

James McCommons

Associate Professor at Movable Type Management

Green Bay, WI, US

All Aboard! On this trip, you'll rekindle an appreciation for effective, efficient and passenger-friendly mass transportation policies

James McCommons joined the Northern Michigan University faculty in 2001. He is a veteran journalist, specializing in ecology, environmental and travel topics. At Northern Michigan University, McCommons teaches journalism and nature writing. He serves as faculty adviser to The North Wind, the student newspaper. In 2008, James was on sabbatical to research and write a narrative, non-fiction book: *Waiting on a Train: The Embattled Future of Passenger Rail Service*. McCommons spent a year on America's trains, talking to the people who ride and work the rails across much of the Amtrak system. Organized around these rail journeys, *Waiting on a Train* is equal parts travel narrative and investigative journalism. Readers meet the historians, railroad executives, transportation officials, politicians, government regulators, railroad lobbyists, and passenger-rail advocates who are rallying around a simple question: Why has the greatest railroad nation in the world turned its back on the very form of transportation that made modern life and mobility possible? In the past few years, McCommons has contributed to *Better Homes and Gardens*, the *History Channel*, *Next American City*, *Wildlife Conservation*, *Organic Gardening*, *Backpacker*, *The Oregonian*, *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. He has written for the *New York Times*. He is a member of the American Society of Journalists and Authors. He attended the Art Institute of Boston majoring in photography and later earned a B.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa. After several years of newspaper work and a stint in corporate communications, he moved to upstate New York where he was a freelance journalist from 1990 to 1997. During this period, he earned an M.A. in magazine journalism from the Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University and an M.S. in environmental science from College of Environmental Science and Forestry-SUNY. He has also taught essay and magazine writing at Syracuse University and at Muhlenberg College and DeSales University in Allentown, Pa.

Keynote, Moderator, Panelist, Workshop, Host/MC, Author Appearance, Corporate Training

Railroads, Writing and Editing, Transportation/Trucking/Railroad

High-Speed Rail, Transportation Policy, Mass Transit Public Policy, Passenger Rail

What's the Future of Passenger Railroad?

In the 1920s, the United States began investing in a road network and later an aviation system. The railroads were largely left to fend for themselves and were unable to compete against these newer travel modes that were receiving hundreds of billions in government aid. In short, we just failed to invest in rail over the last several decades. Join James as he explains why there is a much bigger role for rail in America, whether it's moving people or goods.

Next Stop, You're There: High-Speed Rail

The investment decisions and the build-out of high speed rail routes will be driven by the states and federal government, the same way they planned and constructed the interstate highway system. It's absurd to believe we can have an effective transportation system to move goods and people that is dependent only on highways and air. America needs demonstration projects that show the efficacy of rail because Americans will gladly ride these trains as long as the service is frequent and dependable.

The Embattled Future of Passenger Rail Service in America
Seattle Green Festival

The Future of Passenger Rail Service in America
The Future of Midwest Transportation

Passenger Rail in the US...past, present, and future
History and Future of Passenger Rail

Waiting on a Train: The Embattled Future of Passenger Rail Service
Kansas City Public Library Speaker Series

Waiting on a Train: The Embattled Future of Passenger Rail Service
Eugene Public Library Speaker Series

The Embattled Future of Passenger Rail Service in America
Steamtown National Historic Site Event Series

Waiting on a Train: The Embattled Future of Passenger Rail Service
Community Forum on the U.S. Train System

Waiting on a Train: The Embattled Future of Passenger Rail Service
All Aboard Erie Speaker Series

Waiting on a Train: The Embattled Future of Passenger Rail Service
Tea Party Bookshop Speaker Series

University of Pittsburgh
B.A. Creative Writing

Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University
M.A. Journalism

College of Environmental Science and Forestry ? SUNY
M.S. Environmental Science

Author ? Waiting on a Train: The Embattled Future of Passenger Rail Service ? A Year Spent Riding across America

During the tumultuous year of 2008, journalist James McCommons spent a year on America's trains, talking to the people who ride and work the rails throughout much of the Amtrak system. Organized around these rail journeys, Waiting on a Train is equal parts travel narrative, personal memoir, and investigative journalism. McCommons explores how the country may move passenger rail forward, and what role government should play in creating and funding mass-transportation systems.

Associate Professor ? Northern Michigan University

Northern Michigan University, located in Michigan's unique Upper Peninsula, is a dynamic four-year, public, coeducational university which offers 180 degree programs. Northern Michigan University challenges its students and employees to think independently and critically, develop lifelong learning habits, acquire career skills, embrace diversity and become productive citizens in the regional and global community.

Recipient ? Book of the Year Award

In 2009, James received a Foreward Reviews Book of the Year Silver Award in the Social Sciences (Adult Non-Fiction) Category, as well as a Library Journal Best Book of 2009 Award for his book Waiting on a Train.

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