



# ProRail Nebraska NEWS

www.trainweb.org/prorailnebraska

ProRail Nebraska, Inc.  
3915 Apple St.  
Lincoln, NE 68503

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## Nebraska Commuter Rail study underway

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In early October, Duane Eitel, Lincoln, Chair of the Nebraska Transit and Rail Advisory Council (NTRAC), announced that the NTRAC Corridor Feasibility Study will finally begin. Wilbur Smith Associates (WSA) of San Francisco was selected from a field of five consulting firms to conduct the study for the council.

The council and WSA will hold public meetings in January 2003 to gain input on the project. Public opinion will help to determine demand for a public transportation service and will reveal the expectations of potential users.

On November 17<sup>th</sup>, NTRAC announced three corridors that will be studied for commuter service:

- Norfolk-Columbus-Omaha;
- Kearney-Grand Island-York-Lincoln-Omaha; and

- South Sioux City-Blair-Omaha-Nebraska City.

If the study concludes that a particular service is feasible, it will outline the next steps that should be taken to implement that service, including suggestions for necessary legislation. The consultant and council must complete the study by January 1, 2004. NTRAC will then report its findings to the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee of the Nebraska Legislature.

U.S. Congressman Doug Bereuter was the point person for appropriating the federal funds for this study and ProRail Nebraska was instrumental in getting the study for commuter rail service underway.



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### Dan Lutz Rail Advocacy Award initiated at Fairbury meeting *by Dan Lutz*


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On September 28 at the fall meeting in Fairbury, Past-President Dan Lutz received a framed certificate for honorary life membership, "in recognition of your outstanding contributions to ProRail Nebraska and for your having shown a high degree of dedication to the Corporation and the purposes of the Corporation," signed by President Mike Hromanik and Secretary Dave Purdy. Dan was one of the principal organizers of ProRail Nebraska and served as president from the first annual meeting in 1994 to May of this year. The greater recognition was the establishment of the Dan Lutz Rail Advocacy Award. The award object is a piece of heavy rail, about six inches in length, mounted on a piece of wood. The rail came from the now abandoned Missouri Pacific branch from Lincoln to Union; by coincidence, Dan's property is adjacent to this corridor. President Mike Hromanik had the idea on this unique award and followed the creation of it to the finished product.



*Mike hands Dan the Award inside the restored Fairbury Rock Island Depot - photo by Joe Kelly*

The inscription on a plate affixed to the wooden base: "Let it be known, that beginning on this day, September 28, 2002, ProRail Nebraska will annually recognize those individuals who have made an outstanding effort toward maintaining and expanding rail transportation for the citizens of Nebraska. In appreciation and recognition of the outstanding efforts and contributions made by Dan Lutz since ProRail Nebraska was established, this award will hereby be known as The Dan Lutz Rail Advocacy Award."

The first recipient of this award, for 2002, is Merlin Marlowe of Wilber. Merlin for a number of years "went the extra mile" in these endeavors: At his own expense, he provided postage-paid postcards with a timely message relating to the support of Amtrak and handed them out at PRN meetings making it easy for members to address members of the Nebraska Congressional delegation. Merlin always declined compensation for doing this. He also drove from Wilber to Lincoln on occasion and passed out brochures at the Lincoln Amtrak station, most often late at night (because of the Zephyr's schedule). He also has passed out passenger rail related literature while riding Amtrak trains. Merlin has set an example of an unselfish, dedicated booster and supporter of Amtrak, and certainly fits the mould of a dedicated advocate. 

## Talks with Gunn *by Eric C. Miller*

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I scheduled a meeting with Amtrak CEO and President David Gunn while attending the Rail~Volution conference in Washington DC in early October. His office at Union Station has a lot of railroad memorabilia - directly behind him is a scenic painting of an old F40-PH Amtrak Superliner consist and on the shelf is an HO Amtrak model with an Athearn engine and two Walthers cars, to the left of that is a big, shiny gold "pointless arrow" Amtrak logo. I started the conversation off by asking him about long distance trains, the California Zephyr in particular. He said that he is going to preserve the existing system and that the California Zephyr is as safe as Amtrak is.

We then talked about corridor development - Gunn said he wants to see a successful corridor system in place, perhaps one around Chicago. Instead of using expensive extremely-high-speed equipment like the Acelas, he would like the new corridor to use trains that go about 100-110 miles per hour like the Talgos in California - he quoted them as very practical equipment. Regarding reinstating service between Omaha and Kansas City, Gunn told me that a successful line there would need to be competitive, marketable, use the right equipment, and have a high frequency of trains, at least hourly (not the 1-a-day city pairs). He referred me again to the west coast, the Portland area and south has a notable system in place. Gunn also mentioned that we need to have serious backing from our State government for either system to get in place.

We also talked about the Omaha Burlington Station, he said he would like Amtrak to go back into the Burlington Station, but it would have to be a pretty sweet deal for them to do that. He mentioned the Everett, Washington that serves as fine example of restoration and reuse as an intermodal facility. As our meeting concluded, Gunn said that the \$1.2 billion for FY2003 will repay their loans, get the damaged cars back into service, and bring Amtrak back to becoming a quality system that then could expand routes.

Member Bob Ammon of Lincoln recently wrote David Gunn and received a response. Gunn stated in the letter:

"When I assumed my new job as President and Chief Executive Officer of Amtrak, I established as my first priority the mission of providing safe, reliable and efficient transportation to the American public. Unfortunately, as a result of deferred maintenance and repair programs, we are currently experiencing routine equipment failures and a shortage of equipment. This translates to delayed, poorly maintained trains, and frustrated, disappointed travelers.

"We are now working hard to reverse this situation. Over the coming months we will begin aggressive repairs and overhauls and a return to a regular maintenance schedule for all of our equipment. This will ultimately mean better, more reliable service for our customers and country."



## It's Not Too Early to Renew *by Gary Emenitove*

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Attention ProRail Nebraska Members! The New Year is just a couple months away, and for most of us that means membership renewal. We'd like to suggest that you consider renewing now. There are two good reasons: (1) It will be one less thing you have to worry about at the busy year-end and (2) It will save ProRail Nebraska the postage expense of sending you a renewal notice.

Courtesy of Past President Dan Lutz, we'd like to point out some of the accomplishments of your organization:

1. Our involvement in the ongoing effort to establish a commuter rail line in the Lincoln/Omaha corridor.
2. Our continuing communications with the Unicameral's Transportation and Telecommunications Committee
3. Our support to retain short line railroad service in Nebraska
4. Our contact with State and Federal elected officials regarding Amtrak
5. Our leafleting Amtrak stations across the state (through the efforts of member Merlin Marlowe and others)
6. Our communication with and involvement in the Midwest Regional (High Speed) Rail Initiative (through the efforts of member Joe Kelly in particular)
7. Our involvement in the complex issue of urban mass transit in Omaha
8. Our involvement in efforts to preserve and promote future use of the Burlington Station in Omaha (through the efforts of member Eric Miller)
9. Our continuously having a PRN member in a NARP Region 10 Director position (originally Dan Lutz and today Roger Clark)

Remember, membership benefits include three meetings each year, our quarterly newsletter, the PRN web site (<http://www.trainweb.org/prorailnebraska/>), an e-mail discussion group, and the opportunity to become more involved by participating on a committee or at a special event.

Use the handy form below and return it to Secretary Dave Purdy. Thanks!

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I'd like to renew my ProRail Nebraska membership for the year 2003.

\_\_\_\_\_REGULAR MEMBERSHIP \$20 (single membership)  
\_\_\_\_\_STUDENT MEMBERSHIP \$10 (attending school, college, or vocational training program)  
\_\_\_\_\_FAMILY MEMBERSHIP \$30 (all members of your immediate household)

Please enclose your check made out to **ProRail Nebraska**. Mail check and this form to:

**DAVID PURDY, SECRETARY, PRORAIL NEBRASKA, 16329 Webster Street, Omaha, NE 68118**

(Note: Dues are not tax deductible.)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

DAY PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ NIGHT PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

## New PRN Committees Need You *by Gary Emenitove*

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As part of our new By-laws approved at the September 21 membership meeting, ProRail Nebraska has set up new permanent committees. These committees will consist of a chairperson (a member of the Board of Directors) as well as interested PRN members in good standing. Since committee membership is open to all PRN members, **WE NEED YOU!** Please look over the committee descriptions and compare them to your interests and abilities. Our committees and organization depend upon our membership.

If you're interested in serving on one or more committees, please contact President Mike Hromanik, e-mail [mphromanik@leoadaly.com](mailto:mphromanik@leoadaly.com) or phone 402-867-2081.

### Our new committees are:

- **MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE:** responsible for membership recruitment and renewal, creating and maintaining a member handbook, and distributing the membership directory.
- **PROGRAM COMMITTEE:** responsible for planning membership meeting topics, issues, speakers, dates, times, and locations, and working with the Membership Committee in outreach to other like-minded organizations.
- **LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE:** responsible for recommending PRN's lobbyist(s), communicating with our lobbyist(s), monitoring legislative activities, assisting members in legislative matters, and providing liaison with NTRAC, NDOR, and other governmental entities.
- **COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE:** responsible for the ProRail Nebraska newsletter and web site, promoting ProRail Nebraska through contact with other individuals/organizations/media, updating promotional materials (brochures, videos, etc.), and our Speakers Bureau. We are currently in need of a permanent **Editor for the Newsletter**.
- **LONG RANGE/STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE:** responsible for producing five-year plan, recommending long and short term goals to Board, monitoring ProRail Nebraska's nonprofit status, and planning and executing retreats for Board and other members.
- **WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE:** responsible for annual budget planning, participating in the budgetary part of long-range planning, suggesting funding for projects and activities, and reporting sources of additional revenue.
- **ARTICLES AND BY-LAWS COMMITTEE:** responsible for interpreting and making rulings on matters of the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws and proposed amendments to them.
- One other committee was formed, the **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**, consisting of the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Between Board meetings, the Executive Committee may meet and make decisions affecting the Corporation.

According to the By-laws, additional standing committees, temporary committees or task forces may be appointed.

**LOOKING FOR AN UNUSUAL HOLIDAY GIFT?** How about a gift membership to ProRail Nebraska? The recipient will receive all the benefits of PRN membership, including the chance to meet a great group of rail advocates. For more information, contact Gary Emenitove via e-mail at [gary@thejoneses.com](mailto:gary@thejoneses.com) or by phone at (402)551-0510. It's a great way to share your support of rail service with someone, and increase our membership at the same time!



## What about railroads? *Editorial by Richard L. Schmeling (in November 17 Lincoln Journal Star)*

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Almost lost in the recent election hubbub was the announcement by Gov. Mike Johanns of the appointment of the Transportation Task Force for Nebraska's Future. Johanns touts the importance of good highway, rail and air service for Nebraska and an integrated transportation system.

However, by his appointments to the task force, he has stacked the deck in favor of highway interests and predetermined the results of the study. No representative from either of Nebraska's major railroads (Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe) was appointed. No one from Nebraska's important regional railroads was named. No one with an interest in rail passenger or commuter rail was chosen. Gary Ruegg of the Nebraska Transit and Rail Advisory Council, "Mr. Retro Bus" of Omaha MAT, made up his mind that commuter rail will not work between Lincoln and Omaha before the feasibility study has even started.

Highway interests are heavily represented -- Co-Chair Jim Hawks, Highway Supervisor, North Platte; Don Thomas, Lancaster County Engineer; Tom Doyle (former Nebraska Department of Roads) Douglas County Engineer; Terry King, Associated General Contractors (highway paving lobbyist group); Mike Hybl, Nebraska Trucking Association; and Loy Todd, Nebraska New Car and Truck Dealers Association.

Can we expect something new and farsighted from such a group or will it be more pavement, autos, trucks, congestion and pollution with no money for rail projects? Don't hold your breath!



### Next 2<sup>nd</sup> District Special Meeting

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Mark your calendars for January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2003, the date selected for the next ProRail Nebraska Omaha Special Meeting. Members in the Omaha area are encouraged to attend and all others are welcome. The meeting will be held at the **W. Dale Clark Library** in downtown Omaha at 14<sup>th</sup> and Farnam Street and begin at **1:00 PM**. There will be at least one special guest speaker, which may include a Nebraska U.S. Senator or Congressman or a local transit representative. Topics include Amtrak, Midwest High Speed Rail, Commuter rail, trolley and light rail, and the Intermodal Transportation Facility. Reservations are not required but feel free to contact Eric Miller at (402)681-5336 or [emillerz@yahoo.com](mailto:emillerz@yahoo.com) for questions or more information.



### Group Information



#### Welcome to new ProRail Nebraska members who have joined as of September!

Steven J. Tan Creti  
George Stewart  
Richard J. Giovale  
Arthur F. Dismukes

actively participate with your comments to the group. Many up-to-the-minute news items about Amtrak and other railroad issues of interest are contributed regularly by members of this group.

To subscribe to the ProRail Nebraska discussion group, send an e-mail to: [ProRailNebraska-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ProRailNebraska-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). You will receive a verification e-mail from Yahoo Groups.

#### ProRail on the Internet

ProRail Nebraska has a discussion group (through "Yahoo Groups") in which any ProRail member or visitor can participate. You can choose just to read the messages or to

If you have questions or wish to contact the group moderator, send an e-mail to [gary@thejoneses.com](mailto:gary@thejoneses.com)

### New Newsletter News

This newsletter is published on a quarterly basis and submissions are encouraged, and will be credited. Please only submit news you feel should definitely be included in the newsletter. Submissions for the next newsletter should be sent to the acting editor's house address or via email on or before **December 20, 2002**.

Each quarterly newsletter will feature a photo taken by a ProRail Nebraska member. If you have a recent (approximately last 6 months) railroad photo, send it to the acting editor by letter or email on or before the submission deadline. Photo will be chosen by the acting editor and any material with a self addressed stamp envelope sent to the acting editor will be graciously and promptly returned.

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**Photo of the Quarter**

Lincoln Station and Amtrak California Zephyr in late July – *by Eric Miller*



## ProRail Nebraska NEWS

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