



ProRail Nebraska News

Dedicated to supporting and advocating for railroad service in the State of Nebraska

Visit our web site at <http://www.trainweb.org/prorailnebraska/>

Volume XXV

April 2015

ProRail Nebraska Annual Meeting

Saturday, April 18, 2015 – 9:00 am to Noon – Omaha, NE

Where: University of Nebraska - Omaha – Milo Bail Student Center Umoho Room on 3rd Floor
The Milo Bail Student Center is located on the south side of Dodge St. near 62nd St.

Time: 9:00am to about Noon (*Refreshments - 8:30am*) Meeting Sponsor: UNO Department of History

Tentative Agenda:

- 8:30 am - Registration and refreshments
- 9:00 am - Welcome and introductions by President Dave Purdy
- 9:10 am - Legislative update by Matt Roque and Jeff Poley, ProRail Lobbyists
 - LB 317 - Repeal Nebraska's membership in the MIPRC (PRN opposes)
 - LB 644: Legislation to Support the Study of Passenger Rail and Other Public Transportation System Options for the State of Nebraska (PRN supports)
- 9:50 am - Husker Football Special last September: Omaha to Lincoln – Warren Lucas with Zephyr Rail Services
- 10:30 am - Break
- 10:50 am - Nebraska Department of Roads - Railroad Involvement - Ryan Huff, Manager, NDOR Division of Rail and Public Transportation
- 11:30 am - Update on Iowa DOT's Chicago-Omaha Passenger Rail Study - Dave Purdy
- 11:45 am - ProRail Business - Secretary and Treasurer reports, election of officers
- 12:00 Noon - Adjourn

Registration: Free! Advance registration appreciated so we will have enough refreshments.

To register or for more information call Bob Kuzelka (402) 417-9424 (Lincoln) email rkuzelka1@unl.edu or Clyde Anderson (402) 740-5556 (Omaha) email ClydeLAnderson@cox.net.

Please join us on April 18th to better understand why we feel so strongly that Nebraska must become an active participant in the future of passenger rail travel.

Directions to Reach the April 18th Meeting

MEETING LOCATION: The Milo Bail Student Union (MSC) is on University Drive North which is a frontage road on the south side of Dodge Street and can be accessed turning south off Dodge generally between 62nd Street and the west edge of Elmwood and Memorial Parks. Enter the MSC through its western most doors which will put you on the second floor of the building. If you become lost, please call 402-417-9424 (Lincoln number) or 402-740-5556 (Omaha number) for help.

PARKING INSTRUCTIONS: All University of Nebraska at Omaha parking lots are open to any visitors on Saturdays, and parking meters are not checked. The best parking for MSC is in the metered drive just north of the building or the closest lot west of the building. If you become lost, please call 402-417-9424 (Lincoln number) or 402-740-5556 (Omaha number) for help. You can easily reach the meeting site via public transit. Take the Metro Route 2 Dodge Street Bus and get off at the stop at 62nd St. See the Metro web site <http://www.ometro.com/> for schedules and fares. A bike rack is located next to the northeast entrance to the Milo Bail Student Center.

ProRail Nebraska (PRN)
Statement of Mission and Objectives
Revised and Adopted January 10, 2015

(Mission) PRN is a member organization advocating for improved passenger rail transportation serving Nebraska. It is an affiliate of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP), which advocates passenger rail service on a national basis. Our priority objectives are:

1. **(MIPRC)** Nebraska is a member of the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC), an association made up of officials and citizens appointed by the Governors and Legislatures of the member states (10) in the Midwest. Nebraska's representatives include two State Senators and two public representatives. MIPRC's purpose is to coordinate development of passenger rail service in the several Midwest states. PRN advocates that Nebraska's legislative and executives branches take full and active participation in MIPRC. Such participation should include but not be limited to appointing a full contingent (4) of representatives from Nebraska to the commission and the continuation of paying the state's annual membership dues (\$15,000) to the commission.
2. **(OMA/LNK Commuter)** The urban region of Lincoln and Omaha contain the major population centers and growth in Nebraska. PRN advocates establishing commuter public transportation service including commuter trains for this Omaha/Lincoln urban region. The State of Nebraska needs to restudy the feasibility for such commuter service.
3. **(NE-CHI Service)** The State of Iowa's DOT is designing the establishment of a second Chicago – Iowa train service which would be routed through Des Moines and would terminate in Omaha/Council Bluffs. PRN advocates that this line be established to include service through Omaha terminating in Lincoln. We encourage the State of Nebraska and the cities of Omaha and Lincoln actively participate in this Iowa DOT project to insure such a Nebraska termination.
4. **(NDST)** Until there is a significant and identifiable passenger rail organization in Nebraska state government, efforts to improve and increase passenger rail service in the state will not occur. PRN advocates for the creation of a Nebraska Department of Surface Transportation with a clear function to plan, develop, and implement passenger rail service.
5. **(Stations)** PRN advocates for the expansion of the use and accessibility of the AMTRAK stations in the state as hubs for all surface public and private passenger transportation systems.
6. **(CA Zephyr)** The AMTRAK California Zephyr is an impressive train, but it operates only once a day at night with east and west service through Nebraska. PRN advocates for additional daylight AMTRAK passenger service between Chicago and Denver through Lincoln and Omaha. We encourage the State of Nebraska and the cities of Omaha and Lincoln to actively participate in and support such increased service.
7. **(OMA/LNK to KC)** PRN advocates for the creation of a passenger rail line from Omaha and Lincoln to Kansas City. The states of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri currently are studying and undertaking a passenger line that would connect Dallas-Fort Worth through Oklahoma City/Tulsa and Newton, KS to Kansas City. We encourage the State of Nebraska and the cities of Omaha and Lincoln to actively support and participate in this project to include its extension to Nebraska.

ProRail Opposes LB 317

Repeal the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact

By Matthew Roque, ProRail Director & Lobbyist

ProRail is opposed to LB 317 which was introduced by State Sen. Bill Kitner (Dist. 2 - Cass and southern Sarpy Counties). LB 317 would remove Nebraska from the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC).

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) brings together state leaders from 12 states in the Midwest and the Plains regions to advocate for passenger rail improvements. This organization has been instrumental in moving states forward for new or expanded passenger rail options.

The planning and development of passenger rail infrastructure in the Plains will occur with or without Nebraska's participation. ProRail Nebraska suggests that it would be foolish for our state to deny itself the opportunity to participate in this planning.

The FRA's planning process would build on the work that Midwestern and Plains states have accomplished through coordination over the past 20 years. It is expected that corridor projects be identified and prioritized and a process for their on-going advancement will be developed. This process will include preliminary planning to environmental review to construction. Results from the multistate planning effort will give guidance to the National Rail Plan. It is critically important that Nebraska be a part of this planning process. Otherwise our state will not be at the table to provide input that represents the best interests of the state.

Matt's testimony before Nebraska Legislature's Transportation and Telecommunications Committee hearing on LB 317 on February 24, 2015 is available on ProRail Nebraska's web site at: http://www.trainweb.org/prorailnebraska/LB317_Testimony_2015-02-24.pdf

UPDATE 3/17/2015: I have some rather bad news. LB317 was made a priority bill by the Speaker of the Legislature. Although we had hoped that this year would run out before this saw the whole legislature, this basically guarantees that it will be heard by the legislature. I will continue to follow it, and will make calls to both Senator Smith's office and the Speakers office. Of all the bills out there, I would like to know why he thought this was worthy of being a priority....Matt



Visit MIPRC's web site at: <http://www.miprc.org/>

ProRail Nebraska Election of Officers at Annual Meeting April 18th

The Board has nominated the following slate of candidates for officers to be elected April 18th for 2-year terms:

President - Matthew Roque (now Dist. 3 Dir.) District 1 Director – Jeff Poley (incumbent)

Treasurer – Ralph Hayden (incumbent) District 3 Director – Dave Purdy (existing President)

ProRail Supports LB 644

Adopt the Nebraska Transit and Rail Advisory Council Act

By Matthew Roque, ProRail Director & Lobbyist

ProRail Nebraska is a non-profit advocacy group that focuses on increased passenger rail services as well as other public transportation options within our state.

As a group focused on rail issues, ProRail participated in and has studied the Nebraska Transit Corridors Study completed for the Nebraska Transit and Rail Advisory Council in 2003. Although a good document, it did contain several flaws that have continued to impact transportation planning to this day.

One of the major flaws is its lack of any medium and long-range analysis or recommendations. The study simply analyzed the feasibility of developing commuter rail or bus systems by the year 2010. In addition to the limitations of the 2003 study imposed by the short term planning framework, the study did not undertake any in-depth origin and destination analysis. Commuting by University of Nebraska undergraduate and graduate students, for example was not considered, nor was an analysis of non-work related demand considered. Based on the limited research undertaken for the study, the report concluded that it was probably not feasible to initiate rail or bus commuter service by 2010.

Both the Lincoln and Omaha metropolitan areas have experienced significant growth since 2003 and this same rate of growth is expected for the next 20 to 30 years. Studies conducted by the Joslyn Castle Institute, The Nebraska Innovation Zone Commission, The Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance, The Lincoln-Lancaster Planning Commission and the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency among others, have projected considerable population growth and development activity within the Lincoln Omaha corridor. The construction of additional traffic lanes on I-80 in the corridor between Lincoln and Omaha demonstrate the importance the state places on serving the transportation needs of this growing population.

ProRail Nebraska implores our state to adequately prepare for the future transportation needs of its citizens in Lincoln, Omaha, and the areas in between. We believe the provisions of LB 644 offer the state a timely opportunity to examine alternatives for developing successful and cost effective transportation solutions for the future. ProRail Nebraska recommends LB 644 be used by the state to begin an incremental transportation planning and development strategy to take advantage of opportunities that can be implemented in the short term which will result in significant cost savings in the future. In order to accomplish these objectives, we suggest detailed analyses and projections be conducted for a planning period extending 20 years or more into the future through a revitalized Nebraska Transit and Rail Advisory Council.

Matt's testimony before Nebraska Legislature's Transportation and Telecommunications Committee hearing on LB 644 on February 24, 2015 is available on ProRail Nebraska's web site at:
http://www.trainweb.org/prorailnebraska/LB644_Testimony_2015-02-24.pdf

UPDATE 3/14/2015: The news is not good. LB 644 to revive and restudy public transit to include Omaha/Lincoln rail was indefinitely postponed by unanimous vote of the transportation committee. That in effect kills it.....Bob Kuzelka

Gov. Rauner spending freeze results in 'review' of Quad City Amtrak project

January 28, 2015

Gov. Bruce Rauner's spending freeze resulted in the Illinois Department of Transportation reviewing plans to bring passenger trains to the Quad Cities.

In May of 2014, Paul Rumler, executive director of the QC Passenger Rail Coalition, said he expected passenger train service to be available in the Quad Cities in 2016, and the hotel and train station in Moline would be finished by November 2015.

Those plans are currently under review after Gov. Rauner signed an executive order for state agencies to halt nonessential spending, putting state contract activity on pause until July 1. "We believe the project will be released and things will move ahead and be right on track," said Scott Vandewoestyne, director of government affairs for the Quad Cities Chamber.

Vandewoestyne said the governor is reviewing the benefits of various statewide projects, and he believes the rail-passenger service will gain the governor's approval.

Charles Lahl and his father own Dead Poet's Espresso in downtown Moline and said they were counting on gaining more customers from the Amtrak's Quad-City stop. "It would really be a good overall improvement to help attract extra customers who don't usually get here."

In addition to the passenger-rail project, the governor is reviewing the proposed direct flight from the Quad City International Airport to Washington D.C.



Minnesota DOT begins Zip Rail environmental study

Railway Track & Structures, Tuesday, March 17, 2015

Several options for high-speed passenger rail service between the Twin Cities and Rochester, Minn., known as Zip Rail, will undergo the first phase of a two-step environmental impact statement review process.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), the Federal Railroad Administration and the Olmsted County Regional Railroad Authority filed a Notice of Intent to prepare a Tiered Environmental Impact Statement for the Zip Rail project.

Based on public and agency input gathered during the scoping process and the technical analyses conducted to date, MnDOT determined that the no-build alternative and eight end-point to end-point corridors will be evaluated in the first phase (Tier 1) of the EIS. The Tier 1 EIS will examine the social, economic and environmental impacts of each option.

The Zip Rail study area covers approximately a 100-mile corridor between Rochester and the Twin Cities, which includes Dakota, Dodge, Goodhue, Hennepin, Olmsted, Ramsey and Rice counties and various end points in the Twin Cities and Rochester. There is no continuous existing railroad connection between the Twin Cities and Rochester, so many of the potential corridors would create new transportation routes.

For more information, visit the MnDOT's Zip Rail web site at <http://www.goziprail.org/>.

Attend ProRail Nebraska's Annual Meeting in Omaha April 18

Meeting Sponsor: UNO Department of History

Your ProRail (PRN) leaders have been busy this past year supporting improved public ground transportation in Nebraska.

At our Annual Meeting, PRN's Lobbyists Matthew Roque and Jeff Poley will tell us about their efforts opposing LB 317 and supporting LB 644 in the Nebraska Legislature. See the articles on these two bills on pages 3 and 4, respectively.

Bob Owen and Terry Peterson, owners of Zephyr Rail Services, chartered an Amtrak "Husker Football Special" train last September 20 between Omaha and Lincoln. (See ProRail's November 2014 newsletter for details about the special train.) At our Annual Meeting, Warren Lucas, private rail car manager for Zephyr Rail Services, will tell us about his role in helping to get Amtrak involved in the "Big Red Amtrak Special" that ferried fans to Lincoln for the Miami football game. He will speak of this experience as well as his work managing two private rail cars. Because of a rail trip just prior to April 18, his speaking arrangement is tentative until the day of the event.

Another featured speaker April 18 is Ryan Huff, who heads Nebraska Department of Roads' Division of Rail and Public Transportation. Since Nebraska is the only state without a Department of Transportation, Mr. Huff will tell us about NDOR's role in promoting public ground transportation in Nebraska.

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Also, check out ProRail Nebraska's web site (<http://www.trainweb.org/prorailnebraska>) for updates on the Agenda for April 18.

ProRail Nebraska
7020 Burt St.
Omaha NE 68132-2600

Annual Meeting Sat. April 18th

ProRail Nebraska's Annual Meeting will be in Omaha on Saturday, April 18, at 9:00 am (refreshments at 8:30 am). The general public is welcome!

Where: University of Nebraska - Omaha – Milo Bail Student Center Umoho Room on 3rd Floor. The Milo Bail Student Center is located on the south side of Dodge St. near 62nd St.

See page 1 for details.

For more information, contact Clyde Anderson (402) 740-5556 (Omaha)
email ClydeLAnderson@cox.net

NOTE: The Omaha Earth Day celebration is the afternoon of Saturday, April 18th at Elmwood Park just east of the UNO campus.