

RIDING THE *SMART* RAILS IN CALIFORNIA!

By: Andrea Ditto, Member, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

Riding the *SMART* train in California was such a treat for many of us at the Railroad Passengers Association (RPA) fall meeting.

SMART is an acronym for *Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit*. Our group rode it beginning to end from *San Rafael* to the *Sonoma County Airport* (the main repair and “rest area” for the rail cars and engines). The present rail service covers 43 miles of rail, includes **10 stations** and makes 17 round trips per day. Eventually it will provide 70 miles of service to **16 stations** with some extensions almost ready to open. In its first year of operation, it exceeded one million riders! See their website online at: <https://www.sonomamarintrain.org/>.

The ride is smooth and quick. The **Cummins**-powered (made in Seymour, IN) **Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU)** trains were especially designed for the North American market by Japanese manufacturer Nippon Sharyo for *SMART* and also Metrolinx for the [Union Station to Pearson Airport] *UP Express* in Toronto, Ontario. They make very little noise and have actually caused accidents due to “quiet zones” (engineer cannot blow his whistle) that have been set along the way.

The interiors are bright and colorful and spacious. There is comfortable coach seating with pull down tables for each seat. We were told that each entire car is wiped down (cleaned) thoroughly at least once a day and sometimes more. Reasonably priced snacks and drinks are available onboard. You’ll also have an ADA-compliant bathroom. Interestingly, they only accept credit cards, not cash. *SMART* supports and employs persons with disabilities to encourage independence in the everyday world.



Editor's Note: The *SMART* DMU trains can be convertible to Electric Multiple Unit (EMU) so they would be a very good candidate for a *Hoosier State* revival with a route of Louisville/Cincinnati to Indianapolis to Chicago Millennium Station !

The *SMART* train arriving at San Rafael, CA Station

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IPRA Membership Form

We began our journey in Sacramento by riding the Amtrak *Capitol Corridor* train to Richmond, California, where we boarded a minibus to San Rafael. The Corridor ride was a beautiful journey through the Bay Area, and the minivan crossed the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge (in itself an engineering marvel). In the distance from the peak of the bridge, we could see an eerily hazy San Francisco skyline, Treasure Island, and the Oakland Bay Bridge.

We arrived in San Rafael a few minutes before the arrival of the train. Everyone must exit the train for an inspection before others are allowed to board. Ticketing and boarding are super simple and smooth. We rode to the end of the line, exited, and waited a short time before reboarding for return. We exited the SMART train at Santa Rosa, a charming town, to eat some lunch. We then reboarded the train to make our way back to San Rafael and reversed our trip on the minibus and Corridor train.

There are so many types of transportation systems in California. This is one of the great ones for those living in the Sonoma Marin area.

****A footnote:** Just one week after we rode, this area was ravaged by wildfires. I noticed the SMART train was unable to run for a few days but it is up and running again as of this printing.

Rail Nation Fall Conference 2019

By: **Andrea Ditto**, Member, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

The Rail Passengers Association's (RPA) Fall meeting was held in Sacramento, California from Friday, October 18 to Monday, October 21, 2019. In addition to many interesting tours offered, the main symposium took place on Saturday, October 19.

On Friday, besides tours, a half day advocacy workshop was led



by Sean Jeans-Gail, Vice-President of Policy and Government Affairs. The workshop was a hands-on workshop to show advocates how to develop campaigns in their own communities to improve train service in their areas.

During all day sessions on Saturday, three different tracks were offered for attending members. These were: *Inclusion and Equity*, *Making Change Happen*, and *What Passengers Want*. Morning and afternoon sessions were held on varying topics.

Inclusion and Equity offered presentations by several speakers. Topics included equity and housing attached to rail presence, valuing inclusion and equity in rail offerings that have low funding and engaging youth in rail advocacy.

Making Change Happen offered sessions on insights to win hearts and influence senators, a blueprint for advocacy. The second session was on changing rail passenger policy. This session was about how citizens must become involved to save passenger rail. Citizen advocacy is by far the best change agent for passenger rail.

What Passengers Want offered two sessions and four speakers on various subjects. **Jim Allison** presented California's multi-modal scheduling plan to make travel more efficient and **Abe Zumwalt** talked about the case for a daily Sunset. **Tom Martinelli**, publisher of New York by Rail, talked about his 15 years of experience coordinating with Amtrak to plan travel for others and **Madi Butler**, the RPA intern who traveled the rails this past summer, spoke about food service aboard Amtrak. Since she had traveled most routes, she had interesting insights into service problems on Amtrak.

The Keynote Speaker was Chad Edison, Deputy Secretary of Transportation for the California State Transportation Agency. His presentation was on applying California's experiences with transportation to the rest of the United States. Mr. Edison spoke of the development of coordinated transportation in California, its triumphs and pitfalls and how these might apply to any other area which wants to accomplish the above.

Sunday was the business meeting for the organization. Sunday afternoon included a wine tasting at a nearby area, and Monday included a tour of the high speed construction areas.

Rail Nation Fall 2019 had many topics of interest for any rail advocate and gave added knowledge to those attending.

A Visit to the California Rail Museum

By: Andrea Ditto, Member, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

The Rail Passengers Association Fall Meeting was held in Sacramento, California, because of its direct connection to the history of rail. That history is highlighted in no better place than the California Rail Museum, the nation's, and perhaps the world's best railroad museum.

The museum sits in the shadow of the modern day rail station and the historical area of Old Sacramento. For such a famous museum, admission was quite reasonable (\$12).

When you enter the museum, you immediately meet docents, some of the most knowledgeable rail experts you will ever meet. They are dressed as conductors, and conductors they are!! They guide you to the theater where a twenty minute film introduces you to the Central Pacific Railroad and its role in the building of the transcontinental railroad. You meet all the "main investors", who took a chance that connected the East to the West of our country.

After the film, the screen rises to reveal the "roundhouse", where dynamic displays of train locomotives and rolling stock are revealed. It is quite a stunning and magnificent reveal. You proceed from the theater with your docent to a seating area in the roundhouse, surrounded by history. You are sitting right on the spot where the first shovel of dirt was turned to begin the western end of the transcontinental railroad. And you soon learn that you are sitting next to the very first locomotive ever ordered and run on the tracks, the **No. 1 Governor Stanford** (seen above here with Mike Ditto).



The next stop on the tour is in the "construction" zone... construction of the Central Pacific railroad, that is. This part of the museum is a tribute to the Chinese laborers, whose backs built the railroad through the Sierra Nevadas and beyond. It is unbelievable that the Chinese, by hand, bored fifteen tunnels through solid granite. One to two inches of rock per day was drilled. Tunnel #6 alone was 1750 feet long and stood at 7000 feet. Do the math. It was an impossible feat accomplished. Summer or winter made no difference... too much snow (up to 30 feet)... the Chinese developed and built snow huts, some of which are still used today to prevent snow from blocking the tracks. It is very clear... the transcontinental railroad would not have been completed without the Chinese.

After the conclusion of the docent tour, you are free to visit all the different equipment displayed in the roundhouse. Docents are on each piece of equipment to explain it and enhance your visit. You can board a sleeper car from the early 1900's, a diner car from the 1930's, a private rail car of Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg from 1948, or a coach car from the 1880's, and any number of locomotives on display.

But by far the most impressive and largest display is the 1901 #4294 cab-forward steam engine (seen below here). Because so much toxic exhaust and heat was created by the huge steam engine, the engine was attached cab forward for the safety of the crew. It is a monster of an engine. You can sit in it, "drive" it and experience it. A very powerful experience.



Once you have finished in the roundhouse, you can visit the second floor, which has interactive exhibits (especially for young visitors). The third floor is dedicated to model training. Many displays of all gauge model trains are fun for the child in all of us.

It takes about three hours to tour and enjoy the Sacramento museum... worth every penny and every moment!

Op-Ed | Amtrak Leadership Wounds The *Empire Builder* Yet Again

Reprinted with permission of **National Parks Traveler**. This article can also be found online at <https://www.nationalparkstraveler.org/2019/09/op-ed-amtrak-leadership-wounds-empire-builder-yet-again>.

By: [NPT Staff](#) on September 2nd, 2019



*Amtrak has ended the Trails & Rails program on the *Empire Builder*/Wikitravel*

It's early morning in Whitefish, Montana, and the sun slowly climbs over the Rocky Mountains to the east and begins to warm the crisp night air at the beautifully restored Amtrak passenger depot and touches on the gleaming eastbound *Empire Builder* that has paused there.

While some people depart the train, many others—tourists, backpacking explorers, Amish families, local Montanans with distant appointments—climb aboard, and many settle in the lounge car, which provides beautiful views out large windows on both sides of the train. As the *Builder* slowly begins to move eastward, the volunteer National Park Service interpretive guides in the lounge car begin their presentation, which will cover the geography, geology, history, and biological diversity of this marvelous part of our nation.

For approximately five hours, the guides provide commentary as the train climbs and crests the mountains at Marias Pass bordering Glacier National Park, and then makes a long, gradual descent through the Blackfoot Indian Reservation to the northern plains, where they will depart at Havre, Montana. Later that afternoon, the guides will board the westbound *Empire Builder* in Havre and talk these new

passengers from the east through the same countryside, until the setting sun finds the train passing through Whitefish once more on its way to the Pacific Northwest. In both directions, the guides will be constantly engaged with interested, questioning learners and showered with compliments and many thanks as the miles roll by.

At least, that's the way it used to be.

After the summer season in 2017, Amtrak leadership made the unilateral decision to cancel its support for the **NPS guide service** aboard the *Empire Builder* and all other long-distance trains throughout the nation. The service, named the **Trails & Rails Program**, had been a partnership begun in 2000 between Amtrak and the National Park Service to educate travelers regarding the heritage and natural resources of a specific region while traveling by rail. In Montana, the Trails & Rails volunteers on the *Empire Builder* encouraged passengers to visit local communities and explore the state and national parks and forests along the train's route. Because the *Empire Builder* makes three stops in each direction at Glacier National Park, guides were able to promote both the park to Amtrak passengers, and Amtrak to park visitors. During the 2017 season, the 26 Trails & Rails volunteers staffing the *Empire Builder* delivered some 1,200 hours of presentations to many thousands of passengers, a service donated to Amtrak and its customers valued at \$36,000 (based on volunteer time rated at \$30 per hour).



*National Park Service Trails & Rails guide **Jim Eagan** talks with international travelers in the lounge car/ Friends of Trails & Rails*

None of that mattered, however, to an Amtrak administrative staff using questionable financial analysis methods to focus only on making transcontinental trains profitable. In a slow death of one thousand cuts, the

flowers disappeared in the dining car, current newspapers were no longer outside sleeper room doors each morning, wine-tasting events evaporated, many important staff and crew positions were cut, and Trails & Rails support was withdrawn. This significantly diminished the guide program nationally and completely eliminated guide coverage on the *Empire Builder* between Seattle and Havre.

For a moment, let's step back in history.

When President Thomas Jefferson completed the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, he anticipated creating, as he himself called it, "an empire for liberty." And in 1804, he sent the Lewis and Clark expedition on its epic "voyage of discovery" to explore and catalog his vast purchase, which revealed a stunning and amazing land to the west, ready for settlement. Thus, in the 30 years following the Civil War, the transcontinental railroads snaked across the plains, conquered the Rocky Mountains and the desert basins beyond them, and reached the Pacific Coast. James J. Hill's Great Northern was not finished until 1893—the last of the Western trains to be completed in the 19th century while running through harsh and challenging country often near the border with Canada—but it found the lowest and best pass over the Continental Divide, and thanks to Hill's financial management, was built without the largess of federal land grants.

Hill's vision was to settle the land along his tracks by recruiting wheat and cattle farmers from Europe and then to transport their bounty to market. At Hill's insistence, his railroad was surveyed and constructed with great care, and it was always profitable from its beginnings, even as it stretched for thousands of miles across unsettled land and created many small towns along the way. Because of his success, Hill became known as "the Empire Builder," and his memory is preserved today in the name of Amtrak's premier northern long-distance train. This is one of many stories told by the Trails & Rails guides as the miles aboard glide by—one that the guides know by heart and tell with a passion for connecting this current generation with the people and values of those who came before us and who built this great nation in their time.

Travel, of course, is more than history. Most Americans today are well aware of the many scenic wonders of the West, and the transcontinental railroads have brought generations to explore and admire our national parks. The Santa Fe railroad took travelers to the Grand Canyon; the Union Pacific, to Utah's Bryce Canyon and Zion; and the

Northern Pacific became the route to Yellowstone's geysers.

Hill's Great Northern skirted Glacier National Park's southern boundary, and the railroad was instrumental in helping the park develop through the construction of magnificent lodges and chalets. And the interest continues unabated today: the stunning glaciers, mountains, and wildlife of Glacier National Park, which was the nation's 10th most-visited national park in 2018, had nearly three million visitors last year, with many arriving and leaving by train at one of three stops: West Glacier, Essex, and East Glacier. The vast human majority that is urban Americana today can board the *Empire Builder* and within two days be peacefully transported to this national treasure—one of the most beautiful natural landscapes in the continent. It has been this



way for over one hundred years.

Guides help passengers understand the benefits of a natural forest fire/ Friends of Trails & Rails

Many modern politicians consider trains an anachronism from another age—an historical remnant which no longer resonates with these times. People, they say, are in a hurry, and need to get from one coast to the other within a matter of hours, flying at five hundred miles an hour far above the earth at 35,000 feet. At that altitude, however, a rolling field of wheat is the size of a small postage stamp, and entire mountain ranges become mere wrinkles far below.

The Trails & Rails guides know that you need to be close to the land to become part of it, to emotionally sense it, and they strive to help passengers make that connection. With other modes of transportation, there is a remote disattachment and indifference to our history and our countryside as we rush through the miles that go flying by—often at great heights. Riding the *Empire Builder* at 50 miles an hour across 2,000 miles of vast wheat-filled plains, massive mountain ranges, broad rivers, and the many towns beside the tracks is to touch the face of America and to sense its beauty and its history.

To eliminate our transcontinental trains—especially the *Empire Builder*—would be a foolish and short-sighted mistake of major consequence. As more Americans rediscover what passenger trains have to offer, ridership is up and summer reservations especially are frequently hard to come by.

The small rural towns across the West, often initially created by the railroads to provide water and fuel for their steam engines, remain heavily dependent on passenger service. And as in days of old, trains like the *Empire Builder* still provide a direct connection to the majesty of our national parks.

But each year there is a fight for funding in Congress, and Amtrak is consistently left without sufficient funds to effectively maintain or modernize its equipment. The current administration continues to propose deep cuts to national rail service; Republicans in particular demand that Amtrak cover its expenses, even though the government has long subsidized airports and airlines, funded roads throughout the country, and even constructed the Interstate Highway System across the nation. The lack of a reliable and adequate federal subsidy has been Amtrak's greatest challenge since its creation in 1971. To touch our history, to view the beauty of our natural heritage, to preserve who we are and from where we have come, we must adequately fund Amtrak and save our long-distance trains across America: it should seem like a patriotic obligation to do so.

Let's assume for a moment that the *Empire Builder* is secure with a sound funding source, and that you are aboard in Montana, westbound to Seattle, looking in amazement at a view the likes of which you have never seen before. You wonder what those hills in the distance are called—aren't they somewhere close to the Canadian border? It's windy here with little rain; how can farmers grow crops in this climate? Who founded, named, and built the small town we just passed by? There are oil wells and turbine wind farms in the distance; how did those come to be in such a remote area?

And as you pass by Glacier National Park, you wish that you knew more about its history, its geology, its wildlife—and how you can return and spend time there. You eventually go to sleep, only to see a stunning view at dawn as the *Empire Builder* descends in Washington to the Columbia River Gorge and its massive basalt cliffs. How did all of this come about? In the Cascade Mountains, you pass through the longest tunnel in the United States, and would like to know how it could have possibly been constructed

without modern instruments and tools. Finally, as the train skirts the shores of Puget Sound near Seattle, you would like to know how the Sound was formed, the names of the birds and sea creatures visible on the beaches below, and how the area came to be settled.

The Trails & Rails interpretive guides are there to answer your questions, and hundreds of others from fellow passengers. They are well trained, knowledgeable, and delighted to interact with you and share their information and enthusiasm. As William J. Lewis has said, "Interpretation requires an interpreter, an audience, and something to interpret." The audience is you and the hundreds of others aboard the *Empire Builder*. The "something to interpret" is rolling by outside your window—mile after mile of ever-changing scenery. But what has been missing since 2017 is the interpreters—the guides from the National Park Service. Even if the trains such as the *Empire Builder* are saved, the value of each passenger's journey aboard remains greatly lessened because questions go unanswered and what is seen is unexplained.

Every interpretive guide who has been on the *Builder* can tell stories of passengers moved to tears at hearing the plight of the Plains Indians in American history, or gasping in amazement as he/she explains the beauty of alpenglow in the last minutes before sunset along the western face of the snow-covered Rocky Mountains. Hearing the story of the bison causes many to shake their heads, while others listen in rapt attention as the guide tells of the great journey of Lewis and Clark and how close the passengers are to one of their campsites near Cut Bank Creek. The guides explain avalanche chutes in narrow valleys, and then parents begin to point them out to their children. The guides discuss climate change and its repercussions, and indicate stressed and dying forests and other signs of that change directly outside the train windows. Mile after mile, the interpretation and involvement happily go on, and when darkness falls passengers applaud and cheer and thank those from the National Park Service for the value-added benefit they have provided.

This is as it should be. This is what it must be again. If we are to save the Western trains, and if we are to bring back interpretive guides to them, then contacting those who can make those decisions is imperative. **Contact your congressman. Do the same with your state legislator. Write a letter to Amtrak, too.** If we are to save the transcontinental *Empire Builder* and its brethren, and if we are to reinstate National Park Service interpretive guides aboard those trains, it is up to you. Let's preserve and protect this modern

remnant of American history, and reinstate those aboard who can help us sense the very soul of our nation.



National Park Service guide **Barbara Bond-Howard** helps passengers plan hiking trips in Glacier National Park/ Friends of Trails & Rails

To contact Amtrak:

Amtrak Corporate Office Headquarters
50 Massachusetts Avenue
Washington, D.C.
202-906-3000
www.amtrak.com

To contact your federal and state elected officials:

www.usa.gov/elected-officials

The Friends of Trails & Rails

Bob Bjorge
Barbara Bond-Howard
Chris Collison
Craig Wilkie
Leigh Wilson

A Message from the Save the Nickel Plate President

By: **Tyler Mendenhall**, President, Save The Nickel Plate Inc.

October 9, 2019

We still want people to know rail with trail (RWT) is the best option. According to the rules and regulations of the federal railbanking program, if there is future demand for

rail use, the cities know they will have to allow for that. We remain optimistic that a rail operator will take the necessary steps to make this happen. If they did rail with trail, there would be no risk of losing the investment into the trail, since both rail and trail would exist already. However, our elected officials want to take the chance that there will never be a demand for rail traffic.

Currently, all tracks and ties have been removed from 96th Street north to SR32 in Noblesville. Although this would have to be replaced at the expense of the rail operator, it's not out of the question, as rail operator would likely have upgraded the line to accommodate higher speeds anyway. Potential savings for the next operator!



I strongly believe citizens need to remember that Fishers is essentially gambling with tens of millions of taxpayer dollars by not having rail with trail. By "railbanking," the cities are legally obligated to allow rail use in the future. The fact that "Interim Trail Use" literally means "Temporary," gets overlooked or forgotten. I don't think any of us would spend millions of dollars out of our own pocket on a risky, almost guaranteed to fail temporary investment.

Until people stop having children, stop commuting to work, and stop buying or selling literally anything, there WILL be a growing need for rail use along this corridor. This need has been recognized by multiple studies conducted by independent and state-funded planning organizations for at least 10 years already. It might be next year, or not for a decade, but the trail as it is currently planned is temporary at best.

Responsible citizens should demand that their money is invested wisely. The ONLY way to ensure a trail will be a permanent asset to the community is RWT today. If trail advocates and citizens truly understood the temporary aspect of the current plans, they would most likely be opposed to the trail only option.

If you would like to share your opinion, it's easy! Our friends at **Indiana Trails** have created an email address. Just send an email to opinion@indianatrails.com and your email will be shared with regional leaders. THANK YOU!

Halt Removal of Nickel Plate tracks in Indianapolis

By: **Bill Malcolm**, Board Member, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

Editor's Note: This article can also be found in the **Viewpoints** section of the October 17, 2019 issue of the *Indianapolis Star*.



Crews were caught removing track in Indy. When I alerted the Mayor's office, DPW, and the media they mysteriously stopped. Photo taken near 24th Street along Monon Trail.

The selfish efforts of Fishers to not consider joint rail-transit use for the Nickel Plate Corridor should be a wake up call to regional transit advocates. To allow one city to dictate regional transportation priorities is beyond belief. The Nickel Plate Corridor should be preserved for future joint trail and transit use. The tracks run from 10th Street in downtown Indianapolis to Noblesville and beyond and would be perfect for commuter rail, Amtrak, a dedicated busway, or similar use. Fishers refused to consider joint rail trail as an option. More disappointingly, Indianapolis has been complicit in this effort allowing Fishers to file comments before the Federal Railroad Administration supporting the flawed plan and not objecting to the planned removal of the rail tracks in Indianapolis. DPW and the agency head, Dan Parker, have not held any public comment hearings nor has the City Council before undertaking these actions.

The 100-mile regional rail corridor should be preserved as a mechanism to relieve congestion on I-69 and promote non-car alternatives for transportation between Indianapolis and the Hamilton County suburbs.

It demonstrates the total lack of regional transportation

vision.

When Amazon was considering its new headquarters (and picked New York and DC areas over Indy), transportation was a key consideration.

The region's inability to not think as a region and not see the potential of the Nickel Plate as a regional gem is beyond belief.

Indeed, former Mayor Bart Peterson had his staff install a fence along the portion of the trail that runs from 10th Street to 42nd Street separating the rail from the Monon Trail. It is still there today.

DPW should try and halt removal of the tracks in Marion County and withdraw its support for this flawed effort.

Since when does Indy allow Fishers to set its transit vision? Mayor Hogsett should call for public comment hearings and intervene before the tracks are removed in Indianapolis.

It's Time to Build High-Speed Rail (Remind your Members of Congress)

Members of Congress listen when **hundreds** of their constituents make the same request. Please go online to <https://hsrail.salsalabs.org/2020-federal-petition/index.html>, read the letter, add your comments and sign the petition! As of this writing, 1814 people have signed the petition with a goal of 5000. We can get out of this 20th Century transportation rut but only if you request it!!

Parting Thoughts on Indiana Passenger Rail

By: **Bill Malcolm***, Board Member, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

As I ready myself to ride off into the sunset (on Amtrak of course) after my 7 years on the IPRA Board, I wanted to share a few lessons I have learned along the way in doing communications and government affairs for our esteemed group.

It has been a tough year to say the least--losing the *Hoosier*

State after saving it in 2014.

It's a challenge to live in Indiana.

Despite our rich rail heritage, gaining support for the train to Chicago was a challenge. It was always someone else's job according to the City of Indianapolis, INDOT, Amtrak, state legislators, and others. Even Cummins, the Indy Chamber, the Indiana Chamber, Visit Indy, and other obvious allies couldn't be bothered. We tried. And tried. The media helped publicize the plight.

Then there was the Amtrak Union Station Terminal issue (a.k.a. the Greyhound Bus Station). Owned by the City, it stood in stark contrast to the City-owned airport. Even if we could have fixed the departure and arrival time issues, the Terminal was at best a turn off.

There was plenty of blame to go around.

Most disappointing was the Governor's about face on the issue. He had been a supporter as Lieutenant Governor. We expected (at our peril) that he would continue to support the *Hoosier State*.

We need an alternative to I-65 to get to Chicago. Even if you like driving our taking the bus, the Interstate highways are too congested.

Amtrak is not perfect either. There proposed changes always were too little, too late.

The Iowa Pacific thing was another disappointment.

But hope springs eternal. So I hope my replacement on the Board can re-energize our fine group as we re-group in support of passenger rail in the State.

States throughout the country and most in the Midwest support state-funded passenger rail.

Union Station is a gem albeit in the rough.

We can do this.

Bill Malcolm

* Bill Malcolm resides in Broad Ripple in Indianapolis and will be leaving the Board on December 31, 2019. He is a utility advocate for a DC based association and as a hobby writes a value travel column which appears in publications around the country.)

Death of IHSRA Founder

Roger D Sims, one of the founding figures of the Indiana High Speed Rail Association (IHSRA) (now IPRA), passed away suddenly on October 31, 2019. Roger was instrumental in creating this organization. See his obituary online at: <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/nwitimes/obituary.aspx?n=roger-d-sims&pid=194334062&fhid=40626>. (This news thanks to *The Times* [of Northwest Indiana])

Death of NIPRA President

By: **Fred Lanahan**, Board Member, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

Richard (Rich) Joram, president of the Northern Indiana Passenger Rail Association (NIPRA), passed away on September 4, 2019 after a short illness. Rich was president of NIPRA in Fort Wayne for the past two years. He retired from well over 30 years in the freight railroad industry, having worked for the Reading RR, Conrail and finally the Norfolk Southern RR on which he finished as superintendent of the Fort Wayne District. His great knowledge of railroads and track lines in the Midwest was of great value to all of the organizations and supporters of passenger rail in Indiana. Rich has been succeeded by Fred Lanahan as president of NIPRA and Jack Daniel is the new vice president of the organization. However, Rich's passing has left a huge hole to be filled in the world of passenger rail in the Midwest and in particular, Indiana.

Amtrak Reliability Report

By: **Marc Magliari**, Public Relations Manager (Spokesman), Amtrak Government Affairs & Corporate Communications

The Amtrak Inspector General this morning [issued a report](#) about the economic impact of sub-standard On-Time Performance (OTP) of our trains caused by the freight railroads that host and dispatch our services.

[Here's a link](#) to our most recent **Host Railroad Report Card**. We issued this statement on October 17, 2019 from **Dennis Newman**, Amtrak Executive Vice President, Strategy & Planning:

We appreciate the analysis the Amtrak Office of Inspector

General performed on the significant financial consequences of poor on-time performance across the Amtrak network, which is primarily driven by delays caused by host railroads that own most of the rail lines used by Amtrak trains. The Amtrak OIG Report provides important information and recommendations with which Amtrak Management agrees and will implement in a timely manner.

The analysis identified one-time savings of \$336 million and annual cost savings and revenue improvements of \$41.9 million if there were substantial and sustained improvements in on-time performance. This Amtrak OIG report confirms a modest improvement in on-time performance would result in multi-million dollar gains to our bottom line. These findings are in addition to a U.S Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General estimate of annual gains to Amtrak of \$136.6 million if trains off the Northeast Corridor achieved on-time performance levels of 85%.

The findings from these two important reports illustrate the real financial impacts of late trains. Beyond that, they confirm late trains impact every aspect of our operations, from equipment usage and staffing, to trip-time competitiveness and reliability for our customers. Extrapolating the results over a five-year period, there is more than \$1 billion denied to our state and federal investors because Amtrak customers are not getting the reliable service they deserve and are lawfully entitled to receive.

Bullets from the Board

By: Steve Coxhead, President, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

The Board of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) met in the offices of Navigrade Consulting, in Fishers, Indiana, on Thursday, September 26, 2019.

The Board normally meets on the 4th Thursday of the month, on odd numbered months, with exceptions being made as necessary. The next meeting of the IPRA Board is planned for Thursday, November 21, 2019. All IPRA members and other interested parties are welcome to attend these meetings. A schedule of meetings for 2020 will be published shortly after the first of the year.

The highlights of the September meeting are as follows:

- ◆ The IPRA white paper, defining our position with regards to non-Amtrak approaches to a restored & improved *Hoosier State*, has been distributed to every member of the Indiana General Assembly.
- ◆ The white paper distribution will be followed up by visits to the House & Senate majority party leadership, to discuss the restoration of the *Hoosier State*.
- ◆ After discussions with majority party leadership, IPRA will draft proposed legislation and attempt to identify both House and Senate sponsors.
- ◆ It was noted that a solution to the *Hoosier State* issue would set a precedent for the solution of the northern Indiana passenger rail issue (Chicago – Fort Wayne – Columbus, Ohio).
- ◆ IPRA intends to keep the passenger rail issue alive during the next General Assembly session (starts in January – they will reopen the budget during that session), with a view to be ready for substantive action during the next budget session.
- ◆ A subcommittee of the Board (Development) has been formed to address the expansion of our membership, as well as the acquisition of significant corporation and/or foundation sponsorship.
- ◆ Work has started to modernize and update the IPRA website.
- ◆ For year 2020, an IPRA Board position will be open. Please contact a member of the Board if you wish to hold an IPRA Board position. I wish to thank Bill Malcolm for his contributions to IPRA and his much appreciated years of tireless passenger rail advocacy for Indiana!

It is always useful to maintain the dialogue with your State Senator, State Representative and the Governor's Office concerning the importance of a modern 21st Century passenger rail network in the State of Indiana. Please let us know about your conversations with members of the Indiana General Assembly about improving passenger rail in Indiana by sending IPRA an email message to info@indianahighspeedrail.org.

The next IPRA Board meeting will be held at the date and location shown here. All IPRA members are welcome to attend!

What: IPRA Board Meeting

When: Thursday, November 21, 2019 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST)

Where: Books & Brews, 3808 Shelby St, Indianapolis, IN 46227 (University of Indianapolis near IndyGo Red Line BRT)

Food: Lunch will *not* be provided

Those planning to attend this board meeting are requested to respond to the meeting announcement so that we may plan adequately. **Please watch your e-mail for more details as this meeting's date approaches.**

Please don't forget to include the *Cardinal* and other Amtrak services in your travel plans. Heavy ridership is the most important weapon we have in the fight to improve passenger rail service in Indiana.

Riding the Rails

By: Tod K Bassler Editor – All Aboard Indiana,
Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

THE MIDWEST HIGH SPEED RAIL ASSOCIATION (MHSRA) IS NOW THE HIGH SPEED RAIL ALLIANCE – High-speed rail is a *national* need so, as of September 26, 2019, the “Midwest” label is history! See the new website URL online at: <https://www.hsrail.org/>. (This news thanks to the *High Speed Rail Alliance*)

WHY THE U.S. HAS NO HIGH-SPEED RAIL – China has the world's fastest and largest high-speed rail network—more than 19,000 miles, the vast majority built during the last decade. To help understand what we're up against, view this 16 minute video (made May 7, 2019) online at: https://youtu.be/Qaf6baEuo_w. (This video thanks to *CNBC* and *YouTube*)

SUPER-SIZED TRAINS SCHEDULED FOR AMTRAK MIDWEST THANKSGIVING TRAVEL – If you're traveling in Illinois, Michigan, Missouri and Wisconsin (but not Indiana) later this month, Amtrak is prepared for the surge! See details online at: <https://media.amtrak.com/2019/10/super-sized-trains-scheduled-for-amtrak-midwestsm-thanksgiving-travel/>. (This story thanks to *Marc Magliari*, Public Relations Manager, *Amtrak*)

FIVE NORTHWEST INDIANA BANKS LEAD WAY TO TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) – Since the South Shore Line is key to Northwest Indiana's future public

transportation offerings, these banks pledged \$25 million in loans for TOD around current and future rail stations. See this uplifting story online at: https://www.nwintimes.com/opinion/editorial/editorial-banks-lead-way-in-region-investment/article_5c4ad993-7d6a-56e4-a56e-5ea31a63e549.html. (This news thanks to *The [Northwest Indiana] Times*)

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS – In 2016, Arlo Guthrie sings this iconic 5 1/2 minute tribute to the song, train crews and passengers of the Illinois Central “City of New Orleans” accompanied by an excellent collection of donated video clips. Enjoy this not-to-be-missed tear-jerker video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fF1lqEQFVUo>. (This video thanks to *AK Dian* and *YouTube*)

INDIANA INTERCITY BUS NEEDS STUDY – This Assessment and Service Evaluation for 2017 (done February 2018) for INDOT has good conclusions, observations & recommendations near the end of the paper. See this PDF online at: <https://www.in.gov/indot/files/INDOT%202017%20ICB%20Study.pdf>. (This news thanks to the *Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)* and *RLS & Associates, Inc.*)

MICROSOFT IS ACTIVELY SUPPORTING PASSENGER RAIL – Microsoft Corporation is hosting the *Cascadia Rail Summit* this month. See article online at: https://www.progressiverailroading.com/high_speed_rail/news/Microsoft-to-host-Pacific-Northwest-high-speed-rail-summit-58909. (This news thanks to *Progressive Railroading*)

MICROSOFT DONATES \$223K TO FINISH SEATTLE—VANCOUVER HIGH-SPEED RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY BY 2020 – Microsoft Corporation continues their support of improving passenger rail in this October 3, 2019 article! See article online at: <https://www.geekwire.com/2019/microsoft-donates-223k-finish-seattle-vancouver-high-speed-rail-feasibility-study-2020/>. (This news thanks to *Monica Nickelsburg* at *GeekWire*)

READ THE NORTHERN INDIANA PASSENGER RAIL CORRIDOR STUDY – Completed in August 2017, this study discusses route alternatives for the Gary, IN to Lima, OH route. See online at: <http://niprarail.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Route-Alternatives-Analysis-Final.pdf>. (This reference thanks to our partner organization *Northern Indiana Passenger Rail Association (NIPRA)* and *HNTB*)

FOR HOOSIERS ON THE WESTERN SIDE OF INDIANA, THIS IS FRUSTRATING NEWS – Two of Amtrak's Illinois

routes are among the worst-performing in the country. See the story online at: <https://www.chicagotribune.com/business/transportation/ct-biz-amtrak-illinois-trains-late-report-20191017-6p2x6yzpa5fb3pr4bkldzbvpmi-story.html>. (This news thanks to **Mary Wisniewski** at the **Chicago Tribune**)

BRIGHTLINE WILL HAVE CONNECTION TO CRUISE SHIPS IN MIAMI – Virgin Trains USA will build a passenger rail station at PortMiami (home to 22 cruise lines) by 2021. How about two more stations at Aventura and Boca Raton... why not? Read this exciting story online at: https://www.progressiverailroading.com/passenger_rail/news/Brightline-to-build-station-at-PortMiami--58988. (This news thanks to **Progressive Railroading**)

IMPROVE THE CORRIDOR ROUTES AND THEY WILL COME – How about a day train for the 245 mile Fargo to Minneapolis route (and back)? Yes!! Read this short but sweet article online at: <https://www.inforum.com/business/transportation/4747474-A-passenger-train-that-doesnt-leave-Fargo-Moorhead-in-the-middle-of-the-night-Residents-show-their-support>. (This news thanks to **INFORUM**)

A TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) STORY FROM PITTSBURGH – While many of us think that TOD is beneficial to communities served by transit, one must still deal with zoning codes as well as displacement of low income transit users. Go online to: <https://www.publicsource.org/how-some-allegheeny-county-municipalities-are-working-to-make-transit-oriented-development-happen/> and read about this complex situation. (This news thanks to **PublicSource**)

Discounts

Amtrak - The Rail Passengers Association (RPA) members save 10% online at www.amtrak.com if booked three or more days in advance. Select the **NARP** discount on Amtrak's website.

Rail Passengers Association (RPA) (a.k.a. **NARP**) members have a benefit... **MemberDeals**. Current RPA members will find details on RPA's website. **If you're not an RPA member, this is a great time to join!**

STUDENTS CAN SAVE ON AMTRAK MIDWEST TRAVEL – If you're a traveling student, please go online [here](http://www.amtrak.com) and learn how you can save money travelling on Amtrak!

YOUR KIDS GET A 50% DISCOUNT WHEN TRAVELING

WITH YOU – Please go online [here](http://www.amtrak.com) and learn how you can save money when travelling with your children on Amtrak!

Crowne Plaza Union Station in **Indianapolis**: Selecting Corporate ID = **6972** will give you the Amtrak rate of **\$134 per night** (King or two Double beds). You can also request an historic train car room for **\$154 per night** (King or 2 Double beds). The cancellation policy is 48 hours and these rates will be available until December 31, 2019. You can also call the hotel directly at 317-631-2221 and ask for the Amtrak rate.

For More Information

All Aboard Indiana is a bi-monthly publication of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA), formerly the Indiana High Speed Rail Association (INHSR).

To learn more about IPRA, please visit on our website: <https://www.indianahighspeedrail.org>

...or contact us at our mailing address:

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125 West South Street, # 662
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Publication Change

Starting with the July/August 2019 issue, **All Aboard Indiana** will publish every two months. If you prefer a monthly schedule, please let the Editor know.

Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

The Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance is a not for profit organization of concerned citizens, working to bring modern, 21st Century passenger rail systems to Indiana. We believe such systems are one of the keys to Indiana's economic success in the new century.

Goals for Indiana:

- Improve the Chicago-Indianapolis-Louisville-Cincinnati corridor (The Hoosier State)
- Build the Chicago-Fort Wayne corridor
- Expand the NW Indiana South Shore commuter system
- Develop light rail commuter systems for Central Indiana

Modern transit systems are demanded by the work force now coming of age, and expected by 21st Century businesses considering locations for expansion.



Want more information?


Contact us at: info@indianahighspeedrail.org

IPRA Membership Form

Membership, **which has recently been reduced by \$5 per year**, can be purchased online at:

<https://www.indianahighspeedrail.org/join.html>

You are also welcome to print and mail the following form:

 <p>Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance</p> <p>A one-year membership in the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance is only \$15 (Student/Senior 65+) or \$25 (Member)</p> <p>Join or renew at http://www.indianahighspeedrail.org/join.html</p> <p>Please mail check to: Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance, 125 West South Street, Unit 662, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206-0662</p>	<p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>City: _____</p> <p>State: _____</p> <p>Zip Code: _____</p> <p>E-mail: _____</p>
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