

ALL ABOARD **INDIANA**

The Official Newsletter of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

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INDOT Seeks Alternative Funding after Indy Ends Support

Passenger rail service on the Hoosier State Amtrak train which runs four days a week between Indianapolis and Chicago could end as early as October 1 as the city of Indianapolis announced it will not support continuing its subsidy to the train. (The train can be extended for an additional four months per an agreement between Amtrak and INDOT.) The City paid \$300,000 last year.

Local communities along the route agreed last year to fund 50% of the cost of the Hoosier State. However, the agreement is unique. No other state in the country requires local communities to fund Amtrak service.

Further complicating matters is INDOT's selection of another vendor to operate the train. Responding to a lack of progress on service improvements, INDOT put the Hoosier State service out for bid. Eight bidders responded and INDOT tentatively selected Corridor Capital as the winning bidder. However, the matter was apparently contingent on a three-year commitment from local communities to continue funding 50% of the cost.

In an email to *All Aboard Indiana*, Will Wingfield of INDOT clarified the situation:

"The city of Indianapolis has informed INDOT that they will no longer participate financially in the Hoosier State passenger rail service after the end of September. ...

INDOT believes that the local communities should continue to be responsible for half of the operating subsidies. INDOT is researching alternative funding sources and discussing options with legislators and other state agencies.

INDOT is also encouraging its community partners to help recruit other local governments to participate, such as counties along the route.

INDOT has a proposal from Corridor Capital to upgrade the service and make it more self-sustaining, but we must sign a contract with a longer term to realize those benefits.

INDOT will continue to hold periodic conference calls with its community partners so we can update each other on our efforts."

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City Consultant Report on Union Station To Be Released Shortly

The 500 page consultant report on Union Station (completed in February) is due out any day now per John Bartholomew of the City of Indianapolis.

Major repairs may be needed according to an AP story reprinted in the online *Indianapolis Business Journal*.

Bartholomew spoke with a city county councilman last month regarding the beleaguered facility and our complaints concerning lack of proper cleaning and lighting problems:

As for the buzzing (of the fluorescent lights), the Building Authority tells us that is not a safety issue and they have been checking to see if they have any extra transformers.

The fencing (along Illinois Street) is there for emergency façade work and we don't have a timeline on completion yet.

(On the consultant report) We are also waiting for CSX to come up with their part of the report dealing with the two most southern tracks on the bridge deck. This is a 100 plus year old building and has many issues.

Beech Grove Tour Highlights

Amtrak Beech Grove's Rick Burton and Amtrak Chicago's Charlie Monte Verde hosted a tour for IPRA and Brian Gildea of Develop Indy (a business unit of the Indy Chamber) on July 29. The facility repairs and maintains the excellent condition of the Amtrak fleet. Beech Grove's economic impact includes:

- 526 employees
- Hired 120 new employees in the last few years
- \$105 million annual budget
- \$32 million payroll
- Average wage of skilled trades employees is \$28/hour



Amtrak employees were hard at work in Beech Grove on July 29.

- 108 acre facility
- 11 buildings at the site
- Repairs Amtrak cars as well as trains from Cal Trans (the Surfliner), the Sounder (from Seattle, a commuter rail operation that runs from Everett to Seattle to Tacoma), Metro North (commuter rail from NYC area), and private cars including one operated by the Navy



Brian Gildea (Indy Chamber) and Charlie Monte Verde and Rick Burton (Amtrak) pose with a refurbished car.

Amtrak has two other similar facilities in Delaware but Beech Grove is the largest. Beech Grove repairs and maintains equipment from across its system. The facility opened in 1900 by the Cleveland-Cincinnati-Chicago & St. Louis Railroad which became New York Central then Penn Central. Amtrak took it over in 1975.

In 2015, they are scheduled to repair 355 pieces of equipment.

While we were there, they were re-building Superliners. They also repair damaged cars (known as wrecks), rebuild brakes, repair wheels, and the like.

Michigan DOT Checks Out Talgo Trains at Beech Grove

On July 29, Michigan DOT and Talgo officials stopped by Amtrak Beech Grove to check out for purchase the Talgo passenger trains built in Milwaukee for the state of Wisconsin.

Because Wisconsin DOT refused delivery on the trains, they are being stored by Talgo in Beech Grove and are for sale.

The trains can go 110 mph on the new upgraded track that runs between Detroit and Porter, IN (on the Amtrak Wolverine Detroit to Chicago route *(continued)*)



Two new Talgo trains await buyers in Beech Grove.

("Michigan DOT" continued from page 2) and the two other Michigan routes that run to Chicago). Two of the other Talgo train sets

built in Milwaukee were sold to Oregon and are used on the Amtrak Cascades route that runs between Vancouver, BC and Eugene, OR (with stops in Seattle and Portland). Talgo has since closed its Wisconsin facility.

FairTrain Celebrates 32nd Year

By Michelle Yerkeson and John Johnson of the Indiana Transportation Museum

It's FairTrain time. Ride the FairTrain between Fishers and the State Fair in Indianapolis from August 1-17. This year marks the 32nd year since the first FairTrain. No other heritage railroad runs as many as 20 trains a day for 17 straight days or carries over 34,000 people in the same period. For FairTrain departure and arrival times (as well as fares and to purchase tickets), go to www.itm.org

Ride the FairTrain[™] to the State Fair!



Learn more today at: ITM.org!

<p>Arrive at the Fair relaxed, ready for a day of fun! Beat the traffic and the parking! There's a train for you every 90 minutes. Board in Fishers. Parking is free. Arrive at Gate 6 -- Main Street of the Fair.</p>	<p>OR, Take a break and just ride from Indy to Fishers and back! Kids love it! FairTrain is history in motion. A family-friendly Fair-going tradition for 30 years, from the Indiana Transportation Museum.</p>
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Corridor Capital Selected by INDOT

By Don Yehle

Corridor Capital LLC has won a "beauty contest" but not the contract yet to run the Hoosier State by INDOT. Fritz Plous, the organization's Director of Communications, stated on July 17th when speaking at a town meeting on passenger rail in Crawfordsville that it had been selected by INDOT if funding can be secured. If the funding is found, Amtrak's engineers and conductors would continue to drive the four-day-a-week train. Congressional liability insurance of \$200 million rests with Amtrak. They are the only ones with authority to get passenger rail on freight tracks. "Amtrak is a very good train driver, with very nice conductors," Plous said.

Chicago-based Corridor Capital is a passenger rail development company. Launched in 2005, Chief Executive Officer Scott Braverman and Chairman James Coston co-founded Corridor Capital "with a goal to implement a vision to identify new strategies for advancing passenger rail service in the United States."

"We will run it [the service] right," Plous, the third member of the Corridor leadership team said. Passengers can look forward to seeing two or three shining new, single-level cars. Wi-Fi and ADA restrooms would be available immediately. An Indiana-based food service company would provide food service, but not immediately. Business class service would come. Corridor would also introduce new service frequencies—first, seven-day Hoosier State service, followed by a second train each day.

Corridor Capital plans to eliminate delays by changing routing between Dyer and Chicago. The change requires two new power switches—not manual ones—at a combined cost of \$225,000. The switches are needed in Harvey, Illinois, which would allow the Hoosier State to use Canadian National tracks (the old Illinois Central tracks), thus avoiding long delays that passengers presently can endure, Plous stated.

Two diesel-powered passenger locomotives would pull the new Hoosier State. Railplan International, of Baltimore, Maryland, would handle train maintenance. An experienced maintenance company, Railplan has contracts with the North Carolina Department of Transportation, Virginia Railway Express, and MARC (*continued*)

("Corridor Capital" continued from page 3) Train/Maryland Transit Administration.

Plous said that Indianapolis has a business advantage of a downtown station, which offers the potential for huge payoffs in economic development, job growth, and new business opportunities for Indiana.

Dynamic pricing—based on supply and demand—would be the norm for ticketing. Initial ticket prices and how reservations would be made aren't yet known. Plous indicated that there would be a link to Amtrak's existing reservation system.

Crawfordsville Meeting Highlights Challenges

By Donald Yehle

CRAWFORDSVILLE: Thirty people at Crawfordsville's public library on July 17 heard what to expect from the new rail provider, while also hearing from Crawfordsville Mayor Todd Barton that once again financing the operations of the Hoosier State remains a heavy burden for train supporters.

Participants at the town meeting were challenged to reach out to the governor and the legislature to gain additional state funding for this train set. Four cities, one county, and the Indiana Department of Transportation are ready to continue their contributions, but the City of Indianapolis and Beech Grove are not interested. (Crawfordsville, Lafayette, Rensselaer, West Lafayette, and Tippecanoe County are supportive of providing half the funding for the train.) There's a need to make up \$25,000 a month of lost funding from the City of Indianapolis.

The Hoosier Environmental Council and the Indiana Passenger Rail Coalition invited Indiana Department of Transportation's director of multimodal planning and programs to participate in the Crawfordsville meeting along with Mayor Barton and Fritz Plous, Director of Communications, Corridor Capital, LLC.

Beech Grove, which houses Amtrak's primary maintenance facility, currently gives "in kind" contributions but has opted out beginning this October. The City of Dyer is the only other city along the Hoosier State line that isn't currently contributing financial support.

Mayor Barton stated that it is not possible to increase funding from Lafayette, Rensselaer, West Lafayette, Tippecanoe County, and Crawfordsville. "We need to get over the [financial] hump. Additional money must come from the state."

The author prepared this letter for rail supporters to send to the Governor:

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
Office of the Governor
200 W. Washington St.
Room 206

Indianapolis, IN 46204

To send an email click on <http://www.in.gov/gov/2333> and select to contact the governor with questions and comments.

Dear Governor Pence:

I am writing on behalf of the thousands of Hoosiers who rely on the Hoosier State rail line for transportation between Indianapolis and Chicago.

This train serves people who live along the train route—in Indianapolis, Crawfordsville, Lafayette, West Lafayette, Rensselaer, and Dyer. It also serves many folks who live within a 50-mile radius of each of these station communities. Five of these cities and one county currently financially support the Hoosier State train, which runs from Indianapolis to Chicago.

The state's decision to partner with some of the above cities to finance the service through October 1 is innovative and unique.

I'm asking you to spend a small portion of the state's surplus to maintain the Hoosier State.

As you know, the Blue Ribbon Committee on Transportation in July included language in its report "to consider passenger rail if circumstances justify state support of the project." Mobility of our population and what that means for the state's economy falls within those guidelines. I hope sooner, the state also will implement Resolution 2 of the report that says: "Indiana should consider a transportation policy to enhance the movement of freight and passengers."

Sincerely yours,

Booth at Summer Celebration Promotes Rail

By Dorothy Brown-Johnson

For the first time in over 20 years, an Amtrak booth was organized and manned by more than 20 Amtrak volunteers for all three days at the Indiana Black Expo Summer Celebration last month. The purpose of being at the Expo was to promote train ridership for all of Amtrak's trains with special emphasis on the Cardinal and Hoosier State leaving from Indianapolis and connecting to locations all over the country.

Indiana's Black Expo is the oldest event of its kind in the nation with more than 50,000 people attending each day. Adults received train schedules with information provided by employees trained on how to use the schedules. Kids were spotted in their engineer hats and received coloring books and other goodies. The booth was deemed a success and plans are already underway to make next year's even better. IPRA was happy to provide marketing materials distributed at the booth.



Lowell Baker (General Foreman, Maintenance) poses with a group of kids at the Amtrak booth during the Black Expo.

Shared Electric Cars and Bike Lanes, but No Train? Indy's Opposition to Passenger Rail Puzzling

In response to an AP story run in the *Indianapolis Business Journal* as well as a separate story in the *Indianapolis Star* in which the Mayor's aide called passenger rail inefficient, *All Aboard Indiana* editor Bill Malcolm contacted Indy Department of Public Works head Lori Miser in order to request a meeting or phone call dis-

cussion and sent the following letter to the editor (excerpted):

...More puzzling is Indy's disinterest in promoting passenger rail to Chicago, the nation's third largest city, under 200 miles away. Given Mayor Ballard's support for reducing dependence on foreign oil by promoting bicycling and shared electric vehicles (which requires a \$16 million rate increase from IPL), it is disappointing that he does not extend that vision to passenger rail at a nominal cost. (However, the entire region including Hamilton County should similarly support the effort.) The environmental benefits of getting people out of their cars and onto passenger rail when travelling to Chicago are substantial. Over 36,000 passengers per year use the service.

Yes, MegaBus and Greyhound Express both provide bus service to Chicago. However there is room for passenger rail in the mix given the increased traffic congestion on I-65 and the superior service offered by the rail option (waiting area, bathrooms, snack bar in station, on time notification, bigger seats, etc.).

The train from Chicago also can bring tourists, convention attendees, those attending sports events and the like with downtown-to-downtown service.

Indeed, cities like Columbus (OH), Louisville, Cleveland, and Ft. Wayne cannot currently offer travelers a downtown-to-downtown rail option.

Milwaukee, St. Louis, and Detroit all offer such service and their states support it. They also have bus-rail inter-modal stations allowing for regional and local connectivity (and they have MegaBus).

You don't need a consultant study in order to repair the loud buzzing of the fluorescent lights nor to tell the janitor to put away the mop buckets when not in use (or to tell bus passengers they can't sleep on the bare floor). The City would not tolerate such at the airport.

In short, Indy should tell INDOT it will support the funding deal for passenger rail if the train departure times can be adjusted (perhaps leave at 8 a.m. not 6 a.m. and return from Chicago at 10 p.m. not 11:50 p.m.)

Yes, rail service isn't perfect here but it's a strategic, environmentally friendly transportation (continued)

("Indy's Response" continued from page 5) *resource that we already have today and the City should join efforts to improve it."*

CrossRail Plan Detailed at Chicago Forum

By Donald Yehle

CHICAGO—CrossRail Chicago was celebrated last month by 120 people, most of whom are members of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association. The Cross-Rail Chicago plan is "a vision that will set the stage for a high-speed rail network in the Midwest, carrying travelers from O'Hare Airport through Union Station to McCormick Place and designations on the south side and eventually to cities like St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Detroit," explains the Midwest High Speed Rail Association. For more information, go to MidwestHSR.org or Cross Rail Chicago.org.

State Panel Report Includes Three Rail Enhancements

By Donald Yehle

Despite mostly focusing on more roads, three passenger rail projects managed to be included in the list of 33 suggested transportation infrastructure improvements identified in Governor Pence's final blue transportation study released last month.

The three were the Hoosier State Passenger Rail Line, the Northern Indiana/Ohio Passenger Rail Corridor, and a South Shore extension to Dyer. Improving rail service to Indiana ports, rehabilitating light density brand lines on small short line and regional railroads, and improving intermodal rail service were among the rail freight initiatives contained in the report.

The report noted that passenger rail projects are given high marks for decreasing congestion on roads and providing access to region airports. Baby boomers and those under 30 are expected to use these rail services, the report continues. Environmental benefits [from rail] are huge, as well. Those benefits are "decreased energy consumption, reduced accidents, reduced air pollution and emissions, reduced land for auto and air facilities, and intensified and reuse of urban area lands

around stations and reduced wetland and water resource impacts by reuse of existing rail routes," the report notes.

The well-known Hoosier State Line—if trip frequency is increased—and the South Shore extension could provide greater access to Chicago. Meanwhile, the Northern Indiana/Ohio passenger rail corridor "would provide high speed rail service for the citizens of Chicago, Northern Indiana, and Central Ohio by building a new rail line spanning from Chicago to Columbus (Ohio). The 300-mile rail system would be operated using 110 or 130 mph diesel trains."

Hoosier State Ferries Boy Scouts Home from New Mexico Trip

By Donald Yehle

Nine Indianapolis-area Boy Scouts this summer continued a long tradition of riding the Southwest Chief to Raton, New Mexico, for two weeks of high adventure hiking at the Philmont Boy Scout Reservation near Cimarron. *All Aboard Indiana* caught up with the scouts at Chicago's Union Station on July 9th as they were heading home on the Hoosier State. "We choose the train as the most cost-efficient way west," said Scoutmaster Brad Goad, father of one of the scouts. All members of McCordsville United Methodist Church Troop 335, the Scouts had never traveled on Amtrak; in keeping with another Scout tradition, they did a good turn by providing trail food to a very hungry youngster on the Hoosier State.



Boy Scouts await their train at Chicago's Union Station.

It's Time to Ride the Train: LA's Union Station

By Donald Yehle

Editor's Note: "It's Time to Ride the Train" is your space. Suggestions, comments, and story ideas for this column are welcome. All Aboard Indiana and this column are designed to inform our readers about the people, train experiences, and the activities affecting passenger rail across the country and particularly in Indiana. This month, Los Angeles Union Station is featured along with CrossRail Chicago. Please send story ideas to djyehle@gmail.com

LOS ANGELES -- Only a few days remain to view an exhibit of architectural drawings, sketches, blueprints, and photographs of Los Angeles Union Station, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. Through August 9, the Los Angeles Public Library is showcasing some of the 6,500 detailed sketches showing everything from countless designs for clocks, light fixtures, and seating to plans for tracks, retaining walls, and storm drains.

Now beautifully restored, LA's union station was the last of the grand railroad terminals constructed in America. At the time of construction, three transcontinental railroads used the station—the Southern Pacific; the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe; and the Union Pacific. Today, the station is the hub for the area's Metro Lines, Amtrak, and downtown bus service to Los Angeles International Airport.

NARP President Outlines Vision

By Donald Yehle

"Let there be trains," says the National Association of Railroad Passengers' Larry Scott, who serves the passenger rail advocacy group as its acting President and Chief Executive Officer.

Speaking with *All Aboard Indiana* at the Midwest High Speed Rail Association's CrossRail Celebratory luncheon in Chicago on July 9, NARP's interim head wants it understood that his organization doesn't represent Amtrak.

"While Amtrak is the biggest show in town, we represent the American [rail] passenger," he says. Carrying a

four-point agenda, the Californian wants it known that Americans have a need for passenger rail. "It's not a choice; it's a need," Scott says.

Likewise, America needs to embrace high speed rail. "[High speed rail] is going to happen [here] in the next five years. When is the question," he continues. "NARP wants to be at the forefront of that effort." Scott states that transportation inter-connectivity is the rail advocate's third agenda item. Does it make sense for a light rail track and Amtrak not to connect with each other? A scenario exists in this country where an Amtrak train crosses under a bridge that carries light rail, he says. Rail, air, and bus systems must be seamless components of America's transportation system if we are to properly serve passengers.

Normal (IL) Bus-Rail Station Built with Federal Funds, Includes City Hall

Did you know the Normal (IL) Amtrak station is a multi-modal facility for transit and also houses the City Hall? It was a "shovel ready" project built with Federal support. (It was mentioned as the "Urbana" station in the last President's Report.)



The attractive and practical multimodal transit station serves Normal, Illinois residents.

Coming in our September Edition...

- Bicentennial Train Fall events offered by the Indiana Historical Society
- Update on the fate of the beleaguered Hoosier State
- A report on Indy's Union Station 500 page repair report
- Amtrak Thruway bus options allow three down-state alternatives to connecting in Chicago to long distance trains
- VIA rail trip ideas in Canada
- It's Time to Ride the Train column

Please send comments, letters to the editor, news tips, etc. to billmalcolm@gmail.com by August 24 to be included in the September edition.

Note:

This group is not affiliated with Amtrak, the National Railroad Passenger Corporation.

For More Information:

Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance



All Aboard Indiana a monthly publication of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (formerly Indiana High Speed Rail Association).

To learn more or to join IPRA go to
www.indianahighspeedrail.org

To follow rail news on Facebook go to Hoosiers for Passenger Rail and/or Hoosiers for the Hoosier State.

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We are a proud partner with the National Association of Rail Passengers Association. For membership information and rail news, go to www.narprail.org. Members receive a 10% discount off Amtrak fares booked three days in advance.