

MIPRC Year in Review

Presented by Laura Kliewer, MIPRC Director, during MIPRC 2017 Annual Meeting (10/10/17)

+MIPRC 2016 Annual Meeting – Sept. 27-29

MIPRC's 2016 annual meeting was held September 27-29, in St. Louis, Missouri.

The meeting began in Chicago with a brief tour of renovations underway at Union Station, and a ride on Amtrak's *Texas Eagle* (Chicago-San Antonio, Texas) to St. Louis. Aboard the train, commissioners, partners and allies heard about – and saw – ongoing work to upgrade the Chicago-St. Louis corridor to 110-mph service between Joliet and Alton by the end of 2017 or early 2018. They also received an update from Amtrak, with a special emphasis on state-supported routes.

The St. Louis portion of the meeting included a half-day trip on the state-supported *Missouri River Runner* to Kirkwood for a tour of that city's historic station and presentations on how the city has embraced the station as both a gateway and popular civic space/downtown anchor; and on the success of the *Missouri River Runner* service and the Missouri Passenger Rail Advisory Committee (MORPAC).

Commissioners spent Wednesday afternoon and all of Thursday at the St. Louis City Center hotel hearing and discussing presentations from the MIPRC states on the status of their passenger rail programs & activities, along with reviews of MIPRC's past-year activities and the pending Midwest regional rail planning project with the Federal Railroad Administration. They also reviewed the Universities and Colleges Passenger Rail Survey and discussed steps to follow up on its findings and recommendations. Other topics included updates on federal passenger rail-related legislation and rulings, the Next Generation Equipment Committee and the status of new equipment coming to the Midwest.

Commission business included election of commission officers for FY 2017: Tim Hoeffner, director of the Michigan Department of Transportation's Office of Rail (and Governor Snyder's designee to the commission) as MIPRC's chair; Joan Bray, Missouri Gov. Nixon's designee to the commission, as vice chair; and Kansas Sen. Carolyn McGinn as financial officer.

The full meeting minutes, including copies of presentations, is in your packets.

+Webinar on the Future of Intercity Passenger Rail in the Midwest – Oct. 21, 2016

In October, MIPRC joined the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and the Alliance for Regional Development to host a webinar for Midwestern metropolitan planning organizations on the status and future of intercity passenger rail in the region.

Representatives of MPOS in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin got an overview of MIPRC and its activities, the pending regional rail planning project led by the Federal Railroad Administration, the Next Generation Equipment Committee and its work to set design standards for modern, high-speed locomotives and railcars, and a state-by-state rundown of current projects and plans.

You can listen to the webinar or download a PDF of the PowerPoint; they are available on MIPRC's website under "current activities."

+Supplemental Colleges Passenger Rail Survey

In late 2016 and early 2017, three schools in Winona, Minnesota – Minnesota State University Southeast, St. Mary's University of Minnesota, and Winona State University – participated in a supplement to the original 2015-16 **MIPRC Universities & Colleges Passenger Rail Survey** of 30 schools across the region. A total of 666 respondents produced similar results to the original survey: strong support for passenger rail, and evidence of an untapped passenger base for passenger rail in the Midwest. The supplemental survey's findings should boost Minnesota's and Wisconsin's case for a second daily Chicago-Milwaukee-Twin Cities train.

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+4/6/17: Sent letter to Midwestern Members of Congress opposing cuts to long-distance service (in packets)

+Marketing Amtrak Service to Current and Potential College/University Students

On May 3, we held a webinar, in conjunction with Amtrak (special thanks to Derrick James and Jim Brzezinski) on Marketing Amtrak Service to Current and Potential College/University Students. Target audience was marketing contacts for universities/colleges throughout the Midwest, and was a follow-up to the universities and colleges survey MIPRC had conducted in late 2015, early 2016, along with the supplemental Winona schools survey I mentioned.

The results of MIPRC's survey, taken by almost 20,000 students, staff and administration at 33 schools across the Midwest, showed that the availability of passenger rail service to colleges and universities can be a strong marketing tool for schools that publicize it to potential and current students.

The survey showed that passenger rail service between students' homes and their college/university is an important asset for many students, and many more students may take the train if they had more information.

The webinar included:

- Results from the MIPRC Universities & Colleges Passenger Rail Survey
- What Amtrak offers college & university students
- Best practices of schools that market Amtrak
- Discussion of transportation options for students between the rail station and campus
- Q&A/open forum for discussion

+News from MIPRC States

We also wrote almost 2 dozen "[News from MIPRC States](#)" articles over the course of FY 17 and into the current fiscal year. The original source of these articles are passenger-rail activities reported on by our states – anything from public comment periods on transportation plans or studies, to new or changed service – and we try to expand on and provide context for the news. All News from MIPRC States articles are posted on our website. If you have any ideas for News from MIPRC States, please contact Jon Davis.

+Two areas that we will hear about more in detail this morning in upcoming sessions, but I will cover briefly include:

1. **MIPRC is a key stakeholder in the FRA-led planning effort for the Midwest**, which kicked off at the beginning of the year. Three workshops have been held so far, in March, June and September, with a final one planned for December. MIPRC had issued a "statement of interest" to the FRA back in 2014 on behalf of the Midwest, and was chosen as one of two regions (the other being the Southeast) in 2015.
2. On May 22 & 23, MIPRC had a **delegation of commissioners and staff travel to Washington DC** to meet with Midwestern Members of Congress, staff and Amtrak.