

Strand Theatre Shelbyville, Inc.

Old Website Article Backup

Articles prior to December 5, 2018

Strand Theatre Lecture ? Review

Written by David on March, 17 2010

Future of Transportation explored in initial 2010 lecture

Once upon a time, in the not so distant past, Indiana was known as the cross roads of America for the rail lines, both passenger and freight that traversed the state.

Today a group of dedicated Hoosiers hope to recreate this reality and once again make our state a transportation hub for the nation, Dennis Hodges of the Indiana High Speed Association told audience members during his lecture at the Strand Theatre Tuesday night.

In the early decades of the past century rail lines became the backbone of personal travel and industrial growth for Indiana, he added, and by 1916 Indiana had the largest interurban rail system in the nation.

Times have changed. Service sector jobs have replaced manufacturing as the state and the region's largest employers and rail lines, while still in existence, have seriously declined, particularly for personal transportation. Beginning in 1992, the Indiana High Speed Rail System has been working to change this, and with dawn of a new century and the newly proposed Midwest Regional Passenger Rail system in the works, the future is pregnant with possibilities, according to Hodges.

"I am a firm believer that we can be an aggressive innovator in transportation again in the 21st century," Hodges said.

He added that Indiana has already dedicated 636 miles of rail lines for high-speed passenger service and encouraged everyone to inform legislators about the economic, environmental and social value of a rail system linking Shelbyville to a line connecting Chicago, Indianapolis and Cincinnati.

These trains would not merely benefit local and regional business but would also encourage tourism, create jobs, boost local economies and greatly increase the cultural possibilities for citizens across the Midwest.

The proposed Midwest Regional Passenger Rail System is a nine-state project that hopes to connect roughly 3,000 miles of tracks with trains traveling at around 130 miles-per-hour. Hodges added that his organization envisions the rail system as an economic hybrid: a partnership of private and public funding.

Aside from petitioning government to take action on a comprehensive transportation plan for the 21st century, he added that local communities and the state "need to plan for development around these transportation systems" and the hubs of travel and commerce they will create.

Once upon a time Americans prided themselves in leading the world in technologically advanced transportation systems, whether it was intercontinental or inter urban rail-lines, yet since the 1980's we have watched from the sidelines as France, then Japan and finally all of Europe embraced the technology of the future.

As someone who has travelled extensively while abroad in the military I can and do rave about cheaply riding the rails across Europe in a weekend to visit museums, restaurants, cafes and concerts at will.

Equally for years now I have often pondered upon and lamented the lack of clear commercial and cultural vision in this country regarding public transportation, especially in light of increasing shortages and frequent price spikes in gasoline prices. A comprehensive plan to actually approach the future of transportation in our "service economy" is welcome sign.

Images on this post:



SUBMITTED BY: TERRANCE ALDRIDGE

This independent review does not express the opinion of the Strand Theatre.

Archive File: 2010-03-17_strand-theatre-lecture-–-review.pdf

©2022 - Strand Theatre Shelbyville, Inc.