

Hamilton County Citizens Oppose Conversion of Rails to Trails

By Phil Streby*

A meeting of the "Save the Nickel Plate" group was held at the Baptist Church on Pleasant Street in Noblesville, IN, on March 12. Tyler Mendenhall opened the meeting with a brief description of the situation with the former Nickel Plate Railroad line including its history as one of the oldest railroads in Indiana.

The cities of Fishers and Noblesville along with Hamilton County are each 1/3rd owners of the approximate 39 miles of track running from Indianapolis to Tipton, Indiana.

Richard Vonnegut was introduced as president of the group, Indiana Trails Fund, who then provided information about the issues associated with the mayors of Noblesville and Fishers wanting to convert this railroad line into a trail. They (the owners) insist the two, rail and trail, cannot cohabitate on the existing right-of-way for several stated reasons, principally, width (said to be DOT mandated), which is being challenged, and safety, the proximity of the trail to the track, also being challenged.

No official "rail with trail study" has ever been done to document or substantiate either questions or answers.

Also speaking were several individuals running in local and state elections, and all appear to support leaving the former Nickel Plate railroad line intact.

Garen T. Bragg is seeking election as a State Representative for District 29. The Republican candidate, speaking on the platform as "A Fresh Conservative Voice," says we can't run issues like this by dictate.

Ms. Tracy Roberts, formerly of Valparaiso and also in the running for District 29's seat, said she often rode the South Shore into Chicago and back and strongly supports rail.

Steve Schwartz, current president of the Hamilton County Council, and running for re-election, spoke up about supporting the many citizens who want to keep the railroad against the very few who want to rip it out and replace it with a trail.

Also speaking were candidates Mark Hall, running for Hamilton County Council District 3, who spoke at length about transparency in local government, and Matt Milam, in the (continued)

Fishers residents have banded together to spread the word and save the train.



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running for a Hamilton County Commissioner seat, with both stating their support for keeping the rail intact for possible future operation.

Mr. Hall believes most of the information concerning this rail issue is being kept from public view. He is actively seeking full disclosure. Also speaking briefly was a possible future mayoral candidate. There were many questions which led to some lively discussion.

I asked for clarification concerning converting rail routes to trails in Indiana and the potential to lose those routes to adjacent landowners. Mr. Vonnegut explained that this was a very real possibility in this situation, further explaining that a legal group has already been contacting landowners along the right-of-way about this possibility.

The cities appear to be trying to sidestep Federal law as it applies to rail abandonment and subsequent conversion to trail use. [See Surface Transportation Board (STB) under enhanced search for FD-36137-0]

It later became a point of discussion that the city mayors along with the Hamilton County Commissioners do not appear to be openly discussing this with their city and county councils. Requests for information via the Freedom of Information Act are being met with resistance, according to those speakers who said requested information was taking up to 90 days for disclosure.

I (Phil Streby) spoke about how this issue was very closely related to passenger rail, giving a brief history of how railroads came to be replaced by publicly-funded highways and airports, and then advised all present to not stop with local officials, but to address all their representatives at all governmental levels -- local, state and federal -- to support passenger rail efforts.

I further stated that had this always been done over the decades, it may have been probable that this issue would never have manifested itself.

More lively comments ensued, and time, too soon, came to pass to call the meeting to a close.

My thanks to Tyler Mendenhall, who is with the Save the Nickel Plate group, for conducting Monday's meeting and for contributing to this paper.

*Phil Streby is treasurer of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance and serves on the board of directors of the Rail Passengers Association and the Rail Users' Network.

Indy's Airport Wins Another Honor, While Union Station Remains Sick

By Donald Yehle



One of Union Station's doors recently featured enormous spider-webbing cracks.

In the wake of yet another disturbing photo of Indianapolis Union Station at 350 S. Illinois, a conference call was held March 14 by a six Indianapolis Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) members. Participants agreed something must be done as the station is unwelcoming and is in stark contrast to Indianapolis International Airport, which for the fifth year in a row has been named

the best airport in North America serving more than 2 million passengers annually.

Gaining attention to the problem is the first step. Members are considering asking for time before the City-County Council of Marion County and Indianapolis and the department of public works. Asking Visit Indy to help address this "image" issue was mentioned, as was requesting a management change. Let's ask the Indianapolis Airport Authority to run the facility instead of Greyhound.

Discussion participants included Tod Bassler, Steve Coxhead, Bill Malcolm, Phil Streby, Doug Yerkson, and Donald Yehle. Another phone meeting is scheduled for March 28.

Effective March 25 Track Work Affects *Cardinal* Trains 50 and 51

By Donald Yehle

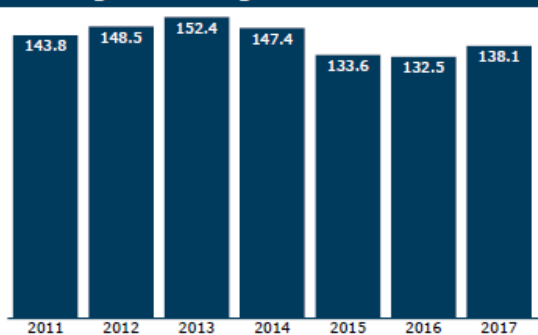
To minimize congestion in New York Penn Station during upcoming track work, Amtrak's *Cardinal* trains are being affected.

Cardinal Service

- **Train 50** will operate from Chicago to Washington, D.C., beginning March 29 until further notice.
- **Train 51** will operate from Washington, D.C., to Chicago beginning April 1 until further notice.

(continued)

Fact sheet: Amtrak in Indiana

Passengers in Indiana, 2011-2017:
boarding & detraining (in thousands)

Also, 940,438 riders passed through Indiana in 2017 - boarding and detraining outside the state.

Quick recap, 2017 (arrivals and departures)

	Coach/ Business	First/ Sleepers	Total
Passengers	132,734	5,372	138,106
Average trip	250 miles	563 miles	262 miles
Average fare	\$ 39.00	\$191.00	\$ 45.00
Average yield, per mi	15.8¢	33.9¢	17.3¢

Top city pairs by ridership, 2017

1. Indianapolis - Chicago, IL	196 mi
2. Lafayette - Chicago, IL	122 mi
3. Waterloo - Chicago, IL	156 mi
4. Elkhart - Chicago, IL	102 mi
5. South Bend - Chicago, IL	84 mi
6. Crawfordsville - Chicago, IL	149 mi
7. South Bend - Washington, DC	680 mi
8. Elkhart - Washington, DC	662 mi
9. Michigan City - Chicago, IL	52 mi
10. Waterloo - Washington, DC	608 mi

Top city pairs by revenue, 2017

1. Indianapolis - Chicago, IL	196 mi
2. Waterloo - Chicago, IL	156 mi
3. Lafayette - Chicago, IL	122 mi
4. South Bend - Washington, DC	680 mi
5. Elkhart - Chicago, IL	102 mi
6. South Bend - Chicago, IL	84 mi
7. Waterloo - Washington, DC	608 mi
8. Elkhart - Washington, DC	662 mi
9. South Bend - New York, NY	875 mi
10. Crawfordsville - Chicago, IL	149 mi



RAILPASSENGERS
ASSOCIATION

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1200 G St NW, Ste 240
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 408-8362
railpassengers.org

Indianans near a station

Within 25 miles: 3,835,873 (59%)
Within 50 miles: 5,296,985 (82%)

Amtrak service in the state

Cardinal - 3 trains/wk
Wolverine - Multiple trains daily
Capitol Limited - Daily service
Lake Shore Limited - Daily service
Hoosier State - 4 trains/wk

11 Amtrak stations

	2015	2016	2017
Connersville	770	586	583
Crawfordsville	5,248	5,705	5,854
Dyer	3,463	3,082	3,142
Elkhart	20,657	21,197	22,452
Hammond	7,449	5,952	6,326
Indianapolis	29,581	30,738	31,866
Lafayette	18,662	18,151	17,397
Michigan City	3,766	3,573	3,699
Rensselaer	2,090	1,963	2,188
South Bend	22,044	21,318	21,750
Waterloo	19,872	20,277	22,849

2 Thruway stops

	2015	2016	2017
Evansville	37	125	186
Gary	7	13	28

Top statewide officials

Gov. Eric Holcomb (R)
<http://www.in.gov/gov/index.htm>
Sen. Joe Donnelly (D)
<http://donnelly.senate.gov>
Sen. Todd Young (R)
<http://young.senate.gov>

past scenic Ohio River and Indiana farmland.

The *Cardinal* continues to serve six Indiana cities – Connersville, Indianapolis, Crawfordsville, Lafayette, Rensselaer, and Dyer. “Equally important, Hoosiers who live within 25 to 50 miles of those stations will continue to be able to travel as far as Washington, D.C., to the east and Chicago to the west,” said Steve Coxhead, president, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA).

The *Cardinal* travels east-bound Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. The train travels westbound Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

In a passenger service notice, Amtrak expressed appreciation for riders’ patronage and apologized for any inconvenience.



*The Cardinal traverses the country between New York and Chicago.
(Photo by J. Mueller on Flickr.)*

(“Track Work Affects Cardinal...” continued from page 2)

The *Cardinal* connecting Chicago with New York City – 1,147 miles—will now make connections in D.C. Passengers must now change trains to connect with Baltimore; Wilmington, Delaware; Philadelphia; Trenton, New Jersey; and the Big Apple.

Rail passengers are still enjoying a scenic rail adventure over the New River Gorge, the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains; through the Shenandoah Valley; to the world-famous Greenbrier mountain resort; along “wild and wonderful” West Virginia vistas, and

For reservations and the most up-to-date schedules, the National Passenger Rail Association (Amtrak) said to visit Amtrak.com, use its free mobile apps, speak with station personnel or call 800-USA-RAIL (1-800-872-7245).

Five Hoosiers Participating April 17 in NARP's "Day on the Hill" Event

By Donald Yehle

Five Hoosiers will be in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday, April 17, to participate in the annual "Day on the Hill" event sponsored by the Rail Passengers Association (RPA)/formerly the National Association of Railroad Passengers. Participants are:

Tod Bassler, Indianapolis
Duane Chattin, Vincennes
Andrea and Mike Ditto, Terre Haute
Phil Steby, Peru

Bassler and Chattin represent Indiana on RPA's council of representatives. Streby, a former council of representative member, now serves on RPA's board of directors. The Ditto's are working to bring 21st Century passenger rail to Indiana.

"We're excited Indiana will be so well represented at this year's meeting," says IPRA President Steve Coxhead, who himself has served as a member on the National Association of Railroad Passengers' council of representatives.

Streby is scheduling meetings for the entire group with Indiana's Congressional delegation and the state's two U.S. Senators – the Honorable Joe Donnelly (Indiana's senior senator) and the Honorable Todd Young (the state's junior senator). Meetings will last 20-30 minutes.

In most cases, meetings are with staff members. The goal is to educate and become 'rail resources' for Mr. Donnelly, Mr. Young, and the following House of Representatives members -- the Honorable Jim Banks, the Honorable Susan Brooks, the Honorable Larry Bucshon, the Honorable Andre Carson, the Honorable Trey Hollingsworth, the Honorable Luke Messer, the Honorable Todd Rokita, the Honorable Peter Visclosky, and the Honorable Jackie Walorski.

In past meetings, Mr. Donnelly was most interested in helping with efforts to transition the *Hoosier State* to become Indiana's state-supported railroad. Discussions can go many different directions, depending on individuals' expertise on rail-related issues and the committees on which they serve, said Donald Yehle, *All Aboard Indiana* editor, a Rail Passengers Association member, and previous participant in the "Day on the Hill" event.

As rail advocates know, listening is critical during these meetings. There are certain topics that IPRA wants to emphasize with the nine House members and two U.S. Senators. (See next story.) RPA staff holds a day-long meeting on Monday,

April 16, to help prepare rail advocates for the "Day on the Hill" event, as well.

One key to a successful meeting is asking open-ended questions to get the discussion going. "Is it possible to have high passenger rail ridership *when* there are a limited number of trains operating," is a question Streby is considering asking this year.

In today's world, one topic emphasized is millennials desire for public transportation, including rail and transit. Studies show that millennials often prefer to not purchase or own automobiles and sometimes, do not possess drivers' licenses, Coxhead said.

IPRA's Agenda Includes Seven-Day *Hoosier State*

By Steve Coxhead

In Progress

Twice Daily, 7-Day-A-Week, *Hoosier State*

Passengers traveling between Indianapolis and Chicago use two trains for daily roundtrip service – the *Hoosier State* and the *Cardinal*. Rail advocates want the *Hoosier State* to operate independently of the *Cardinal* – on a different schedule and twice a day.

Up *Hoosier State* Spending in Next Biennial Budget

Indiana taxpayers fund the *Hoosier State*, at \$3 million a year. It's currently a line item in the state budget. We're asking the state to increase funding in the next biennial budget – beginning July 1, 2019 -- to accommodate two daily trips each direction.

7-Day-A-Week, Multi-State, *Cardinal*

Work with the multi-state *Cardinal* Coalition to bring 7-day-a-week train service to Cincinnati and rural areas in Indiana, Ohio, Virginia, and West Virginia. The *Cardinal* is a three-day-a-week train. It travels 1,147 miles, making 32 station stops in 11 states and the District of Columbia.

Restore Passenger Rail to Fort Wayne and NE Indiana

In 3 to 5 years, Hoosiers will once again be able to travel by rail west to Chicago and east to Columbus, Ohio. A stronger economy, enhanced security, a cleaner environment, and a better quality of life are the benefits. Passenger rail was last available in Fort Wayne in 1990.

Finish South Shore Rail Improvement Projects

Indiana's current biennial budget also includes a \$12 million allocation to double track the main line between (*continued*)

("IPRA's Agenda..." continued from page 4) Gary and Michigan City and for West Lake Corridor rail improvement projects. Let's finish these "connectivity projects" for citizens from South Bend to Chicago.

Ongoing

Serve 5.3 Million Hoosiers Living Near 11 Stations

Passenger rail is about people, city pairs, and complimenting air and auto travel. **138,000 individuals** climbed off or on the state's five Amtrak trains in 2017. All **11 Amtrak stations** are effectively city pairs, offering Hoosiers an economic travel choice between cities.

Keep Passenger Rail, Transit Rail Manufacturing Jobs

Hoosiers in the following 32 Indiana cities work in passenger rail & transit rail manufacturing: Avila. Bedford. Beech Grove. Bloomington. Bluffton. Brownsburg. Carmel. Columbia City. Columbus. Elkhart. Evansville. Fort Wayne. Franklin. Garrett. Gary. Greenfield. Greenwood. Griffith. Indianapolis. Jasper. Kokomo. Lafayette. LaPorte. Ligonier. Michigan City. Muncie. Noblesville. Pendleton. Plainfield. Seymour. West Lafayette. Whiteland.

Vision

Bring Rail Passenger Car Manufacturing Jobs to Indiana

Based on jobs at Nippon-Sharyo in Rochelle, IL, this amounts to 350 new jobs. If an Indiana facility also manufactured light rail and commuter cars, that number could double or triple as rail cars require lots of steel, copper wire, glass, and plastic.

Make Indianapolis the next Midwest Rail Travel Hub

Rail advocates in Indiana see "spokes" extending to Cincinnati, Louisville/Nashville, St Louis, and Chicago. Each spoke would have six (or more) daily round trip schedules. These new routes would act as both feeders and corridors within and to the national passenger rail system.

Create a Dedicated Passenger Rail Fund

Create a small tax added to the fare of all transit systems to fund rail and transit. Gas taxes won't suffice, even for roads and bridges, as they generate less and less revenue due to greater fuel efficiency, hybrid vehicles, and electric vehicles. Doing nothing is unacceptable!

For More Information

Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

3951 N. Meridian St., Suite 100

Indianapolis, IN 46208

Steve Coxhead, President

(219) 741-8053

www.indianahighspeedrail.org

Bullets from the Board

By Steve Coxhead

The Board of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) met on 2/1/18, at 11:11 am, in the Council Chamber of the Peru City Hall, in Peru Indiana. The following items were among those discussed.

Board member Phil Streby presented a draft version of a presentation that is being worked up to present to various rail stakeholders around the state. It consisted of a short video, "A Connected America", produced by NARP, and an IPRA produced PowerPoint presentation.

The new president of the Northeastern Indiana Passenger Rail Association (NIPRA), Mr. Richard Juram, was introduced.

The CSX railroad situation continues to be a concern. IN-DOT is working to resolve the issues, which are responsible for recent poor on time performance of both the Hoosier State and the Cardinal. IPRA has expressed concern to both INDOT and Indiana's Congressional delegation. The "precision railroading" approach pushed by the late Hunter Harrison is being continued by his successor, CSX CEO Foote.

The idea of IPRA developing high level proposals for passenger rail infrastructure projects was discussed. They could then be used as talking points with INDOT, and members of the legislature, in an attempt to have shovel-ready projects ready when Federal funds next become available for infrastructure projects.

There was a brief discussion concerning the usefulness and feasibility of hosting legislators and elected officials on trips to view existing passenger services, terminals and transit-oriented development, to raise awareness of what is possible with modern passenger rail.

An abbreviated print version of "*All Aboard Indiana*" will be distributed to Indiana NARP members for whom IPRA does not have an e-mail address.

IPRA's inclusion of the writ of certiorari before the US Supreme Court was noted.

It was noted that Amazon's criteria for their major new facility (Indianapolis had bid on it) includes a well-developed public transportation system. It has been noted that this puts Indiana communities at a competitive disadvantage.

An idea was floated for the consideration of promoting new Amtrak service linking Pittsburgh, Indianapolis and St. Louis (possibly through Terre Haute). It was pointed out that this would begin to broaden the group's advocacy to be of benefit to southern Indiana.

A strategic route planning committee was tentatively formed.

There was brief discussion on the desirability of developing specific lists of "asks" to put before both INDOT and the General Assembly, regarding improvement of passenger rail services, as well as the usefulness (continued)

(*"Bullets from the Board"* continued from page 5) of active collaboration with other rail passenger advocacy groups in surrounding states.

A schedule of Board meetings for the balance of 2018 will be published soon. All members are welcome to attend! Please watch your e-mail and "*All Aboard Indiana*" for the schedule and meeting details.

Finally, don't forget that it's always a good time to make a tax-deductible donation to IPRA for the 2018 tax year! Suggested donation is \$30. The simplest way to donate is through the website, at www.indianahighspeedrail.org/join.html. Otherwise, checks can be sent to Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance, Membership, 7032 Olcott Avenue, Hammond, Indiana 46323.

Don't forget to include the Hoosier State (and other services of the Amtrak system) in your travel plans.

Riding the Rails

By Donald Yehle

Good News for Toronto Transit – Canadians are working together to improve its infrastructure, specifically Toronto transit. A "new deal" between federal and provincial governments is pledging \$9 billion if the city can come up with matching funds. Read the article at [The Globe and Mail](#) for more details.

Indiana Ranks 6th Nationally in Crossing Collisions – Railroad crossing collisions in 2017 have Indiana ranked 6th most nationally, an improvement from 4th in 2016. Statistics show 101 crashes, 47 injuries, and 12 deaths, according to Indiana Operation Lifesaver, whose motto is "Look, Listen, and Live" when approaching train tracks while driving an automobile or truck.

Light Rail Extension in Charlotte – IPRA Board Member Bill Malcolm was privileged to be among the first to ride the new Charlotte, N.C., CATS Blue Line Light Rail Extension. The extension is nine miles long, connecting riders to the University of North Carolina – Charlotte campus. Two additional rail line extensions are planned by the Charlotte Area Transportation Authority. In North Carolina, transportation is seen as a business development tool well worth publicizing.

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