

## 25th Anniversary of MHSRA Celebrated March 24 in Chicago

By Steve Coxhead, President, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance

The 2018 Annual Meeting of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association (MHSRA) was held on March 24<sup>th</sup>, at Maggiano's Little Italy restaurant, in downtown Chicago. It was an all-day affair, with a full program of speakers, broken by lunch.

This year's meeting celebrated the MHSRA's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and as such was somewhat of a look backwards, as well as a look forwards.

Among the featured speakers were:

Stan Miller, President of the MHSRA Board

Claude Luisada, MHSRA founder

Rick Harnish, Executive Director, MHSRA

Kitty Kurth, President of Kurth Lampe

Dave Winters, MHSRA

Levar Hoard, Managing Director, Urban Development Lab

Bruce Horowitz, Principal, Rail Transport Economics

Martin Ritter, CEO, Stadler USA

Chris Kopp, Transportation Planning Practice Leader, HNTB Corp.

Audrey Wennink, Director of Transportation, Metropolitan Planning Council

Chen-Yu Lin, Graduate Student, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

The day began with a wide-ranging presentation by Messrs. Miller, Luisada and Harnish, which painted an interesting picture of the founding of the MHSRA, and its history and development to the present day. Rick Harnish wrapped up this portion of the presentation with an overview of the current initiative, referred to as the "phased network approach."

This approach is an attempt to come to grips with the high level of complexity in getting transportation projects done. It sometimes appears that political will, funding and planning must occur simultaneously (and spontaneously) across many different organizations, at many (continued)



Midwest High Speed Rail Association

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*("25th Anniversary of MHSRA Celebrated..." continued from page 1)* different levels of government. The "phased network approach" is a tool for coming to grips with this apparent conundrum.

Next, Ms. Kitty Kurth, of the public relations firm, Kurth Lampe, gave an interesting presentation describing ways the citizen can effectively influence the course of events at the political level. Since everything about transit appears to have a political dimension, Ms. Kurth's presentation provided some helpful, and practical, answers to the often-asked question by the individual of "but what can I do?" The core message being that if we, as citizens, want transit projects to go forward, we must flex our citizenship muscles.

On a related note, Dave Winters (MHSRA) provided the gathering an update on transit-related legislative developments within Illinois.

This was followed by an interesting technical presentation by Levar Hoard (Urban Development Lab), concerning the use of hydrogen as a fuel for rail motive power. Mr. Hoard addressed himself primarily to the details of the technical solution, but there was a brief discussion, towards the end, of the economics of a hydrogen-based approach.

The morning was concluded by Mr. Bruce Horowitz, with a description of a proposal for a high-speed rail project in Texas/Oklahoma, different from the Texas centric approach put forward by the Texas Central Railway company. This proposal would be for a system covering a larger geographic area of Texas & Oklahoma, employing a mix of service levels (as opposed to pure high-speed rail), and would be designed to interchange with the national rail system (as opposed to being purely an internal Texas affair).

**The system described by Mr. Horowitz assumed significant financial participation on the part of various governmental organizations.**

There was a break for lunch followed by Mr. Martin Ritter (CEO of Stadler USA) who gave the keynote speech. The keynote described a product offering from Stadler, consisting of state of the art train sets using a new and interesting approach to the motive power. This consists of designing the power units so that the actual power arrangements are interchangeable.

It would essentially be possible to drop a diesel electric, pure electric, or mixed power equipment into the same car body shell. Innovative approaches were also used regarding the coaches, so that the same units could be used with both high and low-level platforms.

Next, Mr. Chris Kopp (HNTB consulting firm) presented some



thoughts and analysis on the current Midwest Rail Plan, under development by the Federal Rail Association (FRA).

To bring us all back down to reality, Ms. Audrey Wennink (Metropolitan Planning Council) shared some thoughts on the financing of transit projects. Such projects are expensive,

requiring a major upfront investment. The key to moving forward may be to exercise creativity in discovering ways to generate new money to be used for transit.

Finally, the session concluded with a presentation by Mr. Chen-Yu Lin (University of Illinois graduate student) on ways to address safety considerations on mixed use (passenger & freight) rail lines. Mr. Lin's approach utilized computer simulations to determine risk factors to be addressed.

**The meeting was both interesting and informative, well worth the day devoted to it.**

However, there seemed to be a sense of treading water, as opposed to moving forward. We all knew the situation, but it was not addressed.

**Political problems are preventing progress in Illinois, Wisconsin and Ohio. Michigan is proceeding incrementally on conventional rail projects, as Indiana has also started to do.**

No one knows when (or if) new Federal money will become available, and under what conditions. It seems that we in the Midwest are doing well to move slowly on getting a few improvements in conventional rail, with no sign of anything approaching high speed rail on the horizon.

It may be that it is our regional political culture that is standing in the way of progress. As citizens, we should all accept a personal challenge to do what we can to change that culture. Yes, we need to pay attention to politics, take it seriously, and get involved.

## Amtrak Midwest Adds Trains for Tulip Time in Holland, MI

Courtesy, Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers



*These tulips along 8th Street in downtown Holland are only a few of the millions to be found around town in the spring. (Photo via TulipTime.com)*

Fellow Rail Passengers,

The Michigan Department of Transportation and Amtrak Midwest are sponsoring additional *Pere Marquette* service in May to the Tulip Time Festival in Holland, Michigan.

Amtrak will operate extra trains on May 5 and 12, departing Chicago Union Station at 7:05 a.m. and returning at 8:24 p.m. The schedule is set up to allow a day trip to the Tulip Time Festival.

The extra train to Holland will stop at Hammond-Whiting, Indiana, at 7:30 a.m., and make intermediate stops in St. Joseph and Bangor before arriving in Holland at 11:29 a.m.

The return trip to Chicago will leave Holland at 5:50 p.m. The trains will operate as Nos. 374 and 375.

In addition, regularly scheduled *Pere Marquette* trains #370 and #371 will stop at Hammond-Whiting on May 5, 6, 12 and 13, convenient for south-of-the-lake passengers who want to stay overnight in Holland.

Heralded as the nation's "Best Flower Festival" and "America's Best Small-Town Festival", Tulip Time in Holland, MI features more than 5 million tulips in bloom along with a celebration of the town's Dutch culture and community. During the nine-day festival from May 5 - May 13, 2018, visitors can experience Tulip City tours, an artisan market, quilt shows, carnivals, Tall Ships dockside, Dutch dance performances and parades.

Most of the events are within walking distance of the [Holland Amtrak station](#) with [shuttle services](#) available as well. For complete festival information, visit [Tuliptime.com](#).

For more information and to book tickets [CLICK HERE](#) or phone 800-USA-RAIL.

## Cherry Blossoms in Full Bloom as RPA Descends on Washington, DC

By Tod K. Bassler, Indiana Council Representative,  
Rail Passengers Association

The April [2018 Rail Passengers Association \(RPA a.k.a. NARP\) Advocacy Summit and Day on the \[Capitol\] Hill](#) was a resounding success with many goals met. The cherry blossoms were at their prime making Washington DC a beautiful place in Spring! The Summit was again held at the Alexandria, VA Hilton Hotel conveniently located adjacent to the [King Street - Old Town] [Metro station](#)\*\*. Next to the Metro station is the Alexandria Amtrak station also serving the [Virginia Railway Express \(VRE\)](#)\*\*\*.

The scheduled events for the RPA Advocacy Summit were on Sunday evening, all day Monday and Wednesday morning. The highlights of the Summit were:

- (1) Board of Directors Meeting (open to all attendees)
- (2) The Alexandria Mayor welcomed us
- (3) Status of implementation Positive Train Control (PTC)
- (4) Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Grant Programs and Funding
- (5) Rail Transportation + City Building (Keynote)
- (6) Amtrak Host Railroad Performance (OTP in 2017 was 44%)
- (7) National Network Issues
- (8) Council Members (including Duane & Tod) Division Meeting
- (9) Annual Council Business Meeting (By-Law Amendment, voting for RPA Officers, other business)

On Monday evening, all Summit attendees were invited to an Open House at the RPA Office, a better office than the previous location. It's great to see where the RPA staff spend their time while advocating for better Passenger Rail in the USA!



Tuesday was the Day on The Hill when we met with 11 of our Indiana Senate and Congress members and their staffs. While traveling to Capitol Hill from Alexandria, we encountered a problem with Metro (i.e. no train) that forced us to walk much more than originally planned to reach The Hill.

This resulted in an injury to one of our Indiana participants (continued)

*USDA photo by Scott Bauer.*



("Cherry Blossoms in Full Bloom..." continued from page 3) preventing them from continuing to the day's meetings. We used this apparent train maintenance issue as an example of the need for improvement when talking with our Indiana members' offices.



We spoke directly with Senator Todd Young and Congresswoman Jackie Walorski along with staffs of Senator Joe Donnelly and Congresspersons Luke Messer, Susan Brooks, Trey Hollingsworth, Larry Bucshon, Todd Rokita, Peter Visclosky, Andre Carson and Jim Banks.

We asked each of these representatives of Indiana to convey support for our 10 bullet [Indiana Wish List](#) (See "IPRA's Agenda, page 4 of link) when they are making decisions regarding our country's transportation infrastructure.

That evening many RPA members as well as invited staff of Indiana Senate and Congress offices attended a reception at the Capitol Visitors Center. During the reception, RPA President Jim Mathews recognized (& awarded) the late RPA member James Hamre, who lost his life in the recent tragic Train 501 derailment in Washington State.

See accompanying photograph of Tod Bassler, Phil Streby and Duane Chattin riding the Senate Subway between meetings under Capitol Hill.

This was the first time this author attended this event and he found it very rewarding. My take away here is "Let's get Excited about Maintenance!" because proper maintenance simply equals quality and reliability.

Any member of the RPA can attend the Summit.

This coming autumn the next RPA Summit will be in Miami, FL. Watch the RPA website for details once the meeting is finalized.

## Indiana's Congressional Delegation Receives Visit from Three Hoosiers

By Phil Streby, IPRA Treasurer

Washington, D.C. – Three Hoosiers joined other Rail Passenger Association (RPA) members for the annual "Day on the Hill" event on Tuesday, April 17. Participants (pictured at left) were Tod Bassler, Indianapolis; Phil Streby, Peru; and Duane Chattin, Vincennes.

Rail issues, particularly the need for consistent, dependable passenger rail funding, were discussed with the following Congressional staffs; one Indiana U.S. Senator (Todd Young), and Congresswoman Jackie Walorski.

Senator Todd Young and Legislative Assistants Andrew Terp and Dan Cheever;

Megan Hrdlicka for Senator Joe Donnelly;

District 1 -- Seth Ehgdahl for Congressman Peter Visclosky;

District 2 -- Congresswoman Jackie Walorski and Legislative Aid Martin Schultz;

District 3 -- Special Assistant Jeffrey Kempler for Congressman Jim Banks;

District 4 -- Legislative Director Parker Reynolds for Congressman Todd Rokita;

District 5 -- Legislative Assistant Rob Hicks and Staff Assistant Emma Hamilton for Congresswoman Susan Brooks;

District 6 -- Legislative Director John Huston for Congressman Luke Messer;

District 7 -- Senior Policy Advisor & Staff Counsel Andrea Martin for Congressman Andre Carson;

District 8 -- Legislative Assistant Susey Davis for Congressman Larry Bucshon,

District 9 -- Legislative Assistant Alec Zender for Congressman Trey Hollingsworth.

A snowmobiler association member from Indiana – also in Washington, D.C. -- was engaged in a discussion about passenger rail. The individual is interested in learning more about RPA.

## Editorial and Commentary

# Let's Bring Back America's Passenger Railroads

By W. Dennis Hodges, Vice President, Business Relations

When President Abraham Lincoln took on the funding and implementation of the intercontinental railroad, he probably could not have envisioned what such a project would do for the United States. Yet, during the middle of the Civil War (1861-1864), he boldly said, "This is a project that this nation must pursue."



W. Dennis Hodges

That project connected the eastern United States with the west and, along its path, was the influence that built some of the world's greatest cities and communities. Chicago and Northwest Indiana would not be what they are today had it not been for the trains that brought massive amounts of freight and people to this area. In addition, the incomparable South Shore Railroad has been an amazing economic stimulus in its ability to move people from northern Indiana communities to the major marketplace of Chicago.

Leading up to the time of Indiana's 100th anniversary in 1916 - Indiana enjoyed more passenger train miles than anywhere else in the world. With 500 passenger trains passing through it each day, Union Station in Indianapolis was the largest rail station to accommodate the transportation system. Unfortunately, that designation was lost some 35 years later.

Even though automobile travelers are routinely frustrated by delays that come from chronic highway congestion and construction, and air travelers are routinely frustrated by chronic delays caused by security concerns and long lines, our state and national lawmakers and elected officials are not moved to add a modern, 21<sup>st</sup> century passenger rail system to the transportation mix.

Doug Ross, an editor with the *Northwest Indiana Times*, wrote in a 2010 editorial, "Who gets punished for all this mayhem in transportation? The traveler who opts for the convenience, efficiency and security of passenger rail -- Amtrak."

He adds, "What should be our main line, service on the 'Cardinal' and 'Hoosier State,' linking Chicago with Indianapolis and Cincinnati via Dyer, is restricted to one southbound train in the evening and one northbound train in the morning. But it does not have to be that way.

Going on its 26<sup>th</sup> year, the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance, formerly the Indiana High Speed Rail Association, has long

believed that a newer and faster set of trains can accomplish transportation efficiencies. At speeds from 79 to 110 mph, this newer version of trains can more economically move passengers and smaller freight parcels to and from Indiana's growing marketplaces and connect Hoosier travelers with many more communities and tourism centers in the Midwest.

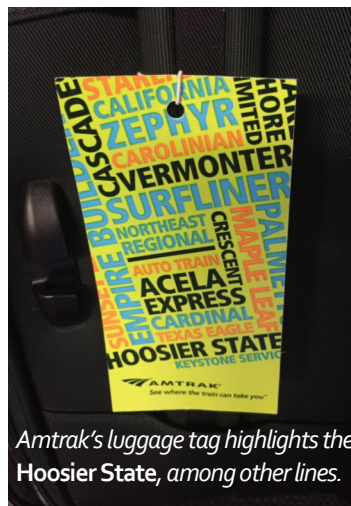
In the editorial, Ross wrote, "I would urge all those concerned that Indiana be properly served by modern rail passenger service contact U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky and U.S. Sens. (Todd Young) and (Joe Donnelly) to let them know that funding for Amtrak and the high-speed rail corridor must be viewed as a (transportation) priority."

Freight rail traffic, which crisscross this state every day to bring us much of the products we enjoy our quality of life, should also be supported. After all, they deliver the material that allows Indiana's great manufacturers to produce so many of the products we often take for granted.

While the national passenger rail carrier is very much a major part of the landscape on the east and west coasts of the United States, it is something of an anomaly in Indiana. Yet, the passenger trains that do serve Indiana (including the *Capitol Limited*, *Cardinal*, and the *Hoosier State*) bring tens of thousands of people annually from Chicago and the eastern United States to serve some of Indiana's larger communities.

Ross continues, "What could be more anti-American than the U.S. government wanting to cut out or reduce the nation's passenger rail system? It just boggles the mind that (any) administration and Congress can't see the tremendous importance of passenger rail in this country." Why would they want to take something away so vital to the American economy? It should also be noted that passenger rail transportation is critical to the defense of the United States.

In 2002, the Chinese minister of transportation told me that when necessary, a new system of high speed trains will be used to transport that country's military from border to border. When looking at China's rail map, one can easily see that option in place. Earlier in history, rail transportation in Europe was credited as being among the reasons why, during World War II, the Western Allies were able to defeat Nazi Germany. Can our business and government leaders be so naive as to believe that a rail system here could not serve (cont'd)



Amtrak's luggage tag highlights the Hoosier State, among other lines.

("Let's Bring Back America's Railroads" continued from page 5)  
a similar purpose?

When President Bush pulled all the civilian planes out of the sky on Sept. 11, 2001, America was vulnerable. There was no backup in place, no transportation policy to accommodate the thousands of travelers stranded far from home or work. An efficient passenger rail system could have then been the alternative needed to have prevented the inconvenience and the billions of dollars lost to the American economy over those four agonizing days.

In hindsight, a modern and efficient passenger rail economy could and should be part and parcel of a travel package that adds to our quality of life, enhances life sciences and technology, and gives the traveler still another reasonable option for moving about in Indiana and the Midwest.

Indiana once led the nation in passenger rail miles. The state also was a formidable leader in the design and development of most transportation modes. On May 10, Indiana's passenger rail advocates will celebrate National Train Day -- in spirit only -- with the mantra, "Let us bring back a great rail system to this state and to the Midwest."

## INDOT Makes \$125 Million Available for Life-Saving Rail Overpass Projects

By Donald Yehle, Editor, *All Aboard Indiana*


To save lives at railroad crossings, the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) is making \$125 million available for "high-priority railroad safety projects on local roads statewide through the agency's new "Local Trax" matching grant program."


**Local Trax provides state matching funds for use at railroad grade separations, crossing closures, and other safety enhancements at railroad intersections with local roads. Indiana cities, towns, and counties may apply for these funds beginning in May through August 31.**

"Eliminating at-grade rail crossings on local roads makes our transportation network safer, reduces congestion, and better connects our communities," says Governor Eric J. Holcomb.

**In 2017, 12 Hoosiers lost their lives at railroad intersections. There were also 47 injuries and 101 crashes at railroad crossings last year, according to Indiana Operation Lifesaver.**

Four meetings were scheduled around Indiana last month to explain program details, which will provide a 20/80 funding split -- 20 percent funding for land acquisition and construction by local governments and 80 percent by the state, INDOT said.


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"The railroad industry is pleased to collaborate with state and local governments on this very important issue," said Kristin Bevil, president, Indiana Railway Coalition.

Funding authorization is part of Indiana's long-term, sustainable road funding plan approved a year ago April by Indiana's General Assembly and signed by Governor Holcomb.

## Next IPRA Board Meeting Set for Thursday, May 17

By Steve Coxhead

As set out in our by-laws, Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance (IPRA) Board meetings normally occur on the third Thursday of the month, in odd months.

On that basis, a tentative schedule for the remainder of 2018 would be:

May 17  
July 19  
September 20  
November 15

Board meetings are open to all IPRA members. Those planning to attend are requested to respond to the meeting announcement so that we may plan for adequate facilities.

**The May 17 meeting will be held in Central Indiana, most likely Lafayette or Indianapolis.**

Please watch future editions of *All Aboard Indiana*, and your e-mail, for more information on times and locations.



## State Chamber Learns Mass Transit, Passenger Rail Investment Are Key Infrastructure Issues

By Steve Coxhead

Development is not a "zero sum" game. There should be no attempt to divert state road funding to rail. In general, rail funding needs and sources should be evaluated and implemented independently of road funding.

**Some rail development, particularly commuter systems, can be funded on a regional basis. Intercity rail will require state participation (development of new funding sources) and Federal funding (as available).**

South Shore Commuter Railroad Expansion is a driver of economic growth in Northwest Indiana. In-progress and desired projects include double tracking and signals improvement; extension to Dyer (Westlake Expansion); extension to Crown Point and Lowell, and extension to Valparaiso

**The South Shore is using local funding as a match for Federal dollars. There may be legitimate instances, such as proposed by the Holcomb Administration for the South Shore, where there is some interaction between the State and the South Shore.**

Improvement of service in *Hoosier State* Corridor. This is a driver of economic growth and significant quality-of-life enhancer in Chicago-Indianapolis corridor. The initial need is for double frequencies – two trains, in each direction, each day, on a reasonable schedule – to connect Indianapolis with Chicago.

**Another need is a 7-day *Cardinal* -- schedule uncoupled from that of *Hoosier State* – to connect Chicago with Washington, D.C., and hopefully, once again New York City.**

*Hoosier State* and *Cardinal* train service must be improved to generate enough fare box revenue to cover operating expense. State of Indiana should participate financially in startup costs of additional *Hoosier State* trains as an investment.

**Northern Indiana & Ohio Passenger Rail Project will connect Chicago with Columbus, Ohio, via Fort Wayne. Local support has been significant enough to raise funding to begin Environmental Impact Study work.**

The orthopedic manufacturing community based in Warsaw views modern rail connections with Chicago as necessary to expand its business. Northern Indiana communities have commissioned their own studies describing the benefits of this rail connection. The State should work aggressively with Northern Indiana communities to obtain necessary Federal funding.

**Editor's Note: IPRA is a member of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce. The above information has been submitted to the Chamber's Infrastructure Committee for its consideration.**

## Riding the Rails

By Donald Yehle

**VISIT INDIANA BY TRAIN** – The 2018 Indiana State Highway map carries a small advertisement supporting Amtrak's *Hoosier State* line. "The Amtrak *Hoosier State* train provides exceptional passenger rail service between Chicago and Indianapolis with stops in Crawfordsville, Lafayette, Rensselaer and Dyer," says the ad, which also features a map showing connecting Indiana passenger rail stops.



**FORD MOTOR TO BUY MICHIGAN CENTRAL DEPOT?** – Ford Motor is considering purchasing Detroit's Michigan Central Depot. A *Detroit News* article published in March said while

no deal is imminent, the automaker's move into the long-vacant train station "would simultaneously resurrect the most visible symbol of Detroit's decline, and make the 114-year-old automaker a major player in the city's rebirth."

The train depot is located near the old Tiger Stadium site, which itself has been resurrected as a youth ballpark. Both the Michigan Central depot and the old Tiger Stadium are in Corktown, the Motor City's oldest neighborhood.

**RPA MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS PUBLISHED** -- "Equipping individual citizen-advocates with the knowledge and data they need to educate the general public and elected & appointed officials about intercity passenger rail's role in a 21st century multimodal transportation" network is the mission of the Rail Passengers Association, also known as the National Association of Railroad Passengers.

The group's vision statement is to bring together passengers and partners to create 'A Connected America.'

**YEHLE ELECTED TO RPA POSITION** – The Rail Passengers Association has elected Donald Yehle to serve as its South Carolina delegate. Yehle, who continues as editor of *All Aboard Indiana*, relocated to South Carolina two years ago. Don this month enters his 3<sup>rd</sup> year on the board of the Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance and holds memberships in the Midwest High Speed Rail Association and All Aboard Ohio.

**VICE PRESIDENT OF RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT** – Mark A. Colucci has been hired to "create, direct and execute (*cont'd*)

("Riding the Rails" continued from page 7) a broad range of resource development and fundraising activities for the Rail Passengers Association (RPA). At an informal breakfast gathering during RPA's spring advocacy event, Mark introduced himself to six IPRA members – Andrea Ditto, Duane Chattin, Mike Ditto, Phil Streby, Tod Bassler, and Donald Yehle.

**NARP'S NEW DC OFFICE** – The Rail Passenger Association's new office is at 1200 G. Street, NW, Suite 240, Washington, D.C. – located adjacent to Metro's Metro Center Station. A multi-function conference room, and workspace for volunteers are featured. IPRA members visited the space in April, and learned of the new communications and technology capabilities at RPA's national office.

## A Peek Into History: Tour the Presidents' Railcar

Video hosted by *Trains* magazine

Take a step back in time with this video tour of the railcar used by Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower. Click the image below to be taken to the *Trains* website to view the video.



## 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](http://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](http://www.indianahighspeedrail.org)

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