

MIPRC Year in Review, presented by Laura Kliewer, MIPRC Director, during 2019 Annual Meeting  
Washington, D.C. (10/21/19)

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## **MIPRC 2019 YEAR IN REVIEW**

### **MIPRC 2018 Meeting**

The commission held its 2018 Annual Meeting from October 3 to 5 in Milwaukee. The meeting began at Chicago's Union Station with a presentation on and tour of renovation work there, an overview of the state-sponsored Chicago-Milwaukee *Hiawatha* service, and a 90-minute ride on the *Hiawatha* to Milwaukee's Intermodal Station. Hosted by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation in its offices at the station, the agenda in Milwaukee included a recap of the previous year, a review of MIPRC's annual trip to Washington, D.C., on May 23-24, and presentations on: member states' passenger rail developments; updates from the Federal Railroad Administration, including on the FRA-led Midwest Regional Rail Planning Study; Amtrak's vision for the future; updates on the new locomotives and coach cars for Amtrak Midwest service; and Brightline's passenger rail service in Florida and future plans, along with potential lessons for similar, potential corridor services in the Midwest.

### **MIPRC "Promotional" Video**

One of the ideas that came out of the meeting was to have MIPRC develop a brief promotional video. We weren't quite sure where to start, but initially contacted several of the DOTs communications teams. Then Cindy Claycomb, who is a Wichita City Council member, and representing Kansas MIPRC commissioner Pete Meitzner at last year's MIPRC Annual Meeting, put us in contact with the head of the Elliott School of Communication at Wichita State University, who introduced us to Madeline McCullough, the faculty member who oversees the Shocker Ad Lab at WSU. The students in the Shocker Ad Lab have a variety of backgrounds (most are studying advertising/public relations) and they work with various "outside" clients to develop social media pieces, including short videos. Jon and I have worked with the group since January to develop and produce the video, and I am happy to say it is now ready to be shown!

### **2019 Annual Meeting, and Drafting of MIPRC Reauthorization Positions**

Another directive that came out of last year's meeting was that commissioners agreed to hold MIPRC's 2019 Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., and shift the commission's annual visit to Congress from late spring to the fall annual meeting. As you know, this unusual step is being taken to amplify MIPRC's voice and Midwestern passenger rail needs as Members of Congress begin discussing re-authorization of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act of 2015, which is due for renewal in 2020.

We sought input from various like-minded organizations, and developed a list of key items on the surface transportation reauthorization which I sent to all MIPRC commissioners and partners who were coming to this meeting. We will talk about the positions in more detail tomorrow afternoon.

### **FRA-Led Planning Project**

MIPRC continues to partner with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to develop a strategic 40-year vision for the Midwest's passenger rail network, service, financing and governance. In 2015, the Midwest was chosen as one of two regions to participate in an FRA-

led multistate rail planning process. The region was chosen based on MIPRC's Statement of Interest and Qualifications submitted on behalf of the Midwest in November 2014.

MIPRC and 12 Midwestern state DOTs are the lead stakeholders for the project. Thirty supporting stakeholders include local governments, MPOs, railroads, public and private passenger rail operators, transit agencies, and other regional and statewide planning organizations.

MIPRC has been awaiting a draft of the final report to be released for MIPRC's and our states' review. In June, MIPRC was informed that FRA needed to make some adjustments to the software tool and are doing some additional analysis based on those changes, some of which may affect the report's conclusions. Once the analysis is complete, the FRA plans to bring an updated proposal for the 40-year network back to stakeholders for input through a workshop, hopefully early next year. We will hear a more detailed update from the FRA project's director, Peter Schwartz, tomorrow.

### **Website**

We continue to offer a variety of resources related to passenger rail development in the Midwest, including MIPRC news, articles about passenger rail-related activities in our states, testimony, letters and information on both long-distance and corridor service across the region via our website ([www.miprc.org](http://www.miprc.org)). News posts are also continually shared via social media, including Twitter (@MW\_Rail) and LinkedIn. If you are on Twitter, we encourage you to follow us.

### **New Appointments to MIPRC**

Every two years, we request appointments to MIPRC from each of our member state's legislative chambers, as well as from any new governor (legislative terms are for 2 years; gubernatorial appointees serve for the term of the governor). We are glad to see a good mix of those re-appointed to the commission and new faces.

### **A word about Nebraska**

On July 1, Nebraska's membership in the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact sunset, due to legislation passed in 2015 that we were unable to get overturned. Nebraska Sen. Dan Quick, who was a MIPRC commissioner, introduced legislation this year to try and get Nebraska back into the compact (the legislation carries over to 2020), and Beth McCluskey and I testified at the bill's hearing; we also held an informational session for Nebraska state legislators sponsored by the advocacy group ProRail Nebraska. Sen. Quick has also requested that the chair of the Unicameral's transportation committee hold a hearing to study MIPRC sometime during the current interim. We will continue to work with MIPRC's former Nebraska commissioners and others to reinstate the state's membership in the compact.