

## **ProRail Board Meeting Minutes: 04/26/2025**

**Attendees:** Bridger Corkill, Jim Hanna, Robert Kuzelka, Matthew Roque; Richard Schmeling

### **Discussion Items:**

- **Annual Meeting is Next Week! Logistics Discussion**
- **Reimbursement & Org Structure**
- **Legislative Study Resolution**
- **Correspondence Follow Ups**
- **Omaha Chamber Survey**
- **Bill Idea: Rail / Highway Funding Link**
- **Next board meeting is Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup> at 2:30PM Scooters Pine Lake. A zoom link will be available.**

### **Detailed Notes:**

- **Annual Meeting is Next Week! Logistics Discussion**
  - Bob to pick up the key this week and get refreshments.
  - Bridger to draft slides with org updates to follow the meeting outline.
  - Matt and Richard to follow up with legislative offices to see if the schedules work out to have a State Senator introduce the meeting. Otherwise, Bridger can intro.
  - Bob following up with Bilka on short presentation by zoom. Bridger looking at a backup if this is too short notice and doesn't fit his schedule. Potentially a video or slides on the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) system.
  - Officer elections will include president, treasurer, district one, and district 3 directors. Plan to make a motion for nominations, then a motion to retain the existing board. All present board members agreed to retain their positions.
  - Legislative updates and plans from Matt and Richard – Bridger will include a slide for this in the meeting slides.
  - Plans and goals for later in the year to close out the meeting. Ask for feedback on potential org structure or foundation spin-off.
- **Reimbursement & Org Structure**
  - Brief discussion of reimbursement for Bridger's expenses. Agreed that Matt can approve reimbursement by email request with a receipt.
  - Matt and Bridger to coordinate on a two-signature policy.
  - Brief discussion of some options for reorganization or foundation spin-off to house the Dan Lutz / ProRail Scholarship.
    - Reorganizing as 501c3 opens opportunities that make it easier to do outreach and education. If we go forward with the Dan Lutz / ProRail scholarship and try to fund more research and continue expanding our public education efforts, then it makes some sense to have a c3. We can still spend 20% of our time and funds on direct lobbying but would have to shift to 80% education/outreach activities. Memberships and donations would be tax deductible like other charitable contributions.
    - We can also start a ProRail Foundation alongside ProRail Nebraska and donate funds to get it started.
    - We can either start our own independent foundation, or we can work with a fiscal agent like the Nebraska Community Foundation.

- **Legislative Study Resolution**
  - Deadline is May 15<sup>th</sup> for Study Resolutions
  - Next meeting May 10<sup>th</sup> for final discussion/push for introduction of a resolution to study passenger rail and explore the need for legislation or research.
  - Bob to follow up with Quick.
  - Richard to follow up with a few Senators offices
  - Matt and Bridger to meet with Juarez on May 8<sup>th</sup>
- **Correspondence Follow Ups**
  - Richard sent materials about the cost of highway infrastructure and the cost to society in terms of accidental deaths and injuries to the Governor's office as well as other relevant offices in the legislature and local government. Also included was information about MIPRC, statutory reference for rail planning, and a request for the DOT to take a more active role in planning for passenger rail.
  - Discussion of a coalition that approached the Trump admin to discuss shifting flexible highway spending to passenger rail and other greener transit options. Worth looking at what we could do from a state perspective after the annual meeting. There could be some bill/policy ideas that are relevant to Nebraska.
  - Discussion of correspondence with DOT about subscribing them to Passenger Train Journal and follow up on MIPRC testimony from Richard.
- **Omaha Chamber Survey**
  - <https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-public-affairs-and-community-service/center-for-public-affairs-research/documents/2024-omaha-chamber-yp-survey-report.pdf>
  - <https://nebraskaexaminer.com/2025/04/21/omaha-area-survey-shows-better-pay-transit-and-housing-options-are-keys-to-curbing-brain-drain/>
  - Link to the survey report in full and the Nebraska Examiner article above.
  - Great resources, need to find as many ways as possible to capitalize on the findings here. People want better transit.
  - Could explore ways to replicate the survey or push the Lincoln chamber to explore similar topics. Bridger to write to the city about it.
  - Something to explore in more detail after the annual meeting.
- **Bill Idea: Rail / Highway Funding Link**
  - Brief discussion of the potential for a bill to link some percentage or ratio of highway funding to passenger rail or transit projects in general.
  - More research needs to be done to find out where this has been done to see if there's a model to follow.
  - Questions to explore:
    - How much does NE receive in Federal HWY dollars?
    - How much does NE spend on roads/highways?
    - What are the social costs of the limited transit options, like accidental deaths and injuries?
    - How have other states or municipalities directed highway or roads dollars to transit projects like congestion pricing?
  - Further discussion after the annual meeting. Potential bill next session.
- **Next board meeting is Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup> at 2:30PM Scooters Pine Lake.**  
**Discussion on the legislative study resolution. A zoom link will be available.**