

Members

Sen. Ron Alting, Chairperson
Sen. Robert Jackman
Sen. Rose Ann Antich
Sen. Allie Craycraft
Rep. Dan Stevenson
Rep. Claire Leuck
Rep. Robert Alderman
Rep. John Ulmer



RAIL CORRIDOR SAFETY COMMITTEE

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Authority: P.L. 28-2000

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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: August 15, 2000
Meeting Time: 1:00 P.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington St., Room 233
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Sen. Ron Alting, Chairperson; Sen. Robert Jackman; Sen. Rose Ann Antich; Sen. Allie Craycraft; Rep. Claire Leuck.

Members Absent: Rep. Dan Stevenson; Rep. Robert Alderman; Rep. John Ulmer.

The meeting convened at 1:15 p.m. After Committee members were introduced, Steve Hull, Indiana Department of Transportation (InDOT) addressed the Committee. Mr. Hull made the following points:

- ▶ Primarily federal highway funds are used for railroad projects. InDOT expended \$5 million on railroads ten years ago. Currently InDOT expends \$15 million per year on railroads. InDOT uses toll road replacement credits to eliminate the need for local matching funds.
- ▶ The process of installing lights and gates is moving faster. It now takes approximately 18 to 24 months from the start of a project until the signals are installed.

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.ai.org/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

- ▶ Accidents at railroad crossings have declined by 80% over the past 25 years. Of the 6400 crossings in Indiana only half of the crossings have lights and gates. Approximately 55% of the railroad accidents in Indiana occur at crossings with flashing lights, gates, or both, a statistic that is consistent with the national average.

Mr. Hull stated that he would provide the committee with a summary of his testimony.

Mr. Ron Thomas, InDOT, addressed the committee concerning state funds available for railroad projects.² Mr. Thomas made the following points:

- ▶ The Industrial Rail Service Fund provides state loans and grants to Class 2 and 3 railroads for infrastructure improvements.³ In 1999, 49% of the "excepted track" received improvement grants from the fund. Lafayette received \$300,000 annually for railroad relocation.
- ▶ The Railroad Grade Crossing Fund provides grants for passive improvements at crossings.⁴ InDOT has allocated \$496,000 of the \$500,000 in the fund.

Mr. Jim Carrico, United Transportation Union, asked whether there is a definition of "short line railroad", because major carriers are receiving money from the Industrial Rail Service Fund. Mr. Thomas said that the definition of a short line railroad is tied to the amount of the railroad's annual revenue. Sen. Alting asked Mr. Thomas to provide the committee with a definition of short line railroad for the next meeting.

Rep. Leuck discussed a railroad crossing in her district that needs repair. InDOT representatives agreed to contact the railroad concerning fixing the crossing.

Ms. Cathy Hale, Indiana Railroad Transportation Group, testified on the needs of short line railroads.⁵ Ms. Hale explained that one of the biggest problems facing short lines is that the railroad industry is moving towards 286,000 pound rail cars, when short line railroad track, due to its deteriorated condition, has difficulty handling 263,000 pound rail cars. Consequently, if short lines are unable to handle the new cars, industries will locate on Class 1 railroad track and not on short line track. Short line railroads receive \$1.4 million annually from the industrial rail service fund for improvements and she would like to see this amount increased to \$3 million annually.

Mr. Bob Garner, Kankakee and Southern Railroad, discussed how the large carriers deferred maintenance of the short line track for several years before selling the track to the short lines. He indicated that the short lines cannot maintain the track structure to handle the 286,000 pound rail cars.

² A handout distributed by Mr. Thomas is on file at the Legislative Information Center. See footnote 1.

³The Industrial Rail Service Fund is located at IC 8-3-1.7-2.

⁴The Railroad Grade Crossing fund is located at IC 8-6-7.7-6.1.

⁵ The materials are on file at the Legislative Information Center. See footnote 1.

Mr. John Secor, Louisville and Indiana Railroad stated that short lines need improved track and bridges. He stated that due to the deferred maintenance, the surface of the track cannot achieve over a Class 2 status of track. He stated that short lines cannot generate enough capital to maintain let alone enhance the structure.

Mr. John Parsons, Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD), provided the committee with information concerning NICTD. ⁶ Mr. Parsons updated the committee on the Old Wilson Road crossing in Portage, Indiana. Mr. Parsons stated that in 1998, the crossing was restricted to use by overweight trucks. NICTD is in discussions with the Indiana Port Commission concerning whether the crossing may be permanently closed. Mr. Parsons indicated that there are discussions about building a bridge to the Midwest Steel facility.

Sen. Antich discussed a problem concerning train whistles that disturb residents in her district. Ron Thomas discussed the proposed federal regulation affecting local train whistle bans. Mr. Thomas stated that the regulation would require communities with a whistle ban to erect supplemental protection such as four quadrant gates or a combination of gates and median barriers. He added that under current state law, a local government that wants to adopt a whistle ban ordinance must have the ordinance reviewed by InDOT before it can take effect.

Mr. Steve Hull, InDOT, discussed the Clark Road crossing in Gary, Indiana. Mr. Hull explained that there are at least six rail grade crossings on Clark Road. He stated that InDOT wants to coordinate the crossing signals so that a vehicle does not have to stop in between the tracks. The cost of this project is between \$600,000 and \$800,000. InDOT originally looked at building an overpass but this would cost between \$8 and \$12 million. The city of Gary will not pay anything in making the improvement because InDOT will use the toll road replacement credits to pay for the local unit's share. Mr. Hull stated that he would provide Legislative Services Agency with a summary of his testimony concerning the Clark Road Crossing.

The Committee set the next meeting for September 14, 2000 at 10:30 a.m. The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

⁶ The handout is on file at the Legislative Information Center. See footnote 1.