



ProRail Nebraska News

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Work begins on BNSF Eola Yard for Chicago-Moline passenger service

Progressive Railroading – October 22, 2014

Construction has begun on a new passenger-rail route between Chicago and Moline, Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) announced yesterday.

The \$23 million effort underway at the BNSF Railway Co.'s Eola Yard in Aurora, Ill., consists of track, grading and drainage improvements, as well as signal and capacity upgrades. The work is necessary to accommodate the additional trains that are expected to use the yard daily after the Chicago-Moline passenger service begins, according to an IDOT press release.

"This project marks the start of better transportation between these two vital areas of the state," Quinn said. "Passenger rail is creating jobs and opening new economic development opportunities across Illinois, and will help travelers get to their destinations quickly and efficiently for years to come."

Funded by federal and state dollars, the Eola Yard project will facilitate additional passenger trains on the 109-mile stretch between Chicago and Wyanet, and help improve operational efficiencies for existing service between Chicago and Quincy. Work is expected to be completed during summer 2015.

"[We're] pleased to be partnering with the state of Illinois on this important project," said D.J. Mitchell, BNSF's assistant vice president of passenger operations safety and technical training. "We look forward to working with state

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Riding the Husker Football Special – September 20, 2014

By Jim Hanna

(Reprinted from Oct. 2014 issue of The Diamond, Newsletter of the Great Plains Chapter – NRHS with permission from the author)

The reason I did not go to Railfest this year was due to the Camerail Club being asked to provide staffing for the Big Red Amtrak Special, and me being fortunate enough to be among those asked to help. This was the first time since November of 1975 that a special train was run to carry passengers from Omaha to Lincoln for a University of Nebraska football game. The 1975 trip was the last of many arranged by Bill Kratville.



Photograph of the Football Special at Melia Siding, NE by Tom Jurgens. This shot was taken at Melia, NE which is about 7 or so miles east of Ashland.

This trip was organized by Bob Owen and Terry Peterson, using a mixture of Amtrak equipment and private cars, and operated with an Amtrak crew. Owen and Peterson own Zephyr Rail

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BNSF Eola Yard (from Page 1)

and federal officials to complete this segment of the Chicago-Quad Cities Passenger Rail program."

Earlier this year, the state reached an agreement with Iowa Interstate Railroad Ltd. (IAIS) to begin designing the signal system, as well as the track and tie improvements, to permit passenger trains on the 53 miles from Wyanet to Moline. Once that process is completed later this year, IDOT can begin finalizing an additional agreement with IAIS that spells out maintenance and operations responsibilities, as well as a construction timeline, department officials said.

Riding the Husker Football Special (from Page 1)

Services of Omaha, which provides indoor storage and maintenance services for private railroad passenger cars.

The Amtrak equipment consisted of locomotive #6, followed by coach #54540, café/lounge #43347, and coach #54000, all Heritage cars. Next was full-length dome #800966, "Sky View" followed by "Prairie View", another full-length dome. Business car #800724, "Promontory Point" was next, which had been Missouri Pacific #2. When the Union Pacific absorbed the MOP in 1983 it was among the assets, where it underwent a series of identity changes. UP sold it to a private owner in 1997, who renamed it "Promontory Point". Zephyr Rail Services purchased it in 2014. It is one of my personal favorite private cars, as its paint scheme is reminiscent of the early streamliners, with Armour yellow sides, leaf brown undercarriage and roof, and red trim.

Bringing up the rear of the seven-car train was the classy heavyweight business car "Suitsme". It was a 1928 Pullman product, originally assigned to the president of the Bangor & Aroostook under #100. There it stayed until 2003 when it went to the Plymouth & Lincoln Railroad, a New Hampshire tourist road. In 2012 it was acquired by a private owner who brought it up to Amtrak standards and in 2013 it became the first passenger car owned by Zephyr Rail Services. Its rear platform is dressed with the unique B&A keystone shaped tailsign.

About 200 people were onboard. Seats in the two Amtrak coaches went for \$200 each, and the riders could purchase snacks and libations from the Amtrak steward in the café/lounge car. This car was hugely popular and did a steady business the entire time the train was occupied. Many chose to socialize around the tables instead of staying in their coach seats.

Seats in the two dome cars cost \$500 each and included free meals and drinks. As I was assigned to coach #54540 I had no opportunity to visit these cars while they were occupied, so I'm not sure how full they were.

The two business cars were limited to the owners of Zephyr Rail Services, their families, and invited guests. As with most business cars, seating is rather limited, primarily in the rear observation area.

Passenger boarding took place from the narrow wooden platform at the Durham Museum, with passengers entering through the museum for a 3:00 p.m. departure. Several Omaha television stations had news teams there, and Amtrak had a reporter/photographer and a videographer documenting the trip for promotional purposes.

Departure was a bit convoluted and time consuming as we had loaded on Union Pacific trackage and had to get over to the BNSF. This was accomplished by pulling the train forward, crossing over the UP #1 (north) mainline onto the #2 (south) main. The train was backed through the new transfer track onto the Burlington, and backed far enough toward Gibson Yard to clear the transfer switch. That put us on the Burlington main line to Lincoln. Making these moves safely with a passenger train required a great deal of coordination between UP and BNSF dispatchers.

The run to Lincoln was swift, uneventful, and involved only one short wait at the east edge of Lincoln. Notwithstanding the onboard imbibing, the passengers were well behaved and many were quite thrilled with the opportunity to take the train. "Are they going to do this again?", was a frequent question. The view from the train windows afforded a unique perspective on the

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Riding the Husker Football Special (from Page 2)

game day festivities on the campus and surrounding areas as we pulled into the Lincoln Amtrak depot at about 4:30 p.m. Departing passengers were warned that the train would be leaving for Omaha at 11:30 p.m. with or without them. The train attracted quite a lot of attention from the public, some of whom came onto the platform for a closer look. (next column →)

At around 6:00 p.m. the train was turned for the return trip. We had expected that to take place in the yards to the far southwest, but instead the train was backed onto the new wye to the north, and across the UP bridge over Salt Creek. A short reverse move south on the main line got us past the depot track switch, and we pulled back into the depot less than an hour after we left. This probably saved at least an hour over going into the yards.



*Crew for the Football Special that operated from Omaha to Lincoln & return on Sept. 20th
Photo by Steve Jones*

Prior to his departure for the game, Mr. Owen had encouraged the crew, both Amtrak and Camerail, to enjoy the ambiance, food, and satellite television of the football game in the “Suitsme”. Chef Reinhard Valnion had prepared a variety of scrumptious finger foods and utterly delightful desserts for the invited guests, and we were privileged to also partake of his superb repast.

Having little interest in football, I spent most of the evening enjoying the pleasant weather out on the platform and watching trains move through.

When the game ended the Amtrak conductor came out to get ready for our passengers to return. He and I had quite a delightful time watching the folks who had too much to drink stagger around the Haymarket while we waited. As our scheduled departure time approached, we knew we had one passenger who was missing, a wheelchair bound man. One of the trip organizers had his cell phone number, was able to contact him, and discovered that he was in a wheelchair accessible taxi that was stuck in

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Riding the Husker Football Special (from Page 3)

traffic. If we didn't get moving soon there was a real possibility that the Amtrak engineer and conductor would go over their allowable hours of service, which would certainly lead to a delay. Fortunately, our missing passenger arrived about 11:45 and was quickly boarded.



Another Photograph of the Football Special at Melia Siding by Tom Jurgens -- The train had a colorful consist with a mix of private and Amtrak cars.

The trip back to Omaha was pleasant and uneventful. The gentle rocking of the car lulled many to sleep, but the lounge car was full of boisterous patrons all the way back. It was about 1:15 a.m. when we passed the Omaha Amtrak depot, but getting the train back over to the Durham Museum track was another long, slow process. Evidently the BNSF dispatcher assumed we would reverse the route we had taken on the outbound trip, so we were sent partway toward Gibson Yard again. There was a freight train stopped on the #2 (south) UP main, so the new transfer track was blocked. After lengthy discussion between the BNSF and UP dispatchers, we finally backed toward the Amtrak depot, then pulled through the old transfer track onto the UP main and crossed over to the #1 (north) line. The train had to go most of the way across the Missouri River bridge to clear the switch for the depot track. The view north up the river was picture postcard perfect, with the city lights reflecting on the water and the Bob Kerry Bridge in the background.

By this time most of the passengers were getting restless and anxious to go home, so they were disappointed to hear that we would have to make a stop to unload our passenger in the wheelchair, then move the train forward to let everyone else depart. Because the platform is so narrow, the only place the wheelchair lift could be used was right in the doorway into the lower level of the museum. The

Amtrak crew again made short work of getting the disabled gentleman off safely, the train was re-spotted, and the rest of the passengers were able to get off.

I would say it was a very successful event, organized and operated professionally, and hopefully can be the prototype for more trips of the same type. Matthew Roque, the ProRail Nebraska board member who represents ProRail District #1, the Lincoln area, wrote his master's thesis on the prospects of resuming regular football game day passenger service using the Union Pacific from Omaha to Valley, then down the Lincoln Branch through Wahoo. Shortly after the trip was announced, one of the ProRail officers who knows Mr. Owen made him aware of Matt's work, and Mr. Owen generously invited Matt to ride along in the private cars. Hopefully, Matt's research will help Mr. Owen decide to sponsor more of these trips.

The Amtrak crew seemed to enjoy the trip. The engineer and conductor were from the regular Omaha-based California Zephyr staff. Onboard services personnel consisted of a steward who staffed the café/lounge car, and the onboard services manager, a delightful lady who I later learned is in charge of all of the California Zephyr onboard staff, both of them based in Chicago. An Amtrak special agent from St. Louis was also on the train. During the time in Lincoln waiting for the game to end, the Amtrak crew had time to swap stories with the Camerail crew. On their regular trips they are far too busy to have time to visit with the railfans on board.

Link to Matthew Roque's Cornhusker Game Day Train news article that appeared in the September 2010 Prairie Fire newspaper –

<http://www.prairiefirenewspaper.com/2010/09/husker-train>

Author Jim Hanna, a ProRail Nebraska Board member, would like to credit Dave Seidel, "Mr. Passenger Car" and president of Camerail Club, with the background information and history of the private cars. Dave is the 7th person from the left in the crew photo on page 3.

Iowa Passenger Rail Advisory Committee
August 28, 2014 Meeting Report
By David Pudy, President, ProRail Nebraska

Time: 10:00 AM August 28, 2014

Place: Des Moines Iowa

Organization: Iowa Passenger Rail Advisory Committee

Purpose: This meeting was called so Iowa DOT could present its activities in passenger rail to interested parties.

Participants: There were 28 people present, including representatives from:

Tammy Nicholson - Iowa DOT
Amanda Martin - Iowa DOT
Stu Anderson - Iowa DOT
Susan Wallace - Iowa DOT
Derrick James - Amtrak
Mark Hemphill - HDR
Brian Ray - HDR
Gordon Canfield - Iowa Assn. of RR Passengers MAPA
Dave Pudy - ProRail Nebraska
Goeff Fruin - City of Iowa City

1. **Overall passenger rail in Iowa** (Amanda Martin) - Iowa has adopted the attitude that they will always have projects ready for implementation when money becomes available. As will be seen below, they have several project packages ready for the next step (e. g., on Chicago-Council Bluffs service they have a basis for the next step, preliminary engineering). Their next study project is north-south service through Des Moines.
2. **Chicago-Omaha service** - The following items are now in hand:
Tier 1 Environmental analysis (May 2013)
Federal Record of Decision (August 2013)
Service Development Plan (late 2013)
This project is now dormant, awaiting further funds. The plan now actually ends at Council Bluffs.
3. **Chicago to Quad Cities** - They are working on a tier 2 NEPA. They are also working on Iowa Interstate 30% engineering, including signaling and positive train control. Iowa

Interstate is now solely a freight railroad, and accordingly has no experience with positive train control. Planning at Wyanet is still in progress. BNSF is working on improvements at Eola yard near Chicago to improve capacity. Design is progressing on Moline Station. The building will have railroad facilities on the first floor, and a hotel on floors 2-6.

4. **Quad Cities to Iowa City Extension Program** - The schedule for this program is a little uncertain, since it depends on the Quad Cities Chicago project. Since the last Advisory Committee meeting, HDR has:
1) Documented conceptual engineering (completion awaits Quad Cities),
2) Completed initial field studies,
3) Completed statement of work for tier 2 EA,
4) Coordinated with IAIS, Amtrak and FRA. Next steps for HDR are: 30% engineering, Tier 2 EA, and Service development plan update. Engineering sub projects include: 1) Track, 2) Structures (bridges etc.), 3) Crossings, 4) Signals and communications, 5) Iowa City station, and 6) Construction cost estimate. Tentative schedule is:
Tier 2 EA July 2015
Final EA February 2016
Draft Decision Document April 2016
5. **Chicago Dubuque Service** - This project will initially go only so far as Rockford. Initial ground breaking is this fall.
6. **Next Generation Equipment Committee** - This organization was mandated in the federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008. Its purpose is to facilitate the development of passenger rail equipment to be used in several projects. Its structure comprises an Executive Committee and several specialist subcommittees. Representatives from Amtrak, Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the pertinent States are members of the Executive Committee. Tammy Nicholson is Iowa's representative on the Executive Committee. 122 bilevel passenger coaches are being procured. Some will be used exclusively in California. Most will be part of a Midwest Equipment Pool (MEP), including the

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Chicago Moline project. Iowa will not be the direct owner of any equipment. A contractor will be hired to manage the pool. Michigan DOT is the lead for the pool contractor arrangement. Twenty one diesel locomotives are also being procured. Illinois DOT is the lead for locomotives.

7. **Fort Madison station platform rehabilitation** - Currently, the Fort Madison station is located in an existing rail yard. It is being moved more centrally into town and improved.
8. **Amtrak activities** - Amtrak is negotiating with bus companies to share the Omaha station. They are also setting up coordinated bus service including places in Nebraska.

Missouri county receives federal funds for Rock Island Corridor

Progressive Railroading, November 4, 2014

Jackson County, Mo., has been allocated \$10 million in federal Surface Transportation Program funds to apply toward the \$59.9 million cost of buying the Rock Island Corridor, which is part of a plan to establish a commuter-rail service that would connect the area to downtown Kansas City.

In addition, the county and Union Pacific Railroad have extended a memorandum of understanding that provides the county the exclusive right to purchase key transit corridors that have the potential to be used for expanded transit options in the future, Jackson County officials said in a press release.

The agreement with UP to purchase the rights of way to nearly 23 miles of transit corridors running through Raytown, Lee's Summit, Kansas City and Independence has been extended until Sept. 30, 2015.

"Union Pacific has been a great partner in this endeavor," said Jackson County Executive Mike Sanders. "They recognize, as we do, that this is a unique opportunity not only for Jackson County, but the entire region for the development of regional transit and extending our trails system."

The memorandum entails no financial risk to county taxpayers should Jackson County and UP be unable to reach a binding sales agreement before the new deadline, county officials said.

The Federal Highway Administration sub-allocated the funds to the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), the region's metropolitan planning organization. MARC's board voted to appropriate the funds.

MIDWEST INTERSTATE PASSENGER RAIL COMMISSION Report on Annual Meeting – June 11 & 12, 2014

By Clyde Anderson – ProRail Nebraska Director District 2

Background

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission is a ten-state interstate compact commission that promotes, coordinates and supports regional improvements to passenger rail service. Member states include Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Iowa withdrew membership two years ago, and Ohio recently stopped participating. Thanks in part to the lobbying by ProRail Nebraska, Nebraska has recently resumed paying its MIPRC dues.

Passenger rail is playing a critical role in the region's transportation network. Therefore, rail projects need a federal partnership with states, similar to that of other modes of transportation, to assist with the capital investments necessary to build a modern, efficient passenger system in the Midwest.

Federal funds awarded to Compact states beginning in FY 2009 have allowed for the development of the first phase of the Midwest Regional Rail System (MWRRS) – a 3,000-mile, nine state passenger rail system plan to implement a network of faster, more frequent regional service with speeds up to 110 mph in 100- to 500-mile corridors, with its hub in Chicago. This development is already bringing significant economic development and jobs to the region. The full build-out of the MWRRS is expected to have an overall economic benefit of \$23 billion while creating more than 57,000 permanent jobs.

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Unlike California that has several major rail corridors within one state, most of the Midwest rail corridors are multi-state. Therefore, the MIPRC provides a vital role coordinating the efforts of its states with federal agencies, Amtrak, suppliers, and universities. This was clearly visible at this year's Annual Meeting. For example, MIPRC helped coordinate the joint Midwest – California corridor passenger equipment procurement program and is working with the University of Illinois Railway Civil Engineering Dept. on several passenger-related research projects.

2014 MIPRC Annual Meeting – Amtrak's Long-Distance Trains

The Meeting began with a reception at Amtrak's Metropolitan Lounge in Chicago Union Station the afternoon of June 11th. About 25 participants boarded Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* for the seven hour trip to Kansas City. Amtrak added an extra Superliner diner to the consist for use as a meeting room. Ray Lang and Derrick James from Amtrak's Midwest Region – National State Relations Dept. made a presentation about Amtrak's Long-Distance Train services and how they relate to the regional corridors.

Amtrak's Long Distance Train Network consists of 13 routes served by 15 trains serving 40 states and about 500 communities. Of Amtrak's five most popular trains, only two serve the Midwest: the *Empire Builder* (1) and *Lake Shore Limited* (3). However, the *Empire Builder* will probably decline in popularity this year because of service disruptions on BNSF's Twin Cities – PNW route. The restructuring of the *Sunset Limited* (it's still tri-weekly) by changing its schedule and days of operation not only improved the popularity of the train, but saved a set of equipment. The demographics of *Southwest Chief* passengers are pretty typical of the long-distance train network: average age is 58, 57% of the passengers are female, 43% are retired, the majority have college degrees, and only 7% are traveling on business. Most of Amtrak's long-distance trains operate over the freight railroad network. Although Amtrak has generally good relations with the freight railroads and tries to avoid litigation when problems arise, there are problem areas such as the *Empire Builder* Route. Amtrak long-distance trains have a cost-recovery ratio of about 50%.

After the presentation ended, several of us stayed in the diner discussing passenger rail issues – Richard Harnish – Midwest High Speed Rail Assn., Kay Chase – Michigan Assn. of Railroad Passengers, and Steven Coxhead – Indiana Passenger Rail Alliance. Later we had dinner in the regular diner. I was surprised that I wasn't the only one who got to Chicago via Megabus! The train ride was smooth and close to on-time over the former Burlington from Chicago to Galesburg, but the ride on the former Santa Fe Galesburg to Kansas City was noticeably rough although we arrived in KC three minutes early.

2014 MIPRC Annual Meeting – Kansas City, June 12 in the Arthur Stillwell Room, KC Union Sta.

There were about 50 attendees at the Kansas City meeting which had a full schedule from 8 am to 5 pm. In addition to myself from ProRail Nebraska, there were three other representatives from Nebraska: Senators Jeremy Nordquist and Jim Smith (both from the Omaha area) and Milo Mumgaard from the Lincoln Mayor's Office. None rode the train the previous day. The Commissioners and MIPRC Partners (including Nordquist and Smith) sat at tables arranged in a big "U" while the Allies (from support groups like PRN) sat on the periphery. Sharing my table was Deb Fischer Stout with Northern Flyer Alliance and Matt Kauffman with Kansas City Regional Transit Alliance.

There isn't space in the newsletter for my full five-page report. However, the full report, meeting agenda, and several of the handouts are available on ProRail Nebraska's web site at:

<http://www.trainweb.org/prorailnebraska/MIPRC%20Annual%20Meeting%202014-06-12%20Report.pdf>

Or go to the Home Page at <http://www.trainweb.org/prorailnebraska/> and scroll down to this MIPRC report and you will find the links.

Conclusion

Attending the MIPRC Annual Meeting was a great opportunity to learn more about the organization and the outstanding work it is doing advocating and facilitating regional passenger rail transportation in the Midwest. I was impressed by the time and effort being expended by many of the Commissioners and partners carrying out the MIPRC's objectives.

Dan Lutz Died Monday, July 21th, 2014



Dan Lutz was a founding member of ProRail Nebraska and served in many capacities including President from the founding of PRN in 1994 until 2002, Board member, and Newsletter Editor. To honor Dan's many years of service to our organization, he was awarded an honorary life membership in 2002. He was a great guy and we'll all miss him! [Click here](#) for news article about Dan.

http://m.omaha.com/obits/lutz-daniel-b/article_47069247-17eb-5957-9062-b475b91b70d9.html?mode=jqm

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ProRail Nebraska Meetings

Next Members Meeting: The next membership meeting is scheduled for Saturday, February 21, 2015 at the University of Nebraska - Omaha campus. Check the ProRail web site for details about January 15th.

Next Board Meeting: Saturday, January 10, 9:00 am at Saint Marks Church on the Campus, SE corner 13th and R in Lincoln. Please contact Dave Purdy, PRN President, for details. (402) 492-8524
<http://www.trainweb.org/prorailnebraska>

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