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# A Summary of Interstate Rail Compacts

## Definitions

**Compact** - An alliance; a union; an association formed to further the common interests of the members.

**Commission** - A public board or administrative body; a select group of persons assigned to consider or take action on some matter.

## Authority to Establish: Title 49 U. S. C. 24101 note

"Congress grants consent to States with an interest in a specific form, route, or corridor of intercity passenger rail service (including high speed rail service) to enter into interstate compacts to promote the provision of the service, including—

- (1) retaining an existing service or commencing a new service;
- (2) assembling rights-of-way; and
- (3) performing capital improvements, including—
  - (A) the construction and rehabilitation of maintenance facilities;
  - (B) the purchase of locomotives; and
  - (C) operational improvements, including communications, signals, and other systems".

## Bipartisan Infrastructure Law: Financial Assistance

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law §22910 authorizes a competitive grant program to provide financial assistance to entities establishing interstate rail compacts for:

- (1) costs of administration;
- (2) systems planning, including studying the impacts on freight rail operations and ridership;
- (3) promotion of intercity passenger rail operation
- (4) preparation of applications for competitive Federal grant programs; and
- (5) operations coordination.

## Purposes of an Interstate Rail Compact

- To promote development and implementation of improvements to intercity passenger rail service in a region.
- To coordinate interaction among member state officials and their designees on passenger rail issues.
- To promote development & implementation of long-range plans for passenger rail service among member states and among other regions.
- To work with the public & private sectors at federal, state, and local levels to ensure coordination among the various entities having an interest in passenger rail service and to promote member states interests in developing and implementing passenger rail service.

## Powers and Duties

Note: The powers and duties stated here are those of the *Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact*. The powers and duties differ among compacts as does the number, tenure, and manner of appointment of commission members.

The duties of the commission are to:

- 1) advocate for the funding and authorization necessary to make passenger rail improvements a reality for the region;
- 2) identify and seek to develop ways that states can form partnerships, including with rail industry and labor, to implement improved passenger rail in the region;
- 3) seek development of a long-term, interstate plan for high-speed rail passenger service implementation;
- 4) cooperate with other agencies, regions and entities to ensure that the region is adequately represented and integrated into national plans for passenger rail development;
- 5) adopt bylaws governing the activities and procedures of the commission and addressing, among other subjects: the powers and duties of officers; the voting rights of commission members, voting procedures, commission business, and any other purposes necessary to fulfill the duties of the commission;
- 6) expend such funds as required to carry out the powers and duties of the commission; and
- 7) report on the activities of the commission to the legislatures and governors of the member states on an annual basis.

In addition to its exercise of these duties, the commission is empowered to:

- 1) provide multistate advocacy necessary to implement passenger rail systems or plans, as approved by the commission;
- 2) work with local elected officials, economic development planning organizations, and similar entities to raise the visibility of passenger rail service benefits and needs;
- 3) educate other state officials, federal agencies, other elected officials and the public on the advantages of passenger rail as an integral part of an intermodal transportation system in the region;
- 4) work with federal agency officials and members of Congress to ensure the funding and authorization necessary to develop a long-term, interstate plan for high-speed rail passenger service implementation;
- 5) make recommendations to member states;
- 6) if requested by each state participating in a particular project and under the terms of a formal agreement approved by the participating states and the commission, implement or provide oversight for specific rail projects;
- 7) establish an office and hire staff as necessary;
- 8) contract for or provide services;
- 9) assess dues, in accordance with the terms of the compact;
- 10) conduct research; and
- 11) establish committees.