



NEWS FROM ALL ABOARD WISCONSIN

July 18 Passenger Rail Summit Brings Representatives from Four States to Wisconsin Dells.

Passenger rail advocates from Illinois, Michigan, and Minnesota, as well as Wisconsin, gathered on Saturday, July 18 at the Wintergreen Resort in Wisconsin Dells to hear Futurist William Draves proclaim that by 2020, Republican lawmakers will be pushing for passenger rail funding, and incentives for private investment in passenger rail as an economic development measure to meet the demands for rail travel generated by the up and coming generations of young professionals now entering the workforce. The author of "Nine Shift" and "The End of the Auto Age", which both examine the changes in attitude and desires of the young adults who will become the trend-setters and decision makers in the next 10-20 years brought forth data and comparisons to the changes that took place in society 100 years ago to bolster his arguments that another fundamental change in attitude and its effects on how people approach decisions on things like lifestyle and transportation is coming as the "Knowledge Economy" takes hold. Draves challenged attendees to continue to promote passenger rail and push for its expansion and modernization now, to position it for the demands to be placed upon it in the next quarter century.

Earlier, attendees were welcomed to the Dells by State Representative Ed Brooks, (R-Reedsburg) who is the newly appointed Wisconsin Assembly representative on the Midwest Regional Passenger Rail Commission. He joins State Senator Mark Miller as the second Wisconsin legislative representative on that panel. Representative Brooks, who is a long-time and avid Amtrak rider, spoke of his experiences of train travel and his personal opinions of its advantages. He looks forward to representing Wisconsin on the Midwest Regional Rail panel.

Luncheon speaker was Dave Zweifel, Editor emeritus of the Capitol Times, who gave the attendees insight to the "Politics of Passenger Rail in

the 2016 Presidential Election". Zweifel's many years of newspaper experience were brought to bear in an interesting and informative review of the candidates and issues affecting passenger rail in the upcoming presidential election year.

The principal afternoon presenter was Mayor Chris Koos, of Normal, Illinois; who gave an interesting, informative and inspiring presentation on the tremendous redevelopment successes in his community when "Uptown Normal" re-invented itself around a multi-purpose public facility which includes a passenger rail, intercity bus and transit station as well as local government offices. The project has spawned millions of dollars in private-sector investment, including a large national-brand hotel/conference center renovation and new construction of retail space and an updated and vibrant feel which has spread throughout the community. Home to Illinois State University, the Normal Amtrak station sees nearly 500,000 annual passengers departing or arriving from that facility; with connections to local and intercity buses.

The afternoon program concluded with a question/answer and open discussion session among the attendees; including an informative update on passenger rail progress in Michigan from Kay Chase. The day ended with a social and tour at the "Riverside and Great Northern" tourist railroad north of the Dells; hosted by AAW members the Fleming family. The day ended with a train ride along the original 1857 Milwaukee Road right-of-way behind a coal-burning 15 inch gauge 4-4-0 "American" class steam locomotive, originally built by Standly Locomotive Works in 1958 for service at the Milwaukee Zoo.

All Aboard Wisconsin Web Site "Goes Live"!

Along with the Passenger Rail Summit on July 18, another significant event in All Aboard Wisconsin's development was announced that day; the official unveiling of [All Aboard Wisconsin.com](http://AllAboardWis.com), the organization's official website. The result of several months work by All Aboard Wisconsin officers, staff and a professional web designer, the site will provide easy access to information about the organization, its programs and upcoming events. It will also provide access to AAW's Twitter feed, <http://twitter.com/AllAboardWis>, and downloadable membership application forms and other materials. The website will continue as a "work in progress" as new information is added and the site is "fine-tuned" over the next few months. Check back often to see what's new!

State Budget Passage Brings Losses and a Win to Rail in Wisconsin.

AAW Secretary and Legislative Director Gary Goyke spent most of the spring monitoring rail issues within the 2015-17 Wisconsin state budget; and as with many issues in this document, Rail took some "hits" while scoring at least one victory. Bonding for freight rail improvements, used to maintain and upgrade state-owned rail corridors, was reduced by \$14 Million, with those funds being transferred to the highway program. It's too early to tell specifically what projects may be delayed or cancelled by this reduction; but track and roadbed upgrades, bridge repairs and replacements on state-owned lines are all projects that are normally funded from this program. Meanwhile, WisDOT has been authorized to sell commercial advertising space at the Milwaukee Intermodal Station as a revenue-producing method, and a study will be commissioned to suggest other ways that the Department can raise revenues to fund the state's transportation system. Fortunately for railroads at all levels, an attempt to remove language that prohibits trespassing on railroad property in response to complaints about crossing blockage was vetoed by the Governor during the budget's signing. The language of the proposal would have removed penalties for most forms of dangerous trespassing on railroad property, and was opposed by the industry at all levels.

Federal Railroad Administration Announces Midwest Rail Study.

Just this week, the Federal Railroad Administration announced the award of nearly \$2.8 Million to fund passenger rail studies in the Midwest and Southeastern states. In its news release, the FRA stated:

The funds are intended to form more comprehensive regional governance organizations to sustain current planning work and develop a long-term passenger rail vision for their respective regions. Funding will also be utilized to enhance FRA's passenger rail network planning tool with updated cost and trip table data, as well as new mapping and benefit-cost analysis features. These efforts will build off of the pilot Southwest Passenger Rail Study funded under similar authority in FY 2010 and released in October 2014.

In announcing the studies, USDOT Secretary Anthony Foxx made the case for expanded, modernized passenger rail as vital to the country's continued progress:

"So, take our already congested roads and runways and imagine what they look like with 70 million more Americans trying to wedge their way from city to city," he wrote. "We have a capacity problem now that is only going to get worse in the very near future. A world-class passenger rail network in our fastest-growing regions is no luxury; it's a necessity. We also have a rail network that, with a commitment from USDOT, states and regions, can be upgraded to accommodate quality passenger service."

WisDOT rail staff, among others, contributed information and ideas that helped the Midwest region successfully compete for this project. All Aboard Wisconsin will be closely monitoring this project as it goes forward.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! All Aboard Wisconsin Annual Meeting, Election of Officers, Special Passenger Rail Sessions, Joint Meetings/Action Plans with All Aboard Minnesota, all Part of Bi-State Fall Public Transportation Conference in Duluth!

Join us in Duluth, MN on October 19 - 21 for the triennial Wisconsin/Minnesota Public Transportation Conference. Held at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center (DECC), with convention headquarters at the Holiday-Inn Downtown, the conference brings-together public transportation professionals, industry vendors, and government transportation officials from both states and the federal government for three days of informative training and information-sharing sessions. This year, All Aboard Wisconsin is an official sponsor of the event for the first time, and we're pleased to invite our neighbors and colleagues from All Aboard Minnesota to join us. On Monday, October 19, in addition to the Annual Meeting and election of officers, held in the historic Duluth Union Depot - site of the Lake Superior Railroad Museum, we'll have a joint meeting with All Aboard Minnesota to discuss such items as the "Second Train Study", the newly announced FRA-funded Midwest Passenger Rail Study, and other items of joint interest. We're also looking forward to a presentation from Ed Ellis, Chairman and President of Iowa Pacific Holdings, on that company's ventures into passenger rail service in Indiana and Oklahoma, and prospects for further expansion in the future. Monday will also feature a welcome reception for all conference attendees at the DECC. On Tuesday, October 20, the rail focus continues with a breakout session at the DECC to receive updates and discuss several on-going passenger rail planning studies and the status of new passenger rail service in Minnesota, including the "Northern Lights Express" which will tie-together the Twin Cities with Superior and Duluth. We've invited passenger rail planners from WisDOT and MnDOT to join us for what promises to be an informative and wide-ranging presentation. Conference registration materials will be available on the AAW website soon, together with hotel information.

Travel Like a Rail Baron to the Fall Conference!

Ever wonder how the "big shots" of the railroad world travel? Here's your chance to find out! AAW is sponsoring a rail trip to the Bi-State Fall Conference aboard the private railcar "*Caritas*", a railroad "business car" similar to those used for decades by high railroad officials. Stretch-out in the lounge or "take the air" on the open rear platform; enjoy full meal

service in the dining room and overnight in double-bunk rooms aboard. "Caritas" will be attached to the rear of the westbound "Empire Builder" on Sunday, October 18 at Chicago, and will carry passengers from there, Milwaukee, Columbus (Madison area) and other stops along the line to St. Paul. The car will return on the morning of Thursday, October 22nd on the eastbound "Builder". For more details, and to reserve your place on this exceptional journey, check-out the attached informational flier.

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