more information on this project should contact info@highspeedrail.org

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

or contact us via USPS or email:

Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance
3951 North Meridian Street, Suite 100
Indianapolis, IN 46208

info@indianahighspeedrail.org

IPRA President: Steven Coxhead
Newsletter Editor: Donald Yehle

djyehle@gmail.com or 765-418-4097
Newsletter Publisher: Shereen Vinke