

# **Prorail Nebraska**

## **Statement of objectives**

Revised September 18, 2008

ProRail Nebraska exists to advocate for improved passenger rail transportation serving Nebraska. It is an affiliate of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP), which advocates passenger rail service on a national basis. Our current projects are:

Nebraska is a member of the Midwest Interstate Rail Compact (MIRC), an association made up of officials appointed by the Governor of each State in the Midwest. Nebraska's representatives include two State Senators and two public representatives. Its purpose is to coordinate development of passenger rail service in the several Midwest states. ProRail encourages this organization. Nebraska has not taken as active a role in this organization as ProRail would like.

The California Zephyr, which connects Chicago with San Francisco, is the only passenger train currently serving Nebraska. We work with Amtrak, the train's operator, to improve its service. We also strive to find means of promoting ridership and utilization.

The California Zephyr is an impressive train, but it operates only once a day and it passes through Nebraska only at night. ProRail advocates a second train connecting Lincoln and Chicago, possibly with service extending to Denver. It would be a "daylight" train. It is considered that a daylight train will attract more passengers who find the Zephyr's schedule difficult.

Lincoln and Omaha are the major population centers in Nebraska. ProRail advocates commuter trains connecting them. The geography is unique in that there are population centers at each end of the route, affording more balanced than usual passenger flow. The major road connecting the two cities is getting very congested. Also, increased gasoline price makes the rail route more attractive than the automobile route. ProRail advocates commuter rail between Lincoln and Omaha.

Omaha and Kansas City have virtually no public transportation connections. The distance between the two cities makes airline service unattractive. ProRail advocates establishing at least two trains a day in each direction. Lincoln should be connected to this service. Initially, the connection could be bus service from Lincoln to either Omaha or Nebraska City.

ProRail advocates establishing a Department of Public Transportation in the State government. Currently, Nebraska is the only state in the union with a Department of Roads, rather than a Department of Transportation.