Vranich Position on High Speed Rail Clarified

Joseph Vranich, author of SUPERTRAINS, has requested that the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers (OARP) clarify his position regarding Ohio’s high speed rail development issues. We are happy to oblige. It was not OARP’s intention to misconstrue Joe’s position. He is a long time friend of OARP and his excellent book provides a strong case for greatly improved rail passenger services, both conventional and high speed. The following excerpts from Joe’s recent letter to Howard Harding should clarify his position:

“When I complained in... my May 16 speech to the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers... about endless studies, I clearly meant that we should quit studying whether we should have high speed rail and get on to deciding when, where, and how to build it. ...The only way the Ohio Rail Organization (ORO) will be able to construct a true high speed line is if it proceeds to those very ‘detailed route mapping, environmental assessments and preliminary design plans’ that you complained about. These are not the kind of studies I was complaining about, but are the required prelude to construction of any rail line, highway or airport. ...For the record, I’m very much in favor of ORO’s plan and I’m in full agreement with the efforts by Bill Lathrop and other high speed advocates. ...I object to the manner in which my views were tied into negative comments about Ohio high speed rail.”

Ohio Needs Comprehensive Transportation System

by J. Howard Harding, OARP President

OARP has endorsed high speed rail development from a base of conventional speed service for almost two decades. Most OARP leaders and members feel that Ohio should already have high speed rail service operating, as part of a comprehensive urban and intercity rail passenger service network. That network should also be fully integrated with air and water transportation, so that direct air-rail and rail-bus or rail-boat transfers are possible within common terminal buildings.

It is the consensus of OARP’s leaders that continued single-minded devotion to high speed rail development, while excluding conventional speed service implementation, is simply not acceptable in Ohio.

Ohio should follow the examples set by Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, California, New York, Alabama, and North Carolina - which have all implemented state supported conventional speed rail passenger services. Nearly all of them have also supported some high speed rail planning efforts, while focusing their attention on providing tangible services to their taxpayers. It is time for Ohio to do the same...

BUILD REAL SERVICE - NOW!

Please see related story on page 2.
"I cannot overemphasize the importance of the work being done to develop a comprehensive transportation plan for Ohio". Comments on the plans of OHSRA? Testimony for the Access Ohio hearings? No, these were the words of former OARP President David S. Marshall almost twenty years ago, as they appeared in the 6:53 of Fall, 1974! This statement graphically illustrates how little real progress has been made in Ohio since that time. This is a major source of frustration for the members of this organization.

Lately, this frustration manifested itself when the Ohio Railway Organization (ORO) proposed a $50 million preliminary assessment of the 3-C Corridor. This assessment would be funded with $5 million of state funds, $5 million of ORO money, and $40 million of funds provided by the federal government. Route mapping, environmental assessments, preliminary engineering, and a ridership survey would be performed. These projects would take three years to complete, at which time a "go" or "no go" decision would be made. Neither the ORO or OHSRA indicated whether there was to be any passenger rail service in the meantime - a prime concern of this organization.

Understandably, many OARP members, already frustrated by years of delay and endless studies, reacted with outrage. Seeing the length of time involved with the proposed assessment and knowing that construction would take at least another five years beyond that was more than some members could stomach. The situation was further aggravated by a lack of communication, with repeated attempts to establish a dialog with OHSRA proving unsuccessful. Many were reminded of the controversies of the past, when certain legislators and others pushed for high speed rail services to the detriment of any other kind of rail service. Had the $50 million assessment been proposed as a package including the start of a basic level of conventional service, to begin while the high speed system is planned and built, the reaction would have been far different.

As a result of our reaction we have been accused of being divisive, and of being against high speed rail. These statements are simply not true. If anything, we have been one of high speed rail's most dynamic supporters, and have consistently taken the position that high speed rail is a necessary component of any system of public surface transportation.

From the very beginning, OARP was closely involved with efforts to develop rail passenger service in Ohio, including high speed service. Former OARP President Tom Pulsifer served on the board of ORTA (the Ohio Rail Transportation Authority), and the organization provided testimony and actively supported passage of bond issues in 1975 and 1976. On two occasions OARP found itself coming to the rescue of a beleaguered ORTA when then Rep. Wilkowski, the guiding light of the high speed rail movement in Ohio, tried to have it abolished following the defeat of Issue 2.

At the same time OARP had developed its own ideas as to how rail passenger service should develop, first officially contained in a resolution passed in 1979. The resolution said that "the ORTA high speed system is at least six to ten years away, even with voter approval... service is needed NOW. There must be an interim plan for service prior to the construction of the super system". In 1980, another resolution was passed, endorsing a building block approach for establishing high speed rail services. This was further detailed in the 1982 position paper and in testimony in 1984 before the High Speed Rail Commission. OARP will further advance this pro-high speed rail position in our latest position paper, which is due to be released shortly.

We support:

1. Making rail passenger service available to Ohioans as soon as possible... by developing conventional services first, while at the same time planning and implementing succeeding levels of service, including high speed rail.
2. Developing public surface transportation through a series of realistic, affordable steps best suited to the resources of Ohio.
3. Adoption of a statewide master plan for transportation, including intercity conventional and high speed rail, intercity bus, urban mass transit and other forms of public transportation.
The Real Costs of Driving:  
A Revealing Look at Highway Subsidies  
by Stu Nicholson

CARP has for years tried to make the point that intercity rail passenger service, as well as other forms of mass transit, are at a gross financial disadvantage because of heavy... and often hidden... subsidies for highways and airports. Usually, this argument has fallen on deaf ears.

Buckle your seatbelts, folks! At last comes a remarkably detailed report that states the American motorist, who's been led to believe that highway travel is all but totally free, is, in actuality being taxed to the tune of $300 BILLION DOLLARS A YEAR to support our nation's network of highways, roads, and bridges. The World Resources Institute (WRI) report asserts that these "hidden" subsidies are largely responsible for the "explosive growth in driving that is clogging the nation's highways".

Few of us here in Ohio have escaped the "orange barrel polka", or as one OARP member dubbed it, "highway constipation". WRI report co-authors James MacKenzie, Roger Dower, and Donald Chen write, 'The quest for personal mobility may now be interfering with the 'good life' instead of contributing to it'. They point out that if the real costs of driving were directly borne by the American driver, we would all be paying several dollars more per gallon for gasoline.

Gas taxes and user fees (i.e. tolls) covered only 60% of the $33 billion governments spent on building, repairing, and improving roads in 1989. In addition, an estimated $68 billion not covered by user fees is spent each year on services such as highway patrols, traffic management, emergency response teams, auto theft investigations, and routine street maintenance. Most of these costs, the report points out, are paid for with taxes raised at the state and local level.

Then there's free parking for commuters. Normally thought of as part of the cost involved in operating a motor vehicle, employers often offer parking at no charge to their employees, thus further subsidizing the cost of driving. WRI reports that approximately 86% of US workers drive to work, and that 90% of them - roughly 85 million people... get free parking. At $1000 per year for a typical parking space, commuters enjoy an annual subsidy of $65 billion! WRI correctly concludes that, as a result, commuting becomes more attractive and highway congestion is compounded.

The WRI report also factors in the costs of air pollution, as well as the national security costs of importing oil from the Middle East. Shifting these costs gradually over to the motoring public, says WRI, would not only boost the demand for more fuel efficient cars, but would also increase the demand for public transportation.

Legislation such as the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) is a good way to begin balancing transportation funding, says WRI. However, they contend, much more must be done before this nation achieves a truly balanced transportation system. OARP couldn't agree more. Changing Ohio's constitution to allow state gasoline monies to be spent on mass transit projects would be a good start here at home.

OARPers Meet Bush's Campaign Train  
by Ken Wilt

Eight of us from the Central Ohio group went to greet President Bush's train in Marysville on September 26th. We took our "Ohio Needs Amtrak Trains" signs, the "Bring Back Amtrak" banner, and Garlene Staton held a sign which read, "We'd Like To Take Trains Across Ohio, Too!" As you may know, Mr. Bush is the only person in America who can take a train out of Columbus, as we remain the largest metropolitan area in the United States without passenger rail service. Although the President didn't acknowledge us, we were well received by the crowd. We gave out complimentary issues of the 6:53 and membership cards. Our banner also showed up briefly on the NBC Nightly News. By the way, even speaking from the back of a passenger train, the President had nothing to say about the importance of rail service. The other presidential candidates seem more pro-rail. You may recall that upon seeing one of our signs recently Bill Clinton responded very positively.
In 1939 construction began on a revolutionary transportation project - The Pennsylvania Turnpike. Over 300 miles of pavement eventually stretched from one end of the state to the other. But when construction crews reached the Ohio State Line there was no Golden Spike-style meeting with construction crews from Ohio working eastward. There was only wilderness. For fifteen long years, the western stub of the Pennsylvania Turnpike sat as a dead end on Ohio's quiet border. It would be 1955 before Ohio would finally open its' extension to connect with a project begun a generation before by another state.

History should not be repeated with the proposed extension of Amtrak's PENNSYLVANIAN to Cleveland. In July, Joseph Petrarca, Chairman of the Transportation Committee in Pennsylvania's House of Representatives, introduced a capital funding request to expand and extend Amtrak's New York City to Pittsburgh PENNSYLVANIAN service. Petrarca's bill seeks $10 million in state money to double service on the NYC-PITT segment and to permit trains to travel west of Pittsburgh to Beaver Falls and New Castle.

Will Ohio be more prompt in responding this time? Don't hope - WRITE. Write to Governor Voinovich and your state legislators (if you aren't sure who your state legislators are, call me at 216-543-8698). Tell them Ohio should invest $12 million in the PENNSYLVANIAN extension so that this important transportation link can reach Cleveland and other Northeast Ohio cities. Tell them that investing in transportation public works projects means jobs and economic development. If you see yourself as a potential customer of the PENNSYLVANIAN, tell them that, too. Let me know if you would like a copy of OARP's "CLE-PITT Talking Points" paper.

Since early August, OARP members Mark Carlson, Bill Hutchison, Howard Harding, and I have met with local and state officials who represent constituencies in key Northeast Ohio cities. Support for the PENNSYLVANIAN extension has been strong. Pledges to locate state sources of funding for Ohio's $12 million investment have been made, but more follow-up is needed. Letters from other OARP members would certainly help encourage state legislators to follow through on their pledges. Don't let history repeat itself... write today!

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Lima Locomotive Works: Back to Work?
by Stu Nicholson

Could the plant that manufactured the mighty Berkshire steam locomotives in the late 1940's become the new home for the nation's first manufacturer of new diesel locomotives in decades? Though in the very preliminary stages, there may be a chance that the old Lima Locomotive Works, closed in the early 1950's, may reopen as the locomotive works for the Morrison-Knudsen Corporation of Boise, Idaho. M-K recently announced plans to begin producing their own line of diesels, including one rated at a mighty 5000 h.p.! M-K has not yet selected a site for such a production facility, but their announcement prompted OARP to make contact with Lima officials to see if there was interest in trying to lure M-K to the historic, and still quite serviceable locomotive works.

In a meeting with former Lt. Governor Paul Leonard, who is now President of Lima's Chamber of Commerce, OARP President Howard Harding and I learned that significant interest does exist. In fact, between the time the meeting was set up and the actual meeting, Leonard had been contacted by a design engineering firm currently under subcontract to M-K, which expressed interest in the availability and condition of the Lima facility. Leonard says he's trying to set up a meeting with M-K officials, and has sent a letter to M-K CEO William Agee requesting a meeting. Leonard has also asked whether OARP would like to send a representative to this meeting. We are considering his invitation.

Keep in mind that these are very preliminary movements. Bringing M-K to Lima would certainly be a boost to the local and state economy, but nothing has gone beyond the stage of possibilities, yet. It is safe to say that the interest is there, and that interest seems to be mutual. We'll keep you posted.
Conventional Service Summit
by Ken Wilt

Do you often find yourself asking why we can't get these trains rolling, already? Could it be that support for rail passenger service is scattered in too many directions, with no uniformity of purpose or agreement on whether to take the fast or slow track? State Senator Cooper Snyder has also been trying to tackle these questions.

Senator Snyder brought together supporters of rail passenger service for a “summit” at the State Capital on September 9th. OARP members Stu Nicholson, Bill Hutchison, and Ken Prendergast were among those gathered by Senator Snyder and his legislative aide, Liz Connelly. Also present were representatives from ODOT’s Rail Division, The Ohio Department of Development, The Office of Management & Budget, The Ohio High Speed Rail Authority, and a legislative aide for State Senator Ted Gray.

Everyone agreed that rail passenger service is necessary to Ohio’s future. However, there are different views of how to achieve that common goal and many questions to be answered... How do we finance rail passenger service? Should there be a dedicated source of funding? How do we involve the public and private sectors in rehabilitating existing station facilities, or building new ones? Should conventional rail passenger service be used as a building block for Ohio’s proposed high speed rail system?

The question of the building block approach could have been a difficult one for the group to have agreed on. Yet, when all was said and done, there was unanimous agreement that conventional speed service should be used as a building block to the proposed high speed system. A working group has been established to develop a business plan and determine the best way of getting Amtrak service up and running in the 3-C and CLE-PIT corridors.

OARP has agreed to provide whatever assistance necessary to the working group. OARP is also currently conducting a legislative survey of the Ohio General Assembly, to determine the depth and type of support that exists for rail passenger service, including methods of funding it. We hope to have the results ready in time for the next working group meeting, scheduled for October 28th.

Bill, Ken, and Stu all agree that now is not the time to build our hopes and expectations too high. Nonetheless, it is encouraging that everyone left the meeting saying that they really gained a better understanding about each other, and each other’s views on putting passenger trains back on Ohio’s rails. There now seems to be a uniformity of purpose, where before there was none.

Columbus Area Update
by Bob Boyce

Petitions urging state support for Ohio passenger trains have just been rolling in! An Ohio State Fair drive in August netted 3,107 signatures. Combined with the 479 signatures collected elsewhere, the total for the months of June, July, and August was 3,586. Copies of the signatures are being sent to key state legislators and the directors of transportation and development. Four previous batches of signatures going back one year totaled 2,246... that makes the grand total 5,832!

Arrangements for the state fair effort were made by Tom Fletcher with the Mid-Central Region of the National Model Railroad Association, which maintained a display at the fair. Thanks go to members of that organization who helped our folks collect signatures, especially Vickie Smith. Our volunteers at the fair included Karl Gelfer, Larry and Meg Grey, Shirley Metro, Ray Mills, John Murley, Dave Lebold, Jack Schoby, Chuck Young, and Harold Zweifel. Jack Schoby and Karl Gelfer are screening the previous batches of signatures to pull out Ohioans who are non-members. Jack has produced an alphabetized computer printout of signers’ names. They will be sent invitations to join OARP.

In other developments:

- Bill Hutchison and Stu Nicholson met with Mo Ismail of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission and learned of four sites under study for a Columbus multi-modal station.

- Bill Hutchison, Clev Ricksecker, and Bob Boyce met with Bill Lillyman of the Ohio Convention Center to discuss Lillyman’s support of the multi-modal station.

- Shirley Metro is a new telephone caller for Columbus area notification of meetings.

The next Columbus area meeting will be Saturday, November 14th, 10 a.m., at the Red Door Tavern, 1736 West 5th Avenue.
Impressions:

via Rail Windsor-Toronto

OARP member Karl Gelfer recently rode Canada's VIA Rail for the first time, and shared some of his impressions with the 6:53. "The first thing that struck me... was the cleanliness of the station in Windsor. I had to use the restroom facilities, and discovered a very brightly lit and very clean station with very clean restroom facilities".

Karl reports that the train, a consist of six cars and a Canadian built F-40 engine, was full from one end of the line to the other. A tour group from Toledo was on board, bound for a Toronto stage production of Phantom of the Opera. The train was also heavily used by local residents. The ride was smooth: "the line is welded rail all of the way... and double tracked from Brampton to Toronto".

Karl reports that VIA provides a complimentary breakfast of muffins, fruit, coffee, and juice to all coach passengers! Does anyone know if Amtrak offers such a service on any of its' trains? How about package tours for theater shows, concerts, sporting events, etc.? Please let us know!

Travel Tips

Travel Tips is a new feature we'd like to try in the 6:53. The idea is to provide a forum in which practical information about traveling by rail can be shared. Each Travel Tips section will focus on an area of importance to rail travelers: making reservations, traveling by coach, eating on board, etc.

We know that many OARP members are seasoned rail veterans who must have some good advice to share with us and the rest of the rail traveling public. Please send in your Tips so that the rest of us may gain from your experience! We will acknowledge contributors.

The first Tips section will run in December and will focus on Reservations & Ticketing. Send your Tips to: Ken Witt, 5056 Cobblestone Dr, Apt L, Columbus, OH 43220-2332. Please note that the deadline for the December newsletter is November 25th.

BAGGAGE & EXPRESS......

Illinois Rail's newsletter RAILGRAM reports that Illinois Congressmen Lane Evans and George Sangmeister have stepped forward to join the growing ranks of those co-sponsoring HR-4414, which would use one penny from the existing federal gas tax to establish an Intercity Rail Passenger and Capital Improvement Trust Fund. Welcome Aboard! The Toledo Blade reports that while TARTA (Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority) feels that preserving Toledo's Central Union Terminal is a worthwhile project, it will not put any of its' own funds into it. TARTA says it will only 'take over the terminal in order to be the recipient of any state or federal funds which could be directed at CUT's renovation. Credit the Blade's Hank Harvey with another fine story. We wish Ohio had more transportation reporters like Hank. Thanks to Dick Cartwright of Toledo for the clipping!

The Indiana Association of Railroad Passengers (INDARP) is asking Indiana's DOT to do a statewide railroad passenger service study, much like ODOT's Access Ohio Plan. Go for it, Indiana!

New station for Syracuse! The Empire State Passenger Association reports that the State of New York has reached an agreement on a plan to provide $5 million in funding for the construction of an intermodal transportation center. Funds will be included in an economic development package funded by the New York State Thruway Authority as part of its' takeover of the Erie Canal.

Finally, this item from The Tittsville Herald. Pennsylvania State Representative Teresa Brown has sponsored legislation that would establish a $5 million Railway Capital Loan Fund. The bill is intended to fund acquisition, maintenance, and improvement projects along Pennsylvania's rail lines. Brown says that inadequate funding of the state's existing Rail Freight Assistance Program prompted her to co-sponsor the legislation. The bill also establishes an authority to fund improvements and expand Amtrak service in Pennsylvania. The bill is endorsed by 30 House members, Conrail, and the Pennsylvania Railroads Association.

Thanks to Larry George and Scott Lawson for organizing a first class meeting in Fostoria on October 3rd! Thanks also to the staff of the Candyland Restaurant in Fostoria... not only was the food delicious, but the service was wonderful!

Thanks to Bob Boyle, Dick Cartwright, the Empire State Passenger Association, Benjamin Farah, Karl Gelfer, Howard Harding, Hank Harvey, Bill Hutchison, Illinois Rail, INDARP, Ken Prendergast, and others for their contributions to this issue of the 6:53.

You can send your Baggage & Express items to 6:53 co-editor Stu Nicholson, 276 E Tulane Rd, Columbus, OH 43202. Please be sure to include both the source and the date of any articles or clippings you send.
Goodbye Ron Myers

We’re sad to report that OARP member Ron Myers (Galion) has announced he is retiring from the business world and stepping down from his seat on the OARP Board of Directors. Ron and his wife will be moving to Colorado so they can be near their kids, ski, and enjoy the mountain air. Sounds pretty nice! Ron, all of us in OARP owe you a great deal for your friendship and support over the years. You will always be remembered for your ability to cut to the heart of the issues we have faced. We wish you and your family all the best that life has to offer! Enjoy the Rockies!

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- **Youngstown:**
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- **Perrysburg:**
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- **Mansfield:**
  - Stu Nicholson, 1318 E 4th St, Mansfield 44904

- **Akron:**
  - Jim Prendergast, 18694 River's Edge Suite A, Chagrin Falls 44022

**Additional Information:**

- For further inquiries, please contact the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) at 900 Second Street, NE, Suite #308, Washington, DC 20002. The NARP OFFICE PHONE (regular hours) is (900) 988-RAIL. NARP is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM (Eastern Time).

- Updated: October 8, 1992

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**Authorized Amtrak travel agents who wish to join OARP, maintain current membership status, and be listed in this DIRECTORY, should send a $40 check, made payable to OARP, to the 6:53 East Tulane Road, Columbus, OH 43202.** The TRAM annual listing fee of $40 entitles you to list your city, the NAME OF YOUR AGENCY, one LONG DISTANCE PHONE NUMBER, one LOCAL PHONE NUMBER, and the name of one salesperson at the agency. RENEWALS will be billed by the Treasurer.
Editorial Policy of the 6:53

We welcome your contributions to the 6:53. We ask that articles be typed and kept to a maximum of 350 words. We reserve the right to edit all submitted materials to conform with format, content, and space requirements. Original articles should also include sources of quotes or excerpts from any works other than the author's own.

Photos are also welcome, but cannot be returned. So, please send reprints rather than originals. We assume no responsibility for materials lost or damaged in the mail.

News clippings from outside sources must include both the source and date of the article or clipping.

Deadline for the December issue: November 25, 1992

All signed articles in the 6:53 represent the opinion of the writer only, and do not necessarily reflect the views or position of OARP or its officers.