

Members

Sen. Ron Alting, Chairperson
Sen. Robert Jackman
Sen. Rose Antich
Sen. Allie Craycraft
Rep. Claire Leuck
Rep. Dan Stevenson
Rep. Robert Alderman
Rep. P. Eric Turner



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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: September 23, 2002
Meeting Time: 11:00 A.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 Antich; Sen. Allie Craycraft; Rep. Claire Leuck.

Members Absent: Rep. Dan Stevenson; Rep. Robert Alderman; Rep. P. Eric Turner.

Sen. Alting convened the meeting at 11:10 am. After introduction of the Committee members and staff, Ms. Kathy Noland, Indiana Department of Transportation (InDOT), Director of Communications, introduced Mr. Mike Scime, Railroad Section Manager of InDOT, to make a presentation on the progress of high speed passenger rail in Indiana. Mr. Scime stated that the high speed rail hub will be located in Chicago with routes running to other cities, including Detroit, Indianapolis, and Cleveland. Mr. Scime reported that InDOT has been doing ridership estimates and cost estimates for high speed passenger rail. Seven public meetings were conducted last year around the state where there was unanimous support for high speed rail. He reported that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has made a budget request for \$3 million for Amtrak in Indiana for the rail line to Detroit; the funds are earmarked for a train control system that would allow

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train speeds exceeding 70 mph. InDOT is completing a final corridor designation study of the Chicago to Cleveland corridor.

Mr. Scime reported that InDOT has completed an internal analysis of the crossings on the projected high speed rail path, visiting each of the more than 800 public crossings along the path. In addition, InDOT will be doing an inventory of the more than 500 private crossings. InDOT is looking at whether crossings will require four quadrant gates, median barriers, or grade separations and which crossings should be closed. InDOT has had discussions with the freight railroads, who have indicated they do not want to bear the increased cost of track maintenance that will be incurred because of the increased speeds of passenger trains.

Mr. Scime stated that InDOT is looking at other improvements to the existing rail system that will benefit passengers, such as increasing some track speed limits. In addition, InDOT is looking at Federal legislative proposals for railroad funding, including proposals to fund railroads like highways or to give railroads bonding authority. The total cost is \$4.5 billion for the Chicago hub system, with the Indiana portion costing \$900 million. Federal participation will be required to pay some of Indiana's cost, but the percentage of that participation is still unknown.

Sen. Craycraft asked whether InDOT has considered whether the Chicago to Cleveland route could go through Fort Wayne. Mr. Scime stated that of the two routes under study, one route would go through South Bend and the other route would go through Fort Wayne. Sen. Jackman asked whether the route from Chicago to Indianapolis would go by the Indianapolis International Airport. Mr. Scime stated that the corridor from Cincinnati to Indianapolis would run by the airport. The plan calls for six trains per day on that line, and some of those trains would stop in downtown Indianapolis. Sen. Jackman asked whether trains on the route from Indianapolis to Cincinnati will run on grade separations through the urban areas of Greensburg, Shelbyville, Lawrence, and Batesville. Mr. Scime stated that the public hearings InDOT has had have been about the general concept of high speed rail and have not looked at the details. Ms. Kathy Noland, InDOT, added that InDOT will propose legislation that will repeal two previous compacts that Indiana entered into that are no longer necessary. Rep. Leuck asked how Europe has handled its train system. Mr. Scime explained that in the 1940's the United States focused on building a comprehensive highway system and left the railroads to the private sector, which focused on the more lucrative business of moving freight. Because a railroad system is so capital intense, no private corporation can recoup the initial investment. Railroads have flourished in Europe because the governments have made the investment.

Ms. Liz Solberg, Indiana High Speed Rail Association (IHSRA), introduced two IHSRA board members in attendance, Mr. Dennis Hodges and Ms. Carol Erickson. Ms. Solberg expressed the IHSRA's concern that the state and the nation are losing competitiveness due to a lack of coordination between transportation systems. Ms. Solberg made a presentation to the Committee on the progress of high speed rail in Indiana, including the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative. (See exhibit 1) Ms. Solberg explained that high speed passenger trains in Indiana will not travel at the high speeds of Europe's TGV trains, stating that high speed trains in the Midwest will not exceed 110 mph. She explained that studies showed that at this speed, trains pick up ridership. Ms. Solberg explained some of the benefits of rail travel, including economic, environmental, and improved quality of life. She stated that Indiana needs to start doing something now to further the development of high speed rail. Ms. Solberg urged that if the state waits until the federal government does something, it will already be too late. She suggested for example, that the state could get started now on the environmental studies needed for high speed passenger rail.

Ms. Solberg asked the Committee whether there was a way to add high speed rail development to the list of priorities that receives a portion of the state sales tax, with possibly a ceiling on the amount. She stated that the IHSRA has had discussions with the Chamber of Commerce on a proposal to allocate .04% of the state sales tax to high

speed rail. She stated to the Committee that the Association needs the Committee's guidance as to how they can fund high speed rail. Sen. Alting stated to the audience and Committee members that they should submit thoughts on generating revenue for high speed rail to the Committee. Sen. Craycraft pointed out that the state allows the local entities certain revenue sources such as hotel and motel taxes and tourism. He added that it could be argued that a new passenger rail system would benefit some of these areas. Sen. Craycraft indicated that the state does not yet know how much revenue will be generated from the sales tax. Ms. Solberg stated that the IHSRA understands that due to the state's fiscal crisis there is nothing that can be done to bring a large amount of money to high speed rail next year, but she stated that they would like to put mechanisms in place to collect in the future. Sen. Antich asked if anyone has heard whether there will be restructuring of the gaming distributions. Ms. Carol Erickson suggested that there needs to be communication with InDOT about what needs to be done first to establish funding priorities. Mr. Scime stated that InDOT has not asked for any money for high speed rail for InDOT's budget hearing in October. Sen. Alting stated that InDOT probably didn't make a request due to the state's fiscal crisis. Sen. Jackman stated that he serves on the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact Commission. (See exhibit 2) He explained that the Commission is trying to unify the Midwest voice to advocate passenger rail service. He explained that 12 states are eligible to join the compact. He agreed with Ms. Solberg that Indiana will suffer if it delays action until the federal government takes action.

The Committee scheduled the next meeting for October 18 at 11:00 AM. Sen Alting said that at that time the Committee will discuss proposals on possible funding sources for high speed rail. The meeting adjourned at 12:25 pm.