

## High-Speed Rail Link Through Davenport Feasible

Written by Joe Collins

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The Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT), in conjunction with the Federal Railroad Administration and eight other states, is studying the possibility of a high-speed Midwest rail system. State DOT Director Mark Wandro has said he wouldn't recommend the state spend the money to establish a line between Des Moines and Omaha because it wouldn't break even financially. A route from Chicago to Davenport and through to Iowa City could be successful, however. The train would run on existing freight lines, which would have to be upgraded to handle the fast-moving passenger trains. Based on potential ridership, Wandro says the expense of upgrading the track to Omaha would be unjustifiable. This decision has no effect on Amtrak's plans to establish overnight passenger-train service between Chicago and Des Moines that could start next year; that train would operate at slower speeds.

The President Riverboat Casino, a 3,000-passenger boat built in 1924, will be retired. Certified as a National Historic Landmark, the President was originally part of the packet boat Cincinnati from 1924 to 1932. It was stripped to its hull during the Depression and rebuilt, making its maiden voyage as the President in 1933. She was originally operated in St. Louis and New Orleans before coming to Davenport in 1991 after Iowa became the first state to legalize riverboat gambling. A new boat, Rhythm City, will replace the President sometime in April and will be big enough to have 1,200 slot machine and 32 tables, the maximum allowed under its operator's gambling license.

For the first time in 80 years, a third party has put up candidates in more than half of all U.S. House races this November. At this time, there are at least 244 Libertarian candidates in 44 states who have qualified to be on the ballot for the U.S. House in the 2000 election, and as many as 10 more could qualify after primary elections. There are already more than 400 Libertarians in office, including a district attorney in California and a sheriff in Colorado, and party officials predict they will elect at least one member to Congress by 2004.

The City of Davenport will receive about \$100,000 from the U.S. Department of Justice to hire the full-time equivalent of four civilian support staffers for the police department. The funds were awarded under the COPS MORE program, which provides one-year grants for personnel who allow police officers to be reassigned and spend 40 hours a week on the street instead of filling out paperwork.

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A recent case decided by the Iowa Supreme Court overrides the “good faith” exemption recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court. This exemption applies in cases in which police officers made an honest mistake and discovered evidence, and no purpose would be served by excluding this evidence. The case involved Des Moines police officers who were investigating a potential crack house and noticed a woman fleeing the scene. Officers stopped her van and conducted a warrantless pat-down search and found illegal drugs. The woman appealed her conviction of possessing a controlled substance, saying that her Fourth Amendment rights against unreasonable search and seizure had been violated. The Iowa Supreme Court refused to adopt the good-faith exemption. Borrowing words from a previous case, Justice Marsha Ternus wrote: “This court will simply not ‘condone and approve a clear and known violation of a fundamental constitutional right to sustain a conviction we think is correct.’”

Ameritech has come under fire recently for long delays in new phone installation and repair – sometimes as long as a month. As a result, the company has announced that any residential customer waiting more than seven days for installation of phone service (unless the customer scheduled it for a later date), and any residential customer who has been out of service for more than 48 hours after reporting phone trouble, might be eligible for service credits. Ameritech has hired additional technicians, is training more, and has even brought in technicians from its parent company, SBC Communications, to help deal with the delays. You can find out more at Ameritech’s Web site at (<http://www.ameritech.com>), but you’ll have to sort through some slippery English to figure out exactly what the company is saying.

Starting January 1, Iowa will implement a new trauma system. All 117 hospitals in Iowa will be rated based on their capabilities, and rescue crews will receive detailed instructions about how to treat patients and where to take them based on their injuries or illness. An important aspect of the new program is a computerized system to track every trauma case in Iowa. It is designed to help analyze accident trends and help administrators meet medical needs. As with any new system, there will be some problems – most notably, under certain circumstances, patients will lose their choice of which hospital they want to go to.

The Literacy Is for Everyone program at Black Hawk College is looking for volunteer tutors to assist adults with their literacy skills. Volunteer tutors will work one-on-one with people 16 and older who are out of school and test below a ninth-grade education in one or more levels. Free tutor training is available at various times of the day with a commitment of three hours a week. To learn more or to volunteer, call (309)755-9801.

Residents of Albuquerque, New Mexico, better lock their liquor cabinets. The city council recently passed a law allowing the city to seize your home if it was used for underage drinking. The ordinance works by strengthening the current nuisance-abatement law that allows the city to seize homes known for drug-dealing and prostitution. This is in addition to a measure passed in April allowing the city to fine or even jail parents who fail to prevent their underage kids from hosting drinking parties at home.