

Members

Sen. Thomas Wyss, Co-Chairperson  
Sen. James Merritt  
Sen. Vaneta Becker  
Sen. Phil Boots  
Sen. James Buck  
Sen. Allen Paul  
Sen. Travis Holdman  
Sen. James Arnold  
Sen. Earline Rogers  
Sen. James Lewis  
Sen. Jean Breaux  
Rep. Terri Austin, Co-Chairperson  
Rep. David Niezgodski  
Rep. Robert Bischoff  
Rep. Sandra Blanton  
Rep. Nancy Dembowski  
Rep. Phil Pflum  
Rep. Vern Tincher  
Rep. Cleo Duncan  
Rep. William Davis  
Rep. Thomas Saunders  
Rep. Ed Soliday  
Rep. Jacque Clements



# JOINT STUDY COMMITTEE ON MASS TRANSIT AND TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

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Authority: IC 2-5-28

## MEETING MINUTES<sup>1</sup>

**Meeting Date:** September 30, 2009  
**Meeting Time:** 1:00 A.M.  
**Meeting Place:** State House, 200 W. Washington  
St., Room 431  
**Meeting City:** Indianapolis, Indiana  
**Meeting Number:** 1

**Members Present:** Sen. Thomas Wyss, Co-Chairperson; Sen. James Merritt; Sen. Vaneta Becker; Sen. Phil Boots; Sen. Travis Holdman; Sen. James Arnold; Sen. Earline Rogers; Sen. James Lewis; Sen. Jean Breaux; Rep. Terri Austin, Co-Chairperson; Rep. David Niezgodski; Rep. Robert Bischoff; Rep. Nancy Dembowski; Rep. Phil Pflum; Rep. Vern Tincher; Rep. Cleo Duncan; Rep. Ed Soliday; Rep. Jacque Clements.

**Members Absent:** Sen. James Buck; Sen. Allen Paul; Rep. Sandra Blanton; Rep. William Davis; Rep. Thomas Saunders.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.in.gov/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

Call to Order

Senator Wyss called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m.

Geoff Paddock, Northeast Indiana Passenger Rail Association (NIPRA)

Before beginning his presentation, Mr. Paddock distributed copies of his talking points and a newspaper article about passenger rail service to Committee members. See Exhibits A and B. Mr. Paddock stated that NIPRA's goal is to bring passenger rail service back to the Fort Wayne area and told the Committee that approximately 800 people participated in a high speed rail rally in Fort Wayne in April 2009. Mr. Paddock told the Committee that passenger rail would positively affect economic development, tourism, and employment; NIPRA estimates an influx of \$30 million into the Fort Wayne area economy and the creation of 4,500 jobs statewide. Mr. Paddock said that he and NIPRA look forward to working with the General Assembly, the Governor, and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) to create a sustainable rail system for Indiana.

Representative Soliday asked about the type of modeling NIPRA used to calculate its economic development statistics. Mr. Paddock replied that NIPRA currently uses data from INDOT and the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission but is working on developing its own data. Senator Boots confirmed that Fort Wayne currently has no passenger rail service. Mr. Paddock stated that, in 1990, Amtrak moved its route 25 miles north to Waterloo but that Amtrak is under new leadership and shows a renewed interest in passenger rail service for Fort Wayne. Senator Breau asked for clarification as to what constitutes a sustainable passenger rail system. Mr. Paddock stated that a sustainable system requires a ridership sufficient to cover its costs and acknowledged that most other forms of transportation are subsidized by governments.

Leigh Morris, Deputy Commissioner for Toll Road Oversight, INDOT

Mr. Morris represents Indiana in a multistate steering group consisting of Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Chicago whose purposes are to advance high speed rail development in the midwest and obtain necessary federal funding. The steering group is focusing its efforts on three routes: Chicago to Detroit, Chicago to Madison via Milwaukee, and Chicago to St. Louis. Mr. Morris stated that INDOT has also applied for federal stimulus funding for a project to ease the congestion at the Indiana rail gateway to Chicago.

Senator Becker asked whether the steering group was studying high speed rail service in southern Indiana. Mr. Morris indicated that a route from Chicago to Cincinnati via Indianapolis would be studied in the second round of proposals. In response to a question from Senator Arnold concerning the timeline for federal funding, Mr. Morris stated that he anticipates learning the results of the first round of funding applications in two to three weeks.

Representative Dembowski stated that most transportation projects, including rail service, are subsidized. Mr. Morris agreed and noted that, while the government will provide initial financial support, he hopes that the high speed rail projects will be sustainable in the long term. Senator Boots commented that no transportation projects are truly self-sustaining. Mr. Morris again agreed but distinguished between traditional public transportation and the proposed high speed rail projects. Representative Duncan asked how the proposed high speed rail lines will work with existing freight lines. Mr. Morris answered that the freight lines will be protected and suggested the possibility of different passenger and freight routes or additional passenger rail miles.

Representative Austin noted that there are two proposed routes from Chicago to Cleveland, one via South Bend and the other via Fort Wayne, and asked which route Mr. Morris and the steering group prefer. Mr. Morris stated that the funding applications require an analysis of alternate routes and will provide the Committee with the results of the study. Representative Austin also asked whether the steering group had considered the possibility of entering into a public-private partnership with respect to high speed rail projects. Mr. Morris responded that the group is definitely considering partnerships because none of the states have enough money to fund the projects.

Senator Breaux asked Mr. Morris to set forth INDOT's position on passenger rail and its vision for the future of passenger rail in Indiana. Mr. Morris declined, stating that the question is outside his area of expertise, but noted that INDOT recognizes the importance of mass transit to Indiana and will participate in any dialogue.

#### Roger Sims, Indiana High Speed Rail Association

Mr. Sims described to the Committee the two rail projects for which INDOT is seeking federal funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. See Exhibits C and D. The first is the \$71.4 million Indiana gateway project to improve performance and reduce congestion at the Indiana rail gateway to Chicago. The second is the development of rail service between Chicago and Cleveland via either South Bend or Fort Wayne and then Toledo. Mr. Sims listed the groups, mayors, and chambers of commerce that support the application for federal funding. Finally, Mr. Sims described the economic impact of a rail system to Indiana, including new jobs, improved quality of life, and increases in household incomes and home values.

Representative Soliday asked Mr. Sims for the source of his data and statistics. Mr. Sims offered to provide Committee members with a study conducted by Transportation Economics and Management Systems, Inc. Senator Wyss asked whether Mr. Sims knew the total amount of federal funding that Indiana hopes to receive. Mr. Sims offered to work with INDOT to calculate the amount. Tim Maloney of the Hoosier Environmental Council responded that the total amount is approximately \$1.4 billion.

Senator Merritt inquired about the fuel source for rail travel as well as the cost of rail travel compared to other methods. Mr. Sims said that most trains traveling in Indiana will be diesel powered with a maximum speed of 90 to 110 miles per hour. He further stated that the cost of transporting one passenger one mile by rail is approximately one-third the cost of traveling by car and one-fourth the cost of traveling by air. Representative Austin asked whether the state will need to purchase additional rights of way for new rail lines or if existing highway rights of way can be used. Mr. Sims replied that since the goal of highway design is to use the least land possible, the curves of the rights of way are too sharp for use as rail lines and new rights of way will need to be purchased.

#### Public Testimony and Other Business

John Swanson, executive director of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), displayed a map showing existing Amtrak and freight lines in Indiana and distributed copies of NIRPC's Resolution 09-15 in support of the midwest high speed rail plan. See Exhibit E. Mr. Swanson said he is pleased that funding is being sought for rail projects in northwest Indiana because traffic in the area is very congested.

Tim Maloney, senior policy director of the Hoosier Environmental Council, voiced his support for the development of high speed rail in Indiana and urged the passage of legislation to provide matching funds.

At the request of Representative Austin and Senator Breaux, Jeff Spalding, legislative liaison for INDOT, agreed to provide INDOT's strategic plans for high speed rail and mass transit in Indiana.

Representative Austin reminded Committee members of upcoming meetings scheduled for October 27 at 1:00 p.m. and October 28 at 9:00 a.m. The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.