

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact

Bringing Together State Leaders from Across the Region to Advocate for Passenger Rail Improvements

What are the purposes of the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact?

The main purposes of the compact are to promote, coordinate and support regional improvements to passenger rail service:

- Promote development and implementation of improvements and long-range plans for intercity passenger rail service in the Midwest;
- Coordinate interaction among Midwestern state officials, and among the public and private sector at all levels (federal, state and local); and
- Support current state efforts being conducted through state DOTs.

Why does the Midwest need a compact to achieve these purposes?

The Midwest needs a unified voice to advocate at the federal, state and local levels for frequent, convenient, cost-effective passenger rail service. The development of a modern passenger rail service is an integral component of the intermodal transportation infrastructure needed to move people and goods quickly, safely and economically in the 21st century. The MIPRC is pleased that this essential transportation component has begun to receive the attention currently afforded other transportation modes.

With all major metropolitan cities within the 100-500 mile range of the Chicago Hub, our region is the ideal candidate for more frequent intercity passenger rail service at higher speeds. Midwestern state officials and other advocates need to come together and declare with one voice that improvements in passenger rail are critical and necessary. The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact provides structure and legitimacy to such a voice.

The MIPRC played a strong role in passage of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA), signed by President Bush on October 16. PRIIA reauthorizes Amtrak and authorizes the first multi-year federal program to provide funding to states for passenger rail improvements and equipment investments. It is imperative that state leaders in the Midwest advocate for appropriations for these authorizations in the coming year, and for other initiatives to build a strong passenger rail system in our region.

Which states are eligible to join the Compact?

The states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin are eligible to join the Compact. Other states may also be declared eligible to join, upon approval of the commission that was created when the Compact became effective.

Who makes up the commission's membership?

Four resident members from each state that has enacted the compact are appointed to the commission. The governor of each state appoints two members and legislative leaders appoint two members.

The governor shall appoint:

- The governor or a designee;
- A member of the private sector

The legislature shall appoint:

- One member from each legislative chamber
(or two legislators from any unicameral legislature)

When did the Compact become operational and what is its progress to date?

According to the compact language, three states needed to enact the compact before it became operational. That happened in 2000, when the legislatures of Indiana, Minnesota and Missouri passed the compact, and the bills were signed into law. Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Nebraska, North Dakota and Ohio subsequently joined. In March of 2008, Wisconsin became the latest state to join the MIPRC, making a total of 10 compact members to date. As the other eligible states continue to pass enabling legislation, they will become members of the commission created to carry out the objectives of the compact – the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission.

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) has been effective in educating Members of Congress from its member states on the importance of passenger rail development to the region, in facilitating dialogue among various parties with an interest in rail and in highlighting the importance of a strong intermodal transportation system to our region. The group seeks a dedicated source of funding for passenger rail, and a preserved and improved nationwide passenger rail system. In addition, the MIPRC advocates for federal funding to implement the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI), a nine-state effort to improve the efficiency and frequency of passenger rail service in the region, and for the Ohio Hub plan, which would also dramatically increase the region's passenger rail service as well as connect the Midwest to the East.

During its June 2008 spring meeting, held June 17 and 18 in Washington, D.C., MIPRC commissioners called on members of Congress to support the PRIIA conference committee report, provided it still contained substantive funding for state capital grants at an 80/20 federal/state match. Commissioners also called on Congress to support full funding of Amtrak at \$1.6 billion; support the inclusion of at least \$100 million for capital assistance to states for intercity passenger rail projects; and provide \$114 billion for the Amtrak labor settlement, as recommended by the Presidential Emergency Board. Finally, the commission called for additional federal funds dedicated to overhauling more passenger rail cars and purchasing new equipment.

During fall 2007/winter 2008, the MIPRC held meetings in several of its member states, to review state passenger rail activities and to assist MIPRC commissioners in determining how to improve its accessibility and advocacy. In the coming year, the MIPRC will hold meetings in the remaining states. MIPRC's 2008 fall meeting will be held December 3 & 4 in Omaha, Nebraska.

How can I find out more about the Compact and its progress?

Detailed information about the MIPRC is available on its website: www.miprc.org. Or, contact Laura Kliewer, the commission's director (630/925-1922, lkiewer@miprc.org).