



## Midwest High Speed Rail Association

### **Rick Harnish, Executive Director** **Midwest High Speed Rail Association 2001 – Present**

Rick Harnish is a thought leader in the movement for transportation policy reform in the U.S. His ideas are revolutionizing train and transit advocacy and elevating high-speed and intercity passenger rail on the national stage.

Harnish was a founding member of the Midwest High Speed Rail Association (MHSRA) in 1993. It is now the nation's largest and most seasoned high-speed rail advocacy organization. Its vision for a network of fast, frequent trains connecting 200 cities and airports across 9 Midwestern states is the gold standard for imagining how high-speed rail can be implemented in the U.S.

Harnish's perspective on trains and transportation policy has appeared on various NPR programs and in Bloomberg, the Wall Street Journal, USA Today, Politico, Governing, the Chicago Tribune, Chicago Magazine, Crain's Chicago and many other publications.



As MHSRA's executive director since 2001, Harnish has achieved notable successes and progress in its three focus areas: advocacy, education, and research.

**Advocacy:** MHSRA led a national coalition in a 2009 campaign for an appropriation for high-speed rail and intercity passenger rail. Congress subsequently appropriated the funds. In 2013, MHSRA played a key role in raising Illinois' Amtrak appropriation from \$28 million to \$34 million—at a time when most other line items were being reduced. In 2015, Harnish worked with both Republicans and Democrats in the Illinois General Assembly to prevent proposed cuts to the state's Amtrak funding. Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner ultimately reversed course and increased funding to \$50 million in 2017.

**Education:** Harnish has given presentations to hundreds of decision makers and thought leaders across the government, business, and transportation sectors. He also speaks regularly to community and business groups across the Midwest, has been an expert witness before Congress and the Illinois General Assembly, and consults with decision makers at all levels of government. In 2010, for example, he presented the findings of a study on the economic impacts of high-speed rail at a meeting of the National Association of Counties. More recently, Harnish and MHSRA created a plan for renovating Chicago's Union Station. Several of its elements were incorporated into the master plan for the building's renovation.

**Research:** In 2009, MHSRA commissioned the first-ever transportation engineering study for a 220-mph corridor in the Midwest. In 2011, Harnish helped persuade Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn to launch a \$1 million, state-sponsored high-speed rail feasibility study. Harnish's work is informed by his strong commitment to researching and learning from global best practices. He has ridden high-speed trains—often in the context of leading small groups—in Belgium, China, England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Spain, and Turkey. He draws on a global network of colleagues with expertise in trains and transportation policy.