

## **ProRail Board Meeting Minutes: 3/1/2025**

**Attendees:** Clyde Anderson, Dan Bilka, Bridger Corkill, Jim Hanna Luke Riley, Matt Roque, Richard Schmeling

### **Discussion Items:**

- **Introductions**
- **LB 256 MIPRC Hearing Discussion**
- **LB 479**
- **Previous Agenda Items**
- **Next Board Meeting Saturday, April 12:00**

### **Detailed Notes:**

- **Introductions**
  - Introductions for Luke Riley – a Lincoln based transit advocate who joined to talk to us about related efforts. Following up with him in the future about presenting an interesting project at one of our meetings. Brief discussion of vulnerable road users act as a related effort to support. No action taken at this meeting.
- **LB 256 MIPRC Hearing Discussion**
  - **Hearing is Monday, March 10<sup>th</sup> at 1:30**
  - Written comments must be submitted by 8:00AM on March 10<sup>th</sup>
    - Form letter style comment discussed – decided it would be better to do some talking points and have people use their own words.
  - Background discussion on MIPRC / general aims of the bill
  - Discussion of who plans to testify at the hearing:
    - Matt R, Richard S, Dan B (on behalf of All Aboard NW), and Laura
    - 15 copies for any handouts printed
    - Follow up after hearing to get the comments via Legislative office
    - Discussion of getting folks from Kansas and Iowa who support MIPRC to come and testify. Jim to follow up.
  - Discussion of content for oral testimony
    - It's important to be a part of regional planning efforts to ensure NE interests are represented.
    - Amtrak regional service would require NE to be a part of an interstate passenger rail compact.
    - Planning efforts eventually lead to funding and bring dollars back into the state for construction and promote economic development. If we aren't at the table – we may not have access to some of these opportunities.
    - Discussion of the potential routes north from KC to MN and the need for Nebraska to be a part of those discussions to ensure communities along the Missouri benefit.
    - Discussion of the cost of roads, how high transit costs burden families, and that it benefits everyone to have more ways to get around.
    - Discussion of some personal anecdotes that could be effective in testimony about traveling with small children on the train being a much more pleasant experience than 12 hours in the car.

- Discussion of tax dollars that Nebraskans pay to the federal government for transit projects that go to other states because we lack an updated state rail plan (including rail passenger) and aren't engaged in regional planning efforts.
    - Discussion of the importance of a regional perspective in linking economic regions that can transcend state boundaries and in long-term planning that benefits from a regional approach.
    - The executive branch in NE gets to pick the representatives to ensure alignment with other state priorities.
    - Bridger to work with Clyde on the roster/email list to distribute the above to folks who want to submit written testimony.
  - Discussion of coordination with Quick's office and luncheon
    - Venue is available on the hearing date – rental cost is \$200
    - Discussion of who should be invited – not the whole legislature – just members of the transportation committee.
    - Discussion of caterers – probably Jersey Mikes or similar. Reminder to have a veggie option available.
    - Discussion of timing and making sure our date wouldn't overlap with another sponsored luncheon.
    - Decision to follow up with Quick's office Monday and determine whether to move forward with catering and an invitation.
  - Discussion of other groups who may support the bill or submit written comments
    - Richard requested support from municipal governments, associations, and businesses who may benefit from increased rail passenger service.
  - Discussion of outstate groups that could support and the need to get additional support west of Lincoln. Recent article in the NP telegraph about the decline of passenger rail. Something to keep in mind.
  - Discussion of prior opposition to MIPRC bill and what kinds of arguments to be prepared for.
    - Cost has been cited as an issue previously – can highlight the economic development that comes with transit oriented design. Local example: hundreds of millions invested along the Omaha streetcar corridor.
    - Relevance to Nebraska/too far apart. The state was built on the railroad and transit projects also help drivers by giving people more options.
  - Discussion of Iowa MIPRC bill – still moving forward. Appears to have a good shot of passing.
- **LB 479 Change to Sales Tax for Expressways**
  - No action to oppose/support.
- **Previous Agenda Items**
  - **LB 271 Anti Tampering Bill**
    - Richard to testify in support. Hearing date March 10<sup>th</sup>
  - PSC / DOT responsibilities related to passenger rail discussion. Discussion of PSC having a historic role and the relationship to the federal rail administration.
  - Next board meeting (April) will be to plan the newsletter and hammer out the details for speakers at the annual meeting.
  - Bridger to coordinate with Clyde to make sure we have the same roster.

- Discussion of making a shared email for ProRail that would forward to our personal email addresses and removing personal information from the website.
- **Next Board Meeting Saturday, April 12, 2:00-4:00 – Bridger to schedule a room/zoom and send confirmations**