



**NORTHERN INDIANA  
COMMUTER TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT**

33 E. U.S. HIGHWAY 12 • CHESTERTON, IN 46302-3514

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**NORTHERN INDIANA COMMUTER TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT  
BOARD MEETING  
November 20, 2015  
Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District  
33 East U.S. Highway 12  
Chesterton, IN 46304-3514  
Public Session – 10:30 a.m. (CST)**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

John Evans  
Mark Catanzarite  
Christine Cid

Michael Repay  
David Decker  
David Prancus

Andrew Kostielney  
Mark Yagelski

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Justin Mount, Regional Director  
Office of Senator Joe Donnelly  
Steven Lyons – Passenger  
George Rogge – Miller Business Assn.  
Greg Price – Passenger  
Paul Willer - Passenger

Chuck Compton – South Shore Freight Railroad  
Gerald Williamson - Passenger  
Roy Benedict – Passenger  
Gene Ayers – Miller Business Assn.  
Jim Nowacki – Passenger

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Michael Noland  
Chuck Lukmann, Esq.  
Anthony Siegmund  
Lisa J. Johnson

John Parsons  
Boris Matakovic  
Laura Harrington  
Robert Byrd

Keith Casey  
Robert Byrd  
Bill O’Dea  
Joe Crnkovich

**CALL TO ORDER**

Board Chairman, Mr. Evans, called the meeting to order and asked that those present stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**SPECIAL GUEST**

Mr. Evans introduced Justin Mount from Senator Donnelly’s office.

## MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Evans requested approval of the minutes from October 2, 2015 and November 9, 2015. David Decker motioned to accept the Public Session and Executive Session Board minutes from both October 2, 2015 and November 9, 2015. The motion was seconded by Mike Repay. The motion was approved unanimously.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. George Rogge of the Miller Business Association thanked the Board for their efforts with Regional Cities.

Mr. Jim Nowacki, resident of Gary and South Shore passenger, stated his dissatisfaction with regard to the applications for the Tiger Grant and Regional Cities Grant.

## GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

**Federal Update.** Mr. Noland reported that the bill was passed for the extension of Positive Train Control implementation. He thanked Senator Donnelly, Senator Coats, Congressmen Visclosky and Congresswoman Walorski for their efforts. Mr. Noland state we have signed the contract with Parsons, passed the Bond Resolution and we are coming together to implement Positive Train Control. They are working in Congress for a long-term funding program for transportation. Mr. Noland stated that there is momentum for a six year bill will present a bipartisan package to assist in funding. It is possible that there will be a three year bill presented with stronger funding. We know that our Congressional Delegation is doing all they can to help us voice some of the key projects we would like to see happen.

**Regional Cities.** There is no final decision with regard to the funding. The application that we put in by the Northwest Indiana RDA for double tracking is not going to be one of the selected entities. However, our efforts regarding relaying what double tracking would mean, was well-received. Trustee Repay had also received commentary at the strong reception of the double tracking project. We were part of the Gary Tiger Application. The double tracking was related to Gary's application. We requested funds for engineering to do a small section of double tracking and to upgrade the Miller Station and to put in high level platforms with storage tracks.

**West Lake DEIS Status Report.** Mr. Noland explained that we held three public workshops in Dyer, Hammond and Munster. They were well-attended. We have several options for West Lake, and we had several teams stationed near explanatory charts to respond to questions. We are gaining public input and have met with the local communities for their input. Hammond had presented to us a plan for the work to be done there. We are only at a 10% engineering level with a \$571 million budget. When we have about 30% engineering complete and begin to obtain construction bids, we will have a better idea of what options are viable. This is all dependent upon us receiving the full federal grant. Service could potentially be expanded from 10 trains a day to 24 trains a day with full implementation of service. This would greatly

benefit the people of the region. Mr. Noland pointed out the various potential stations on the charts. Mr. Noland stated will be bringing a recommendation to the Board sometime in the middle of next year once we have gone through the environmental process for the preferred alternative which will be followed by public hearing. We are on schedule for a start in 2023.

Mr. Noland stated that there are several benefits of double tracking. It gets rid of that single point of failure; will allow us to increase our performance from 89-90% on time to 93-94%; and it will also allow us to add more service – possibly including hourly off-peak service.

**Bikes on Trains Status Report.** Mr. Noland stated that over the weekends of October 31<sup>st</sup>-November 1<sup>st</sup> and November 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, we took one of our 3-2 series cars, removed the three seat side in one quarter of the cars and installed 12 bike racks. Along with our bike advisory group, we had some test bike riders to provide an example of what the pilot program in the spring will look like. We received a lot of interested and positive feedback from our seated customers. We originally planned to fit 30+ racks per half a car, and now plan to do 36 – 12 on one side and 14 on the other. There will be information put together regarding the program. Mr. Noland rode on the first trial weekend with Mr. Parsons rode on the second. Mr. Parsons emphasized that we will need more bike cars. We will need to be prepared for the demand. Mr. Noland stated that we will propose to have three half cars available and one-quarter of the four other cars – significantly increasing our flexibility. Mr. Noland expressed the need for a solid policy for having bikes on trains.

**Wifi.** Mr. Noland introduced Boris Matakovic to update the Board on the Wifi status. Mr. Matakovic explained that the public response has been interesting and positive. In the next few months the rest of the fleet will be outfitted with Wifi. While this is a good thing for our customers, internally we will begin to be able to have GPS on our trains along with more flexibility. Mr. Repay asked if this would eventually give the customer the ability to see where the train is. Mr. Matakovic stated yes. Mr. Noland stated that the investment that is being proposed to the Board for approval today includes the customer services that will be available, but also the GPS location and is a tremendous investment.

David Decker mentioned a technology where you would never lose a signal on the Wifi. Mr. Matakovic stated that that is very capital intensive. Mr. Noland reiterated that this is not only for the benefit of the customers, but also to the benefit of the fleet. Mr. Noland requests the Board approve the purchase of equipment for the remaining 72 cars so that we may move forward in this process.

Michael Repay motioned to approve the motion. The motion was seconded by Christine Cid. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Noland informed the Board that Metra has approved their fare increase stating that Metra is increasing an average of \$.25 to every one way ticket. Our Hegewisch fares will be going up on February 1<sup>st</sup> to \$5.75. We have always kept in step with Hegewisch with keeping a differential between Hegewisch and Hammond/East Chicago of about \$.50. Mr. Noland stated that we have been reviewing our ridership, revenues and costs, and he believes we match the Metra increase percentage-wise, but dedicate it to capital. Mr. Noland stated that we need to

generate our own capital. Metra has been successfully generating their own capital enabling them to match new capital grants or to self-fund through their own bonding authority and pulling together with other monies. The model for West Lake is going to be federal funds, state funds, RDA funds and local community funds. There is a broad base of support for our project. This would give us the ability to put together the fund to get projects to the finish line. Mr. Noland recommends this course of action and requests the Board give it their consideration.

## **RIDERSHIP & PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Mr. Parsons stated that we are reaping the benefits from January and February where there was a strong ridership and service showing relative to 2014. Average weekday ridership remains positive primarily due to peak ridership. Off-peak ridership and weekend ridership remains soft. Everything is down in the state, and it is taking the Northwest Indiana and Chicago economy longer to recover than the rest of the country. Metra's ridership was also soft overall. Mr. Parsons stated that we are going to have to work on attracting additional rider. We are still in the 90s in terms of on-time performance relative to last year. We are up. Overall, we remain position through the year at 85.9% of all train. Through October we ran about 10,700 trains. We have got a busy holiday season coming up beginning with the Magnificent Mile Lights Festival. Chicago has moved the tree lighting to Maggie Daley Park which is closer to Millennium Park. Hopefully, we will get more people taking advantage of that.

Mr. Parsons informed the Board that on Tuesday, we wrapped our first car. It is for Lighthouse Place Mall out of Michigan City, a Simon Property. We will get a good picture for you. Lighthouse is the first customer. This is being done by Q-Rail Advertising. They also have a contract with Blue Chip. A lot of the major firms want to wait and see something on a car before Q-Rail can generate interest in the train wrapping.

## **OPERATIONS REPORT**

Bill O'Dea addressed the Board and stated that our Winter Preparedness Plans are in good order. We have updated our operating plans. Our stocks and stores are in good shape with respect to weather implements (i.e., salt, shovels, brooms, etc.). Our success is based on vigilance. Mr. O'Dea also stated that we have had a successful 2015 in terms of hiring new transportation personnel. We are close to having 30 employees. We have very few people leave once they start working here. This is a credit to the hiring process, and to the mentoring and training that takes place on the trains.

Mr. Noland added that it takes years before a person can become a qualified engineer or conductor on the train. If we are not proactive, we need to look out at 2016, 2017, and the last thing we want is to be short. It takes years to develop the talent and expertise to operate. We have been working diligently because we do see in the outer years is our employee's age. They are able to retire.

Mr. O'Dea mentioned that in 2017 and 2018, there will be a significant number of individuals who will be retiring.

Mr. Evans stated it is a credit to the people who do the mentoring.

Mr. Noland requested Chief Byrd to briefly comment on our response after the Paris terrorist attack. We went on a heightened state of alert.

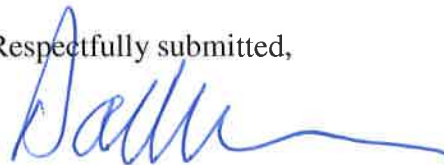
Chief Byrd noted that we have ramped up our operations, our police presence both at our stations and on board our trains. We have incurred some overtime in doing so, but we received a very positive response back from our public. There were commuters who were actually engaging the officers and saying, "Thank you, we appreciate you being out there." This is due not just to the Paris attack, but also to the bombings over the last couple of months, as well as Isis announcing their focus on Times Square, etc. It comes down to vigilance to our employees and our customers. If you see something, say something. Notify your conductor.

Mr. Catanzarite made a motion to table Resolution 15-08 to the next meeting. Mr. Repay seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Repay made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Decker. The motion was approved unanimously. The next NICTD Board Meeting is scheduled for January 22, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,



Dave Decker, Board Secretary

