

Testimony in Support of LB 769

Transportation and Telecommunications Committee Submitted on Behalf of ProRail Nebraska January 23, 2018

TO: Members of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee

RE: LB 769 – Adopt the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact

First, I want to thank Senators Quick, Harr, Kolowski, and Walz for introducing LB 769. My appreciation is also extended to Senator Friesen and to the rest of this committee for their work on behalf of the citizens of Nebraska.

I am here today representing ProRail Nebraska, a non-profit advocacy group focused on increased passenger rail service as well as other public transportation needs within the state.

At its inception, Nebraska was a founding member of the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact (MIPRC). Nebraska took this bold step because members of the legislature recognized there were benefits to cooperating with other states. MIPRC provides a source for regional passenger rail planning as well as multistate information-sharing and contacts. It is a forum for discussion and developing essential technical and professional contacts in other states such as Kansas and North Dakota with similar rail needs and challenges.

As some of you are aware, Amtrak (the National Passenger Railroad Corporation) daily serves the state with a pair of passenger trains (The California Zephyr) operating between Chicago and Emeryville, CA. These trains stop at five stations (Omaha, Lincoln, Hastings, Holdrege and McCook) and in 2017 had 55,693 passenger arrivals and departures (up from FY16). This benefit is in addition to the approximately 5.6 million dollars spent by Amtrak within the state for wages, goods, and services.

If we do not re-adopt the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact, we will be sitting on the outside looking in. All of you have sat on boards of various organizations. I am sure you recognize the importance of having a seat at the table; of being a part of the discussion. Decisions are made by those who show up. If we allow ourselves to be removed from the MIPRC, we will no longer have a seat at the table.

Please vote to advance LB 769 from your committee.

Thank You.

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