

# THE INDIANA PASSENGER LETTER

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INDIANA ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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Dear INDARP members:

Please accept my sincerest apology for the long delay in communicating with you. As many of you know, my mother had been very ill during 1996, which meant that INDARP matters had to take a back seat to more important personal affairs.

I'd like to bring you up to date on the status of INDARP and the condition of rail passenger service in Indiana.

The situation in Indiana is gloomy at present. We have hit a low in the level of rail passenger service in our state. The loss of the Hoosier State, the dismal Cardinal schedule through Indiana, the loss of the Broadway Limited and reinstatement of the Three Rivers coach only overnight train, diminishing importance of Amtrak's Beech Grove shop facility and the downgrading of station services at Elkhart - leaves us to wonder what future if any, rail passenger service has in our state. This is compounded by Amtrak's continuing financial struggle, which means that any future rail passenger plans will have to be supported by funding sources at the state and local levels, something which to date has seemed quite impossible in Indiana.

There are some brighter spots on the horizon. Our state department of transportation (INDOT) is finally showing some interest in passenger service after years of ignoring it. The State of Indiana is participating in a study of Midwestern rail passenger service, along with many neighboring states, Amtrak, and the federal government. The study seeks to find ways to improve services in the Midwest. What this study will recommend is anyone's guess, but I doubt that it will recommend new services. I expect that it will concentrate on improving current Midwestern services, something which is important, but does nothing to reinstate Chicago to Indianapolis corridor service.

Also in development, the Indiana High Speed Rail Association is conducting a high speed rail study. While I don't have much information on the study, they apparently have legislative funding support to conduct the study. In the past, I have not been a supporter of high speed rail, because I thought most of it was pie-in-the-sky dreaming. New rights of way, with trains running at the speeds that they are in Europe is unrealistic in the US at this time. In addition, high speed rail works in Europe mainly because construction is backed and supported by governments through financial backing - necessary for such huge undertakings. For anyone to expect that the private sector could finance such projects in this country is foolish. We are encouraged that IHSRA appears to have moved towards the more realistic approach of supporting incremental improvements to current services that are more likely to be funded. We at INDARP applaud their efforts in getting the attention of the legislature and perhaps INDOT as well. This is a much more realistic approach and one that could work, if the necessary financial support can be found. I've always maintained that if we had a Hoosier State that departed Indianapolis and Chicago at passenger convenient times, and had a schedule of 3 ½ to 4 hours, and was reliable (both equipment and ontime performance) then the service would be successful! Many of you will remember when the Hoosier State was first introduced in 1980. It was described as one of Amtrak's most successful new services by then Amtrak spokesman Chris Knapton. People rode the train then and they would ride it again, under the right circumstances.

It also seems that the Indianapolis Star has had a change of heart concerning passenger train service. The newspaper ran two editorials in support of a high speed rail study and of restoration of Hoosier State service in early February. The editorials are reproduced on the following pages with the permission of the Indianapolis Star. The editorials are excellent and show that those who wrote them did some good research on the subject.

If INDARP continues to exist, I believe that our main goal should be to get the State of Indiana involved in supporting intercity rail passenger service. In order to do this, we need to be more involved in the legislative process and the process of educating our elected officials, not only at the state level but at the local level. We all know people will ride the train, but they don't!

What is necessary to restore Hoosier State service? A new connection into Chicago; power switches at Crawfordsville; and equipment. Why not a set of the new Danish IC3 DMU equipment currently on tour through parts of the country? This type of equipment would be perfect for the Hoosier State route. Flexible, inexpensive to operate, dependable. On a good schedule, with a few improvements and new equipment, I think our state officials would be stunned by the passenger counts. It is a goal that I think could be achieved.

With all this in mind, we must move on to whether INDARP has a future, or whether there is enough an interest in this group to keep it going. I would like to see INDARP continue in existence. In order for this to happen, we must have more people involved in "operations". There are a lot of areas where people can participate. Newsletter production and distribution. Legislative and educational activities. Meetings and events. There is a lot of work involved and only a few people to handle it - too few to handle it properly!

I have stated previously that I could not continue on as President of INDARP, due to personal and work responsibilities. We need some people to step forward and become involved, in order for INDARP to continue to exist. We need new members and we need a reason for them to join and be involved. In my opinion, just producing a newsletter is not reason for INDARP to continue to exist. Our newsletter should be a by-product of our work and efforts. The future of INDARP is up to YOU - our members!

After several meetings and phone calls with members of our board of directors, we have decided on the following course of action for 1997. I will continue as President and keep the group going until my employer decides to move me out of state or until January, 1998 when we will hold an election. This will be your only INDARP newsletter this year. We are currently working with the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, who have offered to send their newsletter to INDARP members during this year, and to allow us the use of one page in it to pass along any Indiana news. Additionally, no dues will be collected for 1997. Those who were paid members in 1996 will continue to be members until January 1998, when a decision about the future of our group will be made.

The officers and board members of INDARP will continue to work on efforts to support rail service in Indiana. Although you will not be receiving a regular INDARP newsletter - that doesn't mean that INDARP doesn't exist anymore. News items should continue to be sent to our post office box. I also urge INDARP members who are not members of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) to join that group. The work it does on behalf of rail passenger service and transit in Washington and elsewhere is essential! Their address is: NARP, 900 Second Street, NE, Suite 308, Washington, DC 20002-3557.

Thank you for your patience.

Paul D. Arden

## LEGISLATION:

S.436. the Intercity Passenger Rail Trust Fund Act of 1997 is a bill introduced in the Senate by Senators Bill Roth (R-DE) and Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY). It would provide Amtrak with a secure source of funding for capital improvements for five years. The bill would divert one half cent of the 4.3 cents gas tax currently going to deficit reduction into a trust fund for Amtrak, providing about \$750 million per year for capital improvements.

Please write Senator Richard Lugar and Dan Coates and urge them to support this bill. It is very important - if Amtrak does not get adequate funding this year, the company faces bankruptcy.

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## 21st century trains

The Indianapolis Star  
February 8, 1997

**T**here is a way to reduce stagnating congestion and fatal accidents on Indiana's ever more crowded roads and highways.

The Indiana High Speed Rail Association seeks the creation of a legislative study commission for a network that would make Indianapolis a high-speed rail center between several Midwestern cities, including Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Columbus and Toledo, Ohio, and the Southern cities of Louisville and Memphis.

Members of the IHSRA, an independently supported, private, non-profit organization, testified this week before the state Senate Roads and Transportation Committee. The group

### With increasing congestion on state highways, the time for developing high-speed rail lines has come.

wants to amend Senate Bill 460.

As it currently stands, SB 460 would make \$30,000 previously authorized by the General Assembly available to the Interstate Rail Passenger Advisory Council. The proposed amendment would also give IHSRA access to some of that money to further develop the high-speed rail concept.

The bill is sponsored by state Sen. Sue Landske, R-Cedar Lake, and on its face doesn't appear overly ambitious. The state Department of Transportation has already set aside \$100,000 to conduct its own study of this idea.

Later this month, members of the IHSRA plan to meet with members of the Indiana congressional delegation. They envision high-speed trains whisking passengers at more than 100 mph from airport to airport, from downtown to downtown. High-speed trains are in use in several countries and it appears such super trains will soon be a reality in the United States.

Indiana, which prides itself as being the crossroads of America, should not be left behind.

It won't, if IHSRA has anything to say about it. Next month, the organization will announce a 10-year plan to raise \$2.5 billion for a 750-mile high-speed passenger rail network originating in Chicago. The proposal seeks to have a network in place linking Indianapolis and Chicago should that city be awarded the Summer Olympic Games in 2008 or 2012.

Florida plans to build a high-speed rail network connecting its major cities, airports and tourist attractions.

In the Midwest, Michigan leads the way in high-speed train development. The Wolverine state is spending nearly \$3 million a year on a corridor between Detroit and Chicago that includes a section of northwest Indiana. Amtrak proposes to operate a 110 mph train between Kalamazoo, Mich., and Porter, Ind., later this year.

Developers envision passengers boarding a train in their home cities, checking their luggage through to final destinations, and stepping off in a terminal at the hub city, ready to board an airplane.

In the initial stage, Amtrak lines would be upgraded to handle 125 mph trains.

"By replacing short-hop jet flights at hubs like O'Hare, high-speed rail can free up many landing slots, eliminating the need for airport expansion and new airports," said Indianapolis attorney William L. Schlosser, IHSRA's vice president for legislative affairs.

With ever-increasing congestion on state highways, the time for developing high-speed rail lines has come. Such trains are safer than cars or planes and would help attract consumer and tourist dollars to Indianapolis.

Rail lines running between Downtown Indianapolis and the airport are already in place. Studying the feasibility of this idea seems to be the next logical step.

The Indianapolis Star  
February 8, 1997

## Improvements now

**W**hile 21st century plans for a new rail system are fine, the most immediate need is the improvement of existing passenger rail service in Indiana.

To that end Indiana is finally working with Amtrak to study the viability of some quick Midwest routes that can offer travelers a good third alternative to congested roads and airways.

Indiana is participating in a study with Amtrak to develop a business plan to develop faster and more frequent service for the routes that radiate from its big Union Station terminal in Chicago.

"The study will determine the potential competitiveness of medium-distance routes between major city pairs, as well as the efficiencies offered by a multi-state approach," Amtrak said in December.

Before the decimation of Indiana service in the last two years, there were 20 trains a week to and from Indianapolis and Chicago. There were the daily Hoosier State and the Cardinal three times a week that continued southbound to Cincinnati and Washington, D.C.

The Hoosier State was cut back for several months and then discontinued. The Cardinal was rescheduled. It now stops in Indianapolis in the dark hours of the early morning.

It is unfortunate that the administration of former Gov. Evan Bayh and previous Indiana General Assemblies did not show any initiative in working out some form of support to keep the Hoosier State running between Chicago and Indianapolis as well as Crawfordsville, Lafayette, Rensselaer and Dyer.

Neighboring Illinois and Michigan worked with Amtrak to save similar passenger trains that link Chicago to cities in Michigan, including Detroit, and to cities in southern Illinois as well as St. Louis.

Indiana now must work to improve rail service as a viable alternative to highway travel and the rising toll of auto congestion.

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