



# ProRail Nebraska

<http://www.trainweb.org/prorailnebraska/>

## COMMENTS ON LEGISLATIVE BILL 747

**BY DAVID PURDY  
PRESIDENT, PRORAIL NEBRASKA  
January 31, 2012**

Good afternoon. My name is David Purdy. I own and live in a house at 16329 Webster Street, Omaha. I am a resident of Senator Scott Laughtenbaugh's district. More pertinently, I am president of ProRail Nebraska, an organization that exists to advocate for improved passenger rail service in Nebraska. Our work is supported by membership dues and individual contributions. We receive no money from railroads. We get our message to the people of Nebraska by meetings, our newsletter and by our web site.

The immediate subject of today's hearing is the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission. This is an interstate body, composed of eleven midwestern states. The purposes of the Commission are to promote improvements in passenger rail and to coordinate interaction between the states in that regard. Nebraska joined the Commission when it was formed. Nebraska is still a member, although it has not paid its dues for the last two years.

An important function of the Commission is to keep the States informed. To that end, members of the Commission are one representative of the Governor, two Senators and one representative from the private sector. The members meet twice a year.

Nebraska does not have a great deal to say at the meetings, since we have no State initiated or supported passenger rail activities. Maybe that embarrasses us and is the reason why the State is frequently absent from meetings and conference calls. Other States in the Commission do have activities to report, and they may affect Nebraska.

For instance, among its many other intercity passenger rail projects, Illinois will start construction this spring of a link between Quad Cities, on the border with Iowa. Iowa, in turn, is performing engineering design of a link between that point and Omaha. Although their design includes activities in Nebraska, we have little voice in the design, since Nebraska has not even written in support of the project let alone put up any funding. If Nebraska would participate, it might be possible to move the terminal to Lincoln, where it would serve many more Nebraskans.

A second project that should be of concern to Nebraska is possible Omaha/Lincoln service to Kansas City. Missouri is developing a transportation master plan which might include this project. A group in Saint Joseph, Missouri is advocating this project.

Kansas City is positioning itself to become a passenger rail hub. It already has direct service to Saint Louis, and by extension to Chicago. There is also a plan under way to provide passenger service to Oklahoma City and thence to Dallas.

Nebraska should continue its participation in the Commission and attend its meetings so we know about, and have as voice in these projects and many others in all the other member states.

LB 747 should be defeated, and Nebraska should pay their dues so we can remain members in good standing of the Midwest Interstate passenger Rail Commission. The dues are very small in comparison to the benefit received. Instead of passing LB 747, dues for the Commission should be included in the budget