



# 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 XXVIX

May 2019

## ProRail Nebraska – Mode Shift Omaha Meeting On Public Transportation

Saturday, June 8, 2019 – 9:00 am to Noon – Omaha, NE

*This event is free and the general public is welcome to attend*

**Where:** Omaha Metro/MAPA Headquarters, 2222 Cuming St., Omaha – Northeast corner of 24<sup>th</sup> St. & Cuming St. Please park on the west (24<sup>th</sup> St.) side of the building and enter the west door.

**By Bus:** Take OMetro Routes 4 or 24 and get off at the 24<sup>th</sup> & Cuming St. stop. Or the #18 bus to 20<sup>th</sup> & Cuming. Go to <http://www.ometro.com/> for schedules.

**Time:** 9:00 am to Noon (*Doors open, Refreshments - 8:30am*)

### Tentative Agenda

8:30 AM – Doors Open, Refreshments & Socialize

9:00 - Welcome & Introductions

9:10 - Sen. Dan Quick speaking on LB401 - Nebraska membership in MIPRC

9:30 - Sen. Justin Wayne speaking on LB492 - Regional Metro Transit Auth. Act

10:00 - Amanda Martin (Iowa DOT) by phone or video link – Update on Iowa Rail Planning

10:15 - Break

10:30 - Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) - speaker to be announced

10:45 - Jason Rose - Update on ORBT - Dodge St. Bus Rapid Transit Project

11:00 - Report from Mode Shift Omaha's Walkability Team - Crystal Edwards

11:15 - Report from Mode Shift Omaha's Transit Team - Madeline Brush

11:30 - Richard Schmeling with Lincoln's Citizens for Improved Transit

11:45 - ProRail Election of Officers

Noon - Adjourn

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

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

Page 2 - Status of LB401 for Nebraska's re-entry as a member of MIPRC, Update on StarTran

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## **Update on LB 401 To Reestablish Nebraska Membership in the MIPRC**

**(Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact)**

By Richard Schmeling - May 16, 2019

LB401 remains stalled in the Transportation & Telecommunications Committee and will not move forward unless we can come up with outside money to pay the annual MIPRC dues (about \$15,000/yr). Sen. Quick is working with the cities of Hastings, Holdrege and McCook to see if they will contribute toward the dues. I have contacted the mayors in Lincoln and Omaha about contributing, and Bob Kuzelka is working with the Railroad Transportation District in Lincoln to help on the dues. I have also sounded out the Omaha and Lincoln Chambers of Commerce offices about helping on the funding.

I have written the Nebraska Congressional delegation urging them to include funding for continuation of the long distance trains in the new Federal budget and will contact them soon. Other ProRail members should write letters, also.

Handouts for Nebraska Amtrak stations are being prepared and will be placed in Omaha, Lincoln, Hastings, Holdrege and McCook to urge Amtrak riders to write letters to Congress.

### **Progress at Lincoln's StarTran Transit System**

By Richard Schmeling - May 16, 2019



StarTran ridership continues to increase at about 5% compared to ridership during the previous year. New smart phone applications have gone online to help riders track buses and to do trip planning using a smart phone.

With recent new bus deliveries, the StarTran bus fleet is about 50% CNG (compressed natural gas) buses. A new CNG fueling facility will be installed this summer at the StarTran garage. Currently CNG buses have to deadhead to Sapp Brothers truck stop on Cornhusker Highway to refuel.

StarTran recently implemented an "Assigned Bus" system that assigns each bus driver to a specific numbered bus for their route. Previously buses were taken at random from the bus garage as drivers came on duty with each driver taking the next bus in line. This often resulted in the short (200 series) buses going out on busy routes or being used as a booster bus for school hauls. Overcrowding resulted, and with the new assigned bus system the properly-sized bus will be assigned to each route.

Work is underway to improve bus stops on the StarTran system. A partnership between StarTran and Lincoln Public Schools is resulting in the improvement of several bus stops serving schools with LPS paying for the pouring of concrete pads with StarTran installing a bench or shelter.

In addition, StarTran will place a bench or bench/shelter at about 34 bus stops on the system this summer.

The recent election in Lincoln has put in place a new Mayor and City Council which will be "transit friendly" at budget time. Thus implementation of Phases 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the update of the Transit Development Plan will likely move forward.

# **ProRail Nebraska Supports LB492 The Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority Act**

By Clyde Anderson

ProRail Nebraska supports LB492 and thanks Senator Wayne for introducing this bill as a follow-up to the hearings on LR399 held last year. On April 18 the Urban Affairs Committee voted this bill out of committee to General File. It is one of the Committee's priority bills.

ProRail believes that improved transit services in Nebraska metropolitan areas will make them less car-centric, encourage higher-density energy-efficient development, make our cities more attractive to young skilled workers who want to avoid car-dependent lifestyles, and improve the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

LB492 would allow municipalities to create regional metropolitan transit authorities (RMTAs) within the boundaries of a MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area). Existing transit agencies like Omaha Metro could choose to become RMTAs.

The service areas Omaha Metro and Lincoln's StarTran are limited to the boundaries of their respective cities. Several surrounding communities like La Vista and Papillion contract with Omaha Metro for limited weekday rush-hour services. But these municipalities cannot join Omaha Metro under the existing Metropolitan Transit Authority Law.

Omaha Metro operations are primarily funded by property tax revenue from taxable property in the City of Omaha. Farebox revenue covers only about 15% of operating expenses.

If enacted, under LB492 Omaha Metro could choose to become a Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority; and any Nebraska municipality within the Omaha MSA could, upon a two-thirds favorable vote of the municipality's governing body, join the RMTA of Omaha. The RMTA would benefit from the increased property tax revenue from the new member's taxable property. Thus this Act provides a mechanism to expand both the transit authority's territory and property tax revenue.

Originally as submitted, LB492 would have applied to other Nebraska MSAs like Lincoln and Grand Island. But LB492 got amended so that it now only applies to the Omaha MSA.

Another nice feature of LB492 is that it requires that RMTAs be governed by an elected, not appointed, seven-member Board. This has the potential of making Board members more responsive to the needs and concerns of the public. Members of Omaha Metro's Board are now appointed by Omaha's Mayor.

A limitation of LB492 is it doesn't provide any new sources of income. RMTAs would still be primarily dependent on property tax income. Some transit agencies, like Kansas City, are also funded by sales tax revenue and business district assessments.

On May 9th, LB492 was advanced to Select File with amendments limiting its scope to the Omaha Metro Area. The bill should get final reading the week of May 20<sup>th</sup> and head for the Governor's desk. So far the Governor hasn't voiced any objections to LB492, so it will likely get signed into law.

Remember, good transit benefits everyone, even those who never ride it!



## Solutionary Rail's Weekend in Omaha

### To Promote Electrified Railroads as a Win for America

May 3 & 4, 2019 – By Clyde Anderson

For the past several years Solutionary Rail (SR) has organized a people-powered campaign for getting America's railroads transitioning to a decarbonized mode of freight and passenger transportation. SR's primary goal is to electrify America's railroads.

To help communicate its goal, SR has published a book Solutionary Rail - a people-powered campaign to electrify America's railroads and open doors to a clean energy future. A PDF copy of the 108-page book can be downloaded for free by going to this website <https://www.solutionaryrail.org/ebook> and entering the coupon code "4WRD2GTHR".

SR also has a 3.5 minute introductory video <http://SolutionaryRail.org/video> that explains its goals and the advantages of railroad electrification.

BNSF Railway is the largest freight railroad network in North America. It is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway (BH). Since all BNSF trains are powered by diesel-fueled locomotives, the railroad is one of the nation's largest consumers of diesel fuel.

SR decided to target BNSF in its effort to promote electrification. The BH Annual Meeting in Omaha May 4th was a perfect opportunity. SR and Nebraska Sierra Club decided to schedule a program to educate the public about Solutionary Rail and its railroad electrification goals. The Electrified Railroad as a Win for America program was held at UNO's Community Engagement Center at 5:30 PM on Friday, May 3rd. There were a lot of questions asked during Bill's presentation and afterwards at a pizza reception.



Saturday morning volunteers held the Solutionary Rail banner outside the CHI Health Convention Center/Arena while the hordes of people lined up to enter the Berkshire Hathaway Annual Meeting. (Photo by Bill Moyer)

Thanks to Mark Hefflinger with Bold Nebraska, Bill was able to get BH credentials to attend the meeting. Once inside

Mark Welsch of Nebraskans for Peace, who has done this many times before, guided Bill to enter the drawing for those wishing to ask questions of Warren Buffet at the Q & A Session. And Bill's number was drawn first and got to ask the first question!

Go to <https://www.shorturl.at/wzCQS> to view Bill Moyer asking his question and the responses from Warren Buffet and Charlie Munger. Warren said SR could talk to Carl Ice, who is BNSF's new CEO. Then Charlie Munger added that SR is not only "on the side of the angels" but that electrification will come and that "Greg Abel will decide that." Greg is the vice chairman of BH for non-insurance business and the CEO of BH Energy. MidAmerican Energy Company, Iowa's largest electric utility is a wholly owned subsidiary of BH and noted for its extensive development of renewable wind energy.

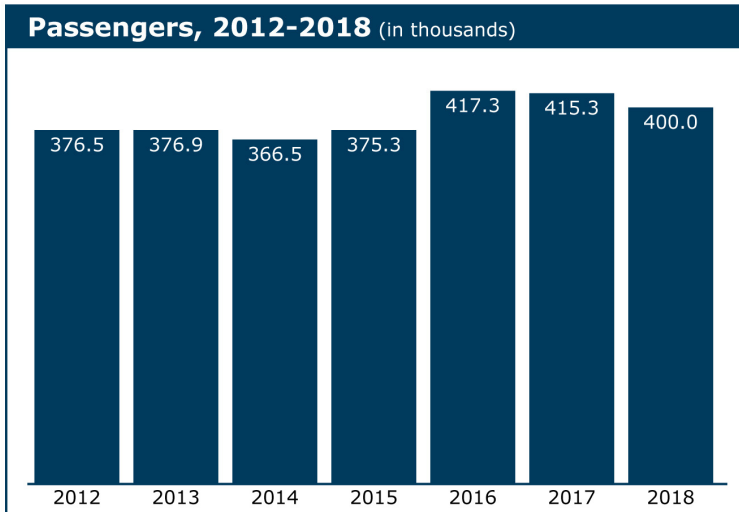


# Amtrak 2018 California Zephyr service Fact Sheet

The Rail Passengers Association has released 2018 Amtrak fact sheets by states, stations, business lines, routes, and congressional districts.

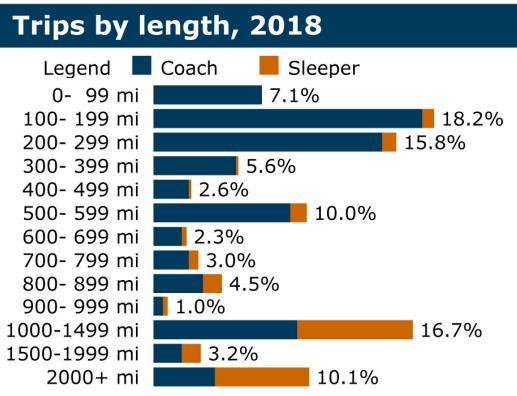
## Amtrak fact sheet: California Zephyr service

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### At a glance

Part of Amtrak's Long Distance sector  
 Daily service: 46 cities in 7 states  
 Population of service area  
 Within 25 miles: 14,960,252  
 Within 50 miles: 25,753,430  
 Longest segment traveled: 2,438 miles  
 Chicago, IL - Emeryville, CA



### Quick recap, 2018

	Coach	Sleeper	Total
Passengers	316,597	83,404	400,001
Average trip	563 miles	1380 miles	733 miles
Average fare	\$ 72.00	\$348.00	\$130.00
Avg yld per mi	12.8¢	25.2¢	17.7¢

### Activity by station

	2016	2017	2018
Burlington	9,242	8,430	8,668
Chicago	136,525	135,355	128,746
Colfax	6,277	7,035	5,658
Creston	3,843	3,797	3,747
Davis	5,815	6,000	5,766
Denver	136,410	135,162	128,483
Elko	7,550	7,219	8,656
Emeryville	62,162	63,207	59,818
Fort Morgan	3,539	3,448	3,445
Winter Park	9,017	8,845	10,006
Galesburg	22,839	23,087	21,813
Glenwood Springs	45,798	44,925	43,467
Granby	4,677	4,950	5,034
Grand Junction	31,861	30,440	32,146
Green River	2,589	2,235	2,605
Hastings	5,104	5,214	5,304
Helper	2,145	2,132	2,261
Holdrege	2,237	2,002	2,225
Lincoln	14,726	15,964	15,200
Martinez	17,011	17,025	16,110
McCook	3,049	2,914	3,282
Mount Pleasant	13,504	13,736	12,586
Naperville	7,376	7,144	7,167
Omaha	29,477	28,846	26,895
Osceola	15,960	15,601	16,064
Ottumwa	12,087	12,209	11,043
Princeton	6,353	6,509	6,939
Provo	5,537	5,095	5,120
Reno	69,297	69,904	70,518
Richmond	4,303	4,741	4,998
Roseville	10,915	9,681	9,503
Sacramento	55,086	54,632	50,441
Salt Lake City	40,890	40,163	45,195
Truckee	14,675	14,879	15,251
Winnemucca	4,050	4,146	4,540

### Top city pairs by ridership, 2018

1. Denver, CO - Glenwood Springs, CO 185 mi
2. Chicago, IL - Denver, CO 1038 mi
3. Chicago, IL - Emeryville, CA 2438 mi
4. Reno, NV - Sacramento, CA 151 mi
5. Denver, CO - Grand Junction, CO 273 mi
6. Reno, NV - Salt Lake City, UT 594 mi
7. Emeryville, CA - Reno, NV 236 mi
8. Chicago, IL - Omaha, NE 500 mi
9. Denver, CO - Emeryville, CA 1400 mi
10. Chicago, IL - Sacramento, CA 2353 mi

### Top city pairs by revenue, 2018

1. Chicago, IL - Emeryville, CA 2438 mi
2. Chicago, IL - Denver, CO 1038 mi
3. Chicago, IL - Sacramento, CA 2353 mi
4. Denver, CO - Emeryville, CA 1400 mi
5. Chicago, IL - Salt Lake City, UT 1608 mi
6. Denver, CO - Glenwood Springs, CO 185 mi
7. Denver, CO - Sacramento, CA 1315 mi
8. Chicago, IL - Grand Junction, CO 1311 mi
9. Chicago, IL - Reno, NV 2202 mi
10. Chicago, IL - Omaha, NE 500 mi

Note: Chicago is Amtrak's east-west gateway.



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 railpassengers.org

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## Annual Meeting Sat. June 8th

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

**Where:** Omaha Metro/MAPA Headquarters, 2222 Cuming St., Omaha. Park on west side of building off 24<sup>th</sup> St. and enter west door.

**See page 1 for details.**

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

**See page 2 for the status of LB401 for Nebraska's re-entry as a member of MIPRC.**

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## ProRail Nebraska Election of Officers at June 8th Meeting

The Board has nominated the following slate of candidates for officers to be elected June 8th for 2-year terms:

President - Matthew Roque  
Treasurer – Ralph Hayden

District 1 Director – Richard Schmeling  
District 3 Director – James Baldus

ProRail Nebraska members and allies are welcome to attend our Board meetings and participate in the business of our organization. There will be a short business meeting after the June 8<sup>th</sup> presentations, and you are welcome to join us. **Not a ProRail Nebraska member yet? JOIN NOW!**

### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

**Regular Member \$20 annually**

**Family Membership \$30 annually**

**(Family Memberships receive two votes on organizational issues)**

**Student Member \$10 annually**

**Corporate Member \$100 annually**

**Mail your membership dues to:**

F.M. "Morrie" Tuttle, PRN Secretary  
1910 Lake St., Lincoln NE 68502-3816  
home phone: (402) 435-5454;  
e-mail: [mtuttle@inebraska.com](mailto:mtuttle@inebraska.com)

