



# ProRail Nebraska News

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## ProRail Nebraska President's Message – Dave Purdy

It looks like exciting times ahead for passenger rail in the nation and in Nebraska. The pace of developing and implementing new projects is increasing. Recently, the New Mexico *Rail Runner* had a successful start-up. Commuter rail in the Salt Lake City, Portland, Ore. and Seattle areas is expanding. Illinois intercity rail traffic is increasing.

Iowa is an interesting—and to Nebraska—an important case. The governors of Illinois and Iowa have signed a memorandum of understanding covering rail service between Chicago and Dubuque, and between Chicago and Iowa City. They will work together to make these services happen. The Iowa City case is especially pertinent to Nebraska, since there are already plans to extend service to Des Moines. From Des Moines, it is only a short jump to Council Bluffs—and with only a little help from Nebraska, to Omaha.

Our neighbors in Missouri are also active. A group in St. Joseph is campaigning to obtain funds from the Missouri Legislature to study the feasibility of passenger rail service between Kansas City and Omaha. Their campaign has had its advances and retreats, but we hope for its success. Again, a little cooperation from Nebraska would help!

ProRail Nebraska is doing its bit to help these efforts materialize. Recently, ProRail representatives met with the newly named Director of the Nebraska Department of Roads, **Monty Frederickson**, to introduce ourselves and encourage him to cooperate with our neighboring states in efforts to expand and strengthen rail passenger service.

## ProRail Nebraska Membership Meeting September 19 at North Platte

The fall membership meeting will be held in conjunction with North Platte's Railfest Weekend September 18-20. A number of events planned for the weekend include tours of Union Pacific Railroad's huge Bailey Yard complex, including the new observation tower and visitors center. Union Pacific's 4-8-4 steam locomotive no. 844 as well as other heritage equipment will be on display.

About 15,000 people are expected to attend the 3-day event.

PRN president **Dave Purdy** of Omaha will chair the meeting, beginning at 9 a.m. at the Depot Restaurant, 520 North Jeffers, North Platte. The meeting is free and open to the general public. Snacks and beverages will be available at 8:30 a.m. An inexpensive, optional lunch will be available about noon, after the meeting.

Program speakers and discussion topics::

- **Ray Lineweber**, State Legislative Director for the United Transportation Union, will speak regarding the Midwest High Speed Rail Compact and the upcoming 2010 Nebraska legislative session.
- **Jeff Meyer**, Union Pacific Railroad's Amtrak Operations Officer.

- **Roger Clark** of Grand Island, PRN board member and a director on the board of the National Assn. of Railroad Passengers.
- **Bob Rynerson** of Colorail will discuss the proposal to restore the Amtrak *Pioneer* .
- Current plans and studies regarding proposed Midwest Corridor service originating in Chicago.
- Presentation and discussion regarding a study of the feasibility of extending Amtrak passenger service north from Kansas City, Mo. to Omaha via St. Joseph, Mo., Falls City and Nebraska City.

The Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission approved 11 rail projects totaling \$201 million to upgrade rail passenger service between St. Louis and Kansas City. These projects are in partnership with Union Pacific Railroad and are being submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration seeking a slice of the \$8 billion in stimulus funding available for high speed rail projects.

ProRail Nebraska and the Great Plains NRHS will share a booth at Cody Park for Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and a table at the train show Saturday and Sunday.

Carpooling to North Platte will be available for Omaha and Lincoln area members and friends. Contact Clyde Anderson [clydelanderson@cox.net](mailto:clydelanderson@cox.net) for carpooling information.

Spending one or more nights at North Platte? Following are telephone numbers for North Platte motels. (The Rodeway Inn is located only two blocks from Cody Park. Some motels are offering a special Railfest rate).

Rodeway Inn (308) 532-2313  
 Comfort Inn (308) 532-6144

Quality Inn (308) 532-9090  
 Hampton Inn (308) 534-6000

**PRN Footnotes:**

PrpRail Nebraska officers, directors and members express appreciation to **Clyde Anderson** for his thorough updating of the PRN web site <http://www.trainweb.org/prorailnebraska/> A website is a key component of an organization’s efforts and responsibility to inform its members and to project its purpose to the public as a whole, and to a wide array of passenger rail advocates across the country.

When you have access to a 2010 calendar, or an event planner, pencil in the date and location of the next ProRail Nebraska membership meeting: February 13, Ashland Country Club, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Plenty of time for details, but save this date!

**Is a High-speed Train Omaha-Bound?**

**All Aboard! More Passenger Rail Lines May Soon Cross Iowa**

For ProRail Nebraska members and persons interested in, and supportive of, additional rail passenger service reaching Nebraska--and who do not have access to the Omaha World-Herald--separate stories in June and July touted the interest of Iowa Governor **Chet Culver** in expansion of passenger rail service across Iowa, which would benefit Nebraska.

In a June 25 article, Culver was quoted: High speed passenger train service between Chicago and Omaha could eventually become a reality. He said a route between Chicago and Iowa City could be up and running within two years. If that proves popular with the public, then the route would continue through Des Moines, Council Bluffs and into Omaha.

Southern Iowa currently is served by Amtrak’s **California Zephyr**, which has stops in Nebraska at Omaha, Lincoln, Hastings, Holdrege and McCook.

Excerpts from the World-Herald article of July 17, again quoting out Iowa Governor Culver regarding “more passenger rail lines (may) cross Iowa.”:

“Iowa must vie with other states for a share of \$8 billion in rail funding, which the Governor intends to win by lobbying transportation officials and teaming with the state’s neighbors. Winning federal money will not be easy, thought, as 40 states have submitted 278 plans that total \$102 billion in federal subsidies.”

In Iowa, the initial focus would be on two lines from Chicago—one reaching to Dubuque and the other to Iowa City. State officials hope trains could run on those lines by spring 2012 or sooner. Culver and state transportation officials have called for an Iowa City line eventually to be extended west to Des Moines and Omaha. That effort suffered a setback recently with word that Amtrak won’t complete a study of the extension until next year.

Studies by Iowa and Illinois for the full route (Chicago-Quad Cities-Iowa City) completed in 2008 estimated annual ridership at about 187,000 passengers, based on two daily round trips and if improvements would allow top speeds at 79 mph. Travel time could be five hours for the 240-mile route.

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### **Midwest Governors Play Catch-up With High Speed Rail Advocates**

Eight governors from Midwest states announced a pact July 27 to seek federal stimulus funds to establish a high speed rail network with Chicago as the hub. The Obama Administration in April identified such a network as one of 10 candidates eligible for a portion of \$8 billion provided for high speed rail by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

In forming the pact, the governors, by accident or design, are mimicking ongoing efforts by the not-for-profit Midwest High Speed Rail Association, which since 1993 has advocated a Chicago-based high speed rail network with top speeds of 220 mph.

Governors from Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio gathered in Chicago at the Midwest High Speed Rail Summit, signing a memorandum of understanding to jointly seek federal funds for HSR. Other states in the group include Minnesota, Indiana and Missouri; the governors of these three states signed the memorandum of understanding prior to the meeting.

The participants will establish a multistate steering group to coordinate the region’s work associated with all ARRA applications. Such coordination could turn a potential liability-numerous state players—into a political asset if the group maintains its cohesion.

Some observers have asked the question: Where was Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman? Visible emphasis has been on seeking federal stimulus funds to improve rural Nebraska highways.

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### **Getting Rails on Track – Gil Carmichael, chairman of the board of directors of the Intermodal Transportation Institute at the University of Denver; was Federal Railroad Administrator from 1989 to 1993. (Excerpt from Journal of Commerce article).**

President Obama’s proposed high-speed, intercity passenger rail network is a major step toward creating a sustainable, ethical, 21<sup>st</sup> century solution to our nation’s badly congested, polluted and eroding transportation system. High-speed intercity passenger rail is a logical and necessary next step forward from President Eisenhower’s massive Interstate Highway System of the last century.

If we are to alleviate highway congestion, develop new energy alternatives and improve economic conditions, our rail network must reliably move people and freight. By 2050, there will be 400 million residents in the U.S. Population density will continue to be a mobility problem. For this reason, we must build “Interstate

2.0”—20,000 to 30,000 miles of high-speed rail in partnership with the private freight railroads and state transportation departments.

The Interstate Highway system was paid for with a highway trust fund gas tax that is outdated and expiring. We should support the new intermodal freight and passenger transportation system with an “Intermodal Trust Fund”, one that taxes and supports all four modes of transportation. We should have an “Intermodal Freight Trust Fund” and an “Intermodal Passenger Trust Fund.”

This efficient, ethical transportation system will be safe, will not pollute and can be environmentally benign; it will not waste fuel, will not cost too much and will not destroy more green fields. By building “Interstate 2.0,” the U.S. can have a better transportation system than Europe has built or Asia is building, and one the freight industry, railroads and shippers alike, can depend on and grow with

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**High Speed Rail Would Turbocharge Midwest Economy – excerpt from article in Chicago Business – author: Richard Harnish**

High speed trains would weave the Midwest into an economic powerhouse. Richard Longworth, a fellow at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, states that higher speeds and tighter connections are important to reviving the Midwest economy. The Midwest’s powerful resources need to be connected, and only high speed trains can do the job. An example: Chicago and St. Louis are roughly 300 miles apart. That’s also the distance between Paris and Lyon, cities with about the same respective populations as Chicago and St. Louis. The French launched the TGV on this route in 1981. Today, the TGV fleet carries more than 18,000 people a day between Paris and Lyon. That is three times as many daily travelers as between Chicago and St. Louis by all means of transportation.