

# JGLETTERS

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## **Rail service will boost stops on U.S. 30 corridor**

Recently several newspapers along the U.S. 30 highway corridor across Indiana (including The JournalGazette on Aug. 17) published an op-ed from Leigh Morris on making U.S. 30 a limited-access freeway from the Ohio line to the Illinois line. While this effort may well help reduce congestion and improve traffic and truck flow, it may also reduce local economic development in the cities and towns along the corridor with higher speeds and less reason to stop along the way.

While improving the safety and traffic flow on this important highway is laudable, there is another project being worked on that will offer much more direct economic development and transportation benefits to people living in the cities and towns along U.S. 30.

The Northern Indiana and Ohio Passenger Rail project will restore passenger rail service to Fort Wayne, Warsaw, Plymouth, Valparaiso and Gary. This passenger rail service, which will connect to Chicago and eventually to Columbus, Ohio, will provide transportation to the downtown areas of each community along this route and will help drive direct economic development in the heart of all these cities and towns.

We have spoken with Amtrak about partnering with the Northern Indiana Passenger Rail Association and our many public and private stakeholders to operate this restored passenger rail service for northern Indiana, and they are interested in doing so. We hope to see at least four trains each day (two each way) as a minimum within three years, with more added as ridership use and demand grow.

The return of passenger rail service to the U.S. 30 corridor by 2020 will have a dramatic and immediate effect on the downtowns of all the Indiana communities mentioned above. It will also help other communities located between the passenger stops. The first federally mandated study on the reintroduction of passenger rail service on this rail line will be completed and results released this fall. So, stay tuned. Passenger rail service is coming back for northern Indiana.

*Fred Lanahan*

*President,*

*Northern Indiana*

*Passenger Rail Association*

*Fort Wayne*