

Community Outreach for High Speed Passenger Rail in Indiana: Lessons Learned and Ideas for the Future

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About HEC

- Education and advocacy for stronger environmental policies –state, federal, local
- Statewide network of thousands linked by email, programs, personal outreach
- Offices in Indianapolis, Lafayette and Valparaiso



Outreach Goals

Outreach focused on Chicago to Cincinnati corridor

- Raise awareness among public, community leaders, and news media
- Build network of supporters and allies
- Learn local concerns and needs



Community Outreach-- 2012 project

Crawfordsville
Shelbyville
Greensburg
Rushville
Connersville



Meetings with Community Leaders

Connersville

Mayor Urban
Economic Development Group, Chairman

Rushville

Mayor Pavey and City Council
Economic Development Corp, ED
Eastern Indiana Development District

Greensburg

Mayor Herbert
State Rep. Randy Frye
Chamber of Commerce, ED
Economic Development Corp, ED
Mainstreet Greensburg

Shelbyville

Mayor DeBaun
Building and Planning Director
Plan Commission members

Crawfordsville

Mayor Barton
Economic Development Corp, ED

Versailles

Susan Craig,
Southeastern Indiana Regional
Planning Commission



Community Leaders: Reception and Common Questions

- Community leaders generally supportive
- Recognized regional area benefits even though route may not go through their community
- Common Questions:
 - How will this conflict with existing freight operations?
 - What are setback requirements from rail?
 - Train speed through towns?
 - Why was Indy to Cincinnati section changed?
- Public funds used for improvements to privately-owned infrastructure was a concern for some



Public Meetings

- Hosted public meetings: Greensburg, Rushville, Shelbyville and Crawfordsville
- Meetings held in public libraries—low cost, easy access
- Advertised events in local newspaper and on local radio stations
 - Small market media is very affordable
- Crawfordsville most highly attended event: 48 individuals
- Community leaders in attendance
- Media coverage in Greensburg, Shelbyville, Crawfordsville, Indianapolis Star, Inside Indiana Business, Indiana Public Radio
- Collaboration with IHSRA



Frequently Asked Questions

- What is the expected train speed through downtowns?
- How will the implementation of HSR service affect freight operations?
- Who will operate the HSR network?
(The state? Private companies?)
- How much will it cost to build?
- How much will tickets cost?
- Where do Indiana's leaders stand?

Greensburg, IN Public Library



Public Reception

- Generally positive reception
- Comments at meetings included:
 - Efficient means of travel
 - Ability to generate economic development
 - Benefits to businesses along the route
 - Need to compete, economically, with other states
 - Viable transportation option for personal travel
- Not all positive – some community members presented opposition



Opposition

- Expense of capital costs
- Ridership may not be high enough to cover operating costs
- Safety at crossings is not guaranteed
- Amtrak has a poor track record of management and their management is a reflection of future HSR service



Outreach Model -- Illinois

- Coalition of Supporters
 - Mayors, city & county officials – 300
 - Chambers and Economic Development Corps -- 30
 - Universities & Colleges – 12 presidents
 - Business – manufacturing, services, commuters
 - Environmental groups
- Public Involvement Program for Chicago to St. Louis route



Lessons Learned & Ideas for Future Outreach

More Audiences:

- County government
- Service Clubs
- Local environmental and energy-focused not-for-profits
- Universities and colleges – Wabash in Crawfordsville, Indianapolis-area universities and colleges, Ivy Tech
- Business – manufacturing, service
- Freight rail operators



Lessons Learned & Ideas for Future Outreach

- Coalition building – regional, i.e. Southeast Indiana Coalition for Passenger Rail
Or corridor-based: Chicago to Cincinnati Coalition for Passenger Rail
- Sponsor fact finding trips for public officials to neighboring states' communities served by rail, i.e. Normal, Illinois or Battle Creek, Michigan
- Invite rail leaders from other states to tour and speak in Indiana



Lessons learned & Ideas for future outreach

- Include local leaders/local rail advocates as part of community presentations
- Produce videos for use in community presentations
- Maintain regular follow-up communications
- Urge inclusion of passenger rail in local and regional land use and economic development plans
- Produce white papers on rail benefits for specific communities and regions served by HSR routes



Role of Community Outreach

- Essential component of Indiana's high speed rail advocacy campaign
- Need on-going involvement of campaign leaders
- Recruit qualified spokespeople and organizers to assist with outreach



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