OHSRA Revives "All Aboard Ohio"

The Ohio High Speed Rail Authority (OHSRA) has revived the efforts of a statewide intercity rail coalition. The coalition, known as "All Aboard Ohio", is designed to promote an increased awareness and understanding of the important role that an efficient and coordinated statewide system of intercity passenger rail plays as part of a balanced transportation system.

"All Aboard Ohio" will endeavor to demonstrate how rail passenger service will benefit Ohio by:
1) enhancing economic growth and development,
2) revitalizing Ohio's central cities,
3) improving Ohio's natural environment, and
4) providing for the mobility of disabled persons, the elderly, students, Ohio's visitors, and others who are dependent upon or choose to use modes of transportation other than private automobiles.

"All Aboard Ohio" will also support and assist public agencies that are responsible for planning, coordinating, financing, and providing intercity passenger rail and public transportation facilities and services in Ohio.

"All Aboard Ohio" was active several years ago, but little had occurred over the past two years. However, OHSRA now has an enthusiastic new administrator (Don Damron has replaced Bob Chizmar), and the level of public interest in establishing rail passenger service across the state seems to be increasing.

The renewed "All Aboard Ohio" group held its first meeting on March 24th, in Columbus. Approximately 75 people attended, including several state lawmakers. OARP was well represented at the meeting, with at least 15 members from across the state attending.

Involvement in "All Aboard Ohio" offers opportunities for education, networking, and sharing of views and ideas. It is hoped that many of you will become involved, and that your ideas and energy will lead to some concrete action that helps speed up the process of making a balanced transportation system in Ohio a reality.

To become involved with "All Aboard Ohio" contact OHSRA Administrator Don Damron at 614/466-2509 or OARP Newsletter Editor Ken Wilt at 614/451-5764.

Retreat Revives OARP Leadership

A retreat held in mid-March has brought about increased levels of communication, cooperation, and energy among OARP's leadership. On the weekend of March 12th, 1994 eleven members of OARP's leadership met at Salt Fork State Lodge, near Cambridge, to discuss OARP's present and future. Attending were: President Howard Harding; Treasurer George Bayless; Secretary Ben Farah; and Board Members Mark Carlson, Larry George, Bill Schuler, and Al Wolf. Also attending: CLE·PIT Project Director Ken Prendergast, Newsletter Editor Ken Wilt, and Board Member Emeritus Harold Wolff (who made a special trip up from his winter home in Florida to be able to attend!).

Attendees paid their own way for rooms, meals, and travel (most carpooled). OARP covered the cost of the meeting room and the facilitator's room and meals.

The facilitator, Bruce Mansfield of Burgess & Niple, (Columbus) was also kind enough to donate his time. Bruce did an excellent job of keeping the discussion focused and moving us along when we would start to get bogged down on some point of disagreement. Many thanks, Bruce, for keeping us on-track! Special thanks also to OARP Treasurer George Bayless, who did an excellent job organizing the event.

Bruce will soon be providing us with a full report on our discussions, including the list of potential goals we came up with and some suggestions as to how we might want to proceed from here.

Those of us involved realize that the follow up to the retreat is what will ultimately determine its value. You can expect to hear more about it in the months ahead. We do have some initial feedback now, however. Most of the folks who attended agree that the retreat was valuable because it helped us get to know one another better, it helped us identify some differences that we need to work through, it helped us identify some goals that we all agree on, and it revived us in the sense that we now seem to have more energy and enthusiasm for the work we're doing. We hope that our enthusiasm proves to be contagious!

You are cordially invited to attend the OARP Annual Membership Meeting on May 21st, 1994 in Akron. Please see page 3 for details...
OARP President’s Column
by J. Howard Harding

Amtrak’s new President, Thomas Downs, recently testified before the US House of Representatives Subcommittee on Transportation. He noted that, “to achieve [my] vision of Amtrak’s role in the nation’s future transportation system, two fundamental changes must take place. First, there must be a far more realistic balance between the level of service Congress directs Amtrak to provide and the amount of operating support and capital investment to provide that service. Second, there must be a change in both Amtrak’s corporate culture and in the way Congress evaluates Amtrak’s performance to ensure that the customer is the overriding focus of our corporate mission.”

Downs continued, “Too often in the past ...the needs of Amtrak’s customers and the quality of Amtrak’s service have been compromised to address "short-term" financial difficulties and to protect the revenue-to-cost ratio. ...Unfortunately, ...the "short-term" financial difficulties never seem to disappear; rather they become the baseline for next year’s budget. ...In today’s competitive transportation environment, undermining quality of service to improve the bottom line is counterproductive and ultimately destructive.”

To put Amtrak’s modest funding request in perspective, Downs listed proposed rail passenger investments for several European systems. For example, the French National Railways expects an operating loss of $1.36 Billion in 1993, but plans to invest $5.3 Billion on TGV mainline infrastructure, $1.1 Billion in non-TGV rail infrastructure, and $6.8 Billion in new rolling stock. Germany will invest $70 Billion on rail in the 1990’s, including $28.8 Billion in mainline infrastructure upgrades, $18.5 Billion in other mainline upgrades, $8.2 Billion in equipment, and $14.7 Billion in other infrastructure.

Meanwhile, Amtrak is requesting $430 million for 1995 operating funds ($50 million more than President Clinton proposes), and $337 million in capital funds (including $37 million to repair wrecked equipment) and $8 million for existing Section 403(b) service costs. Downs also asked that Amtrak’s $9.5 million annual fuel tax payments be deposited to a rail capital investment trust fund to guarantee bond payments. This would reduce interest and operating costs.

It will be extremely difficult for Congress to find a way to comply with Amtrak’s new budget request. Help them find the courage to do it by writing letters supporting Tom Downs’ efforts to ensure that “the customer is the overriding focus of [Amtrak’s] corporate mission.”

March Membership Meeting Report

About 60 rail passenger advocates from 3 states gathered at the Toledo Radisson on March 19th, 1994 for the annual NARP Region 6 Meeting. OARP, IndARP and MARP also held individual meetings at this event. The state meetings were held in the morning, then the entire group gathered for lunch, a speech by Amtrak Board Member Dan Collins, and the NARP meeting.

At the OARP meeting reports were given by Howard Harding, George Bayless, and Ken Witt. All three stressed that more involvement from OARP Members is needed if we expect to achieve our goal of restoring and expanding passenger rail service. Other business at the OARP meeting included passage of by-law changes regarding Board powers and meetings and qualifications for and removal from office. A by-law amendment allowing the OARP Board to consider a new introductory membership rate was also approved.

The NARP meeting followed an informative and frank speech by Amtrak Board Member and fellow Ohioan Dan Collins. The NARP meeting consisted of state reports, passage of a vote requesting that Amtrak ban smoking entirely on all trains, and the NARP election results.

The following people were elected to the NARP Board: Paul Arden and Phil McGeath from Indiana; Alan Gebauer from Michigan; and Mark Carlson, Howard Harding, and Jim Stevenson from Ohio.

RDF To Receive Funding

Last year state legislators approved the creation of a Rail Development Fund (RDF). Unfortunately, they didn’t provide much funding for the RDF - only $1.8 million and no dedicated funding source.

A recently passed Budget Corrections Bill (HB 715) contains provisions which provide an extra $3 million to the Ohio Department of Transportation, and allow the Director of Transportation to place the money in the RDF.

Exactly how this money will be spent remains to be decided. ODOT and Amtrak officials will be meeting to discuss this issue, and OARP will be offering them some suggestions. One problem is that any money which isn’t spent by the end of the budget year is lost, yet there isn’t enough money to carry out any major projects. What is really needed is an ongoing and dedicated source of funding which could accumulate in a trust fund.
Nominating Committee Report

The 1994 annual meeting of the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers includes election of officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. One At-Large Board Member will also be elected. As provided in the Association bylaws, incumbent officers cannot serve more than two consecutive terms. Thus, this year there will be a change in OARP leadership.

A nominating committee, consisting of retiring President Howard Harding and Columbus Coordinator Bob Boyce, was asked to recommend a slate of candidates for consideration by the Membership. The following list of nominees is the result of that effort:

- **PRESIDENT** ............... Mark Carlson
- **VICE-PRESIDENT** ......... George Bayless
- **SECRETARY** .............. Ken Wilt
- **TREASURER** .............. Stephen Klipfel
- **AT-LARGE** ............... Ron Bergen

If this slate is accepted, it will be necessary to elect someone to complete Mark Carlson's term as Area 216 Board Member. The following OARP Member (and NARP At-Large Director) is nominated for that position:

- **AREA 216 DIRECTOR** .......... James Dingus

OARP's Vice-President, Bill Hutchison, has spent considerable time working with state government officials in Columbus. In recognition of the importance of Bill's continuing efforts, the nominating committee chairman/OARP President recommends that Bill be named to the position of STATE GOVERNMENT LIASON.

The May 21st election will allow for nominations from the floor for each elected position. The President is empowered to appoint additional members to special committees, and Members are free to propose to the Board the creation of additional positions. Each member listed above has agreed to serve if elected.

Notice of Vote on By-law Changes

The Membership will take notice that the following amendments to the By-laws of OARP will be voted upon at the Membership meeting on May 21st, 1994. The Board of Directors approved them at January Board meeting and recommends their adoption.

As Written: ARTICLE V - BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SECTION 4 - SPECIAL MEETINGS. Special meetings may be called by the President who will designate the location, date, and time of the meeting.

SECTION 5 - QUORUM. A quorum shall consist of not less than one third of the Board membership, including at least two officers, one of whom shall be the President or the Vice-President.

Proposed: SECTION 4 - SPECIAL MEETINGS. Special meetings, TO BE HELD AT A DATE, TIME, & LOCATION STATED IN THE CALL, may be called by the President OR BY AGREEMENT OF ANY FIVE BOARD MEMBERS.

SECTION 5 - QUORUM. A quorum shall consist of EITHER (I) not less than one third of the Board membership, including at least two officers, one of whom shall be the President or Vice-President, OR (II) NOT LESS THAN ONE-HALF OF THE BOARD MEMBERSHIP, INCLUDING AT LEAST TWO OFFICERS.

Purpose: To make it easier for the board to meet and act in the event both the President and Vice-President are unavailable or unable to call a meeting and preside.

Ohio Association of Railroad Passenger's Annual Meeting

Saturday, May 21st, 1994 from 10am to 4pm
Terrace Room of the Tangier Restaurant
Akron, Ohio

The Agenda Includes:
- Election of Officers
- Legislative Updates
- Coordinators Reports
- Discussion of issues

Luncheon Menu:
- Salad, main course and dessert. Coffee, tea, soft drinks, and pastries at 10am

The featured speaker will be Mr. William Rich of Conrail, who will present and discuss Conrail's perspective on passenger train use of freight railroads. Jeff Honefanger of ODOT's Rail Division has also been invited.

The TANGIER RESTAURANT is located at 532 W. Market Street. The phone number is 216/376-7171.

To reach the TANGIER from the east, southwest, or west: follow I-76/77 to the BROADWAY ext. Take BROADWAY north to E. MARKET ST. Turn left (west) on MARKET ST. and go about a mile, the TANGIER will be on the left.

To reach the TANGIER from the northeast: follow SR 8 to PERKINS ST. (SR 59). Turn right (west) and follow PERKINS ST. to HIGH ST. Turn left (south) on HIGH ST. and go one block to E. MARKET ST. Turn right (west) and follow about a mile. The TANGIER will be on the left.

Registration for the meeting is $16/person, which includes lunch. The Registration Deadline is May 18th, after that date registration is $20.

To register, please send the registration form above along with your check or money order (payable to OARP) to:

J. Howard Harding, 489 Overwood Road, Akron, OH 44313-5327

Questions? Call Howard evenings at 216/867-5507.

EASY REGISTRATION FOR MAY 21st...

NAME: __________________________
PHONE: _________________________
NO. IN PARTY: _______ @ $16/each = $_____

See details below. Send this to J. Howard Harding, 489 Overwood Rd, Akron, OH 44313-5327.
In the Summer of 1990, Clark and Fayette Counties joined forces to create a port authority, which in turn then purchased the 27 miles of Grand Trunk (ex-DT&L) track between Springfield and Washington Court House. The arrangements took over two years to complete, but the track is now owned by the port authority and the Indiana and Ohio (I&O) Central Railroad is operating on it. The primary freight on the line is grain.

Negotiations are currently underway to add 64 miles to the publicly owned rail system centered on Springfield. Again grain is a major item, but general freight from small and medium sized businesses is also important. To accommodate the changes, Champaign County has joined the re-named West Central Ohio Port Authority. Conrail is selling the track, and again the I&O is the probable operator. Conrail is staying in the area and wants the freight generated by the lines.

Many people in West Central Ohio are interested in railroads for the economic advantages they offer the community. This interest has been articulated by public officials such as Clark County Commissioner Gordon Flax. Mr. Flax is a retired farmer who understands the impact of a 10 cent per bushel increase in shipping costs which would have occurred if the Grand Trunk line had been abandoned. In addition to lower shipping costs, using existing rail lines to move freight reduces public infrastructure costs and helps reduce congestion & pollution.

It took the work of many fine people to bring the port authority together. In addition to Commissioner Flax, special congratulations go to Jolene Molitoris and the many local, state and federal leaders who participated. The precedent is now set and the system is ready to expand.

So, what does all this mean for rail passenger service and OARP? Well, the port authority hasn’t said anything about any plans to start running passenger trains yet, but the preservation of the short lines means that more freight flows onto the mainlines, and that promotes more rail operations. The right-of-way is also preserved - in operating condition! In addition, the port authority model may be one we can apply to obtaining publicly owned rail infrastructure on routes where passenger trains are more feasible. Besides, who knows, someday we might actually be able to take a passenger train from Springfield to Washington Court House or Bellefontaine!

Editor’s Note: Amazingly enough, some of us did recently take a passenger train from Springfield to Bellefontaine! I&O’s "Shippers Special" of April 6th, 1994 was also the first passenger train to run between Springfield and Mechanicsburg in over 60 years! More on that in the next 6:53...

ALLIANCE TRACK EXPANSION AFFECTS AMTRAK

An important track reconfiguration project has just been completed, providing additional capacity to Conrail’s Alliance, Ohio interlocking, and reducing congestion-related delays to all trains, including Amtrak’s CAPITOL LIMITED.

Conrail is spending $1.7 million to make its operations through the electronically controlled junction more efficient, according to a Conrail spokesman in Philadelphia. Conrail moves 70+ trains a day through Alliance, two of which are Amtrak’s east and westbound CAPITOL LIMITED trains between Chicago, Toledo, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Washington D.C.

A second track connection has been constructed between the Fort Wayne Line and the Cleveland Line, eliminating the only stretch of single track left on Conrail’s Cleveland-Pittsburgh main lines. Two-thirds of Conrail’s traffic through Alliance already follows this path. More is due. Later this year, and for the first time, double-stack container train service will begin hammering the rails at the Alliance interlocking.

Amtrak’s Alliance station is located at the midst of the reconstruction, and has been directly affected. Conrail has moved the station platform from between the tracks to the south side and about 200 feet further east from the passengers’ parking lot. Conrail paid for reactivating the 1950’s-era station as a passenger facility, resulting from an agreement to reroute the CAPITOL LIMITED out of Canton and Lima in 1990.

Work on the Alliance project began in July 1993 and was completed in March 1994.
Amtrak News Briefs

Changes Effective in Upcoming Timetables
The LAKE SHORE LIMITED’s connections with western trains in Chicago is to be restored, effective with Amtrak’s Summer Timetable (due out in May). The BROADWAY LIMITED will temporarily lose its dining service, but will retain cafe service. The BROADWAY’s dining cars will go to the LAKE SHORE LIMITED and the CARDINAL.

The BROADWAY’s dining service is to be restored effective with the Fall Timetable (due out in October). At that time the CAPITOL LIMITED will gain Superliner diner and lounge service.

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS Goes Superliner
March 3rd, 1994 marked the date that double-decked Superliner cars began daily service on Amtrak’s CITY OF NEW ORLEANS (Chicago to New Orleans). Superliner coaches accommodate 77 passengers each. The sleeping cars host 44 passengers -- double the previous capacity.

Initially, a single car will serve as both diner and lounge. Later this summer, Amtrak will add a Sightseer Lounge car with large, floor-to-ceiling windows to view the passing scene and to serve as the social center of the train.

OARP News Briefs

Toledo Area Local Meetings
The Toledo area OARP group has resumed monthly meetings. The meetings are held on the 3rd Friday of each month, 7:30pm, at the Oregon Municipal Building, 5330 Seaman Road, Oregon, Ohio. For more information, please contact Larry George at 419/696-2167.

Regularly scheduled local meetings are a good way to attract new members to the group and to get current members more involved. A strong program, such as videos or a speaker, is a sure way to get people to attend. If you’d like more help in establishing local meetings in your area, please contact Bob Boyce at 614/486-7038.

Member Information Available
Membership Services Director Tom Pulsifer would like to remind all OARP officers, directors, and regional coordinators that he can provide you with up-to-date computer print out reports or printed mailing labels for your work locally. These could be used to reach local members or as a basis for an OARP membership drive in your area.

Columbus Area Update
by Robert Boyce,
Columbus Area Coordinator

Members attending the February 12th Red Door meeting viewed the Capital City Transit Coalition’s new video promoting rail transit. Cleve Ricksecker, Coalition Director and OARP member, discussed the hard hitting feature. He said the $15,000 tape, which was a year in the making, pulled out all the stops in promoting passenger rail -- such as relieving traffic congestion, curbing pollution, and providing an alternative for non-drivers. Cleve wrote the script, The Media Group produced the tape, and Bill Hamilton did the commentary. Cleve said the tape will be available for group meetings. Red Door members voted to buy a copy for showings at our own events, the money to come from our local treasury.

Dave Lebold reported that the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) isn’t ready to conduct a multi-modal station site visit for us yet, but should be ready later this Spring. MORPC expects to have conceptual drawings of potential sites completed in April. Dave said, MORPC is also conducting public meetings on this and other rail transit issues. Call me at 614/486-7038 if you’d like to be involved.

The Steering Committee for the Festival of Stations met on January 12th and set tentative dates of September 29th, 1994 for the mayors’ informational half of the festival, and October 1st for the public conference featuring historic station talks and displays. Both sessions will be held at the Ohio Historical Center on the Ohio State Fairgrounds.

At the March 12th Red Door meeting Lou Jannazo of ODOT’s Rail Division gave a talk updating the situation in Ohio. He reported on that four ODOT studies for the revival of passenger service on multiple Ohio corridors are currently underway. These studies, which are supposedly the final studies before action to establish service could be conducted, have been subcontracted to consultants for completion by next spring.

The April 9th Red Door meeting will feature a talk on bikeways and the bike/transit connection by Dale Hooper, the new Columbus Bicycle Coordinator.

Columbus Area Local OARP Meetings are held on the SECOND Saturday of every month, 10am - noon, at the Red Door Tavern, 1736 West 5th Avenue.
March 29, 1994 Columbus Dispatch - Mark D. Somerson reports that the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) has recommended a site for the downtown transit hub. The 5.3 acres of land is owned by Nationwide Insurance. Earlier reports had stated that Nationwide was unwilling to sell the land, but negotiations continue with the hope that the company will find a way to become involved in the venture, which MORPC estimates would attract 20,000 people a day. (Dave Lebold)

March 20, 1994 Columbus Dispatch - Extensive coverage on efforts to expand bus service and establish a light rail system in Columbus. Articles by Mark Somerson examined the economics of the project, noting that if the whole bus and rail project goes through, it will cost $522.04 million, of which the federal portion would be $390.81 million, the state portion $79.02 million, and the local portion $52.21 million. In the fall of 1995, Franklin County voters will be asked to approve an increase in the sales tax to cover the local portion of construction and operations. (Dave Lebold)

February 24, 1994 Dayton Daily News - Jim Bland writes that one of the companies bidding on a $30 million contract to build 90 electric trolley buses for the Miami Valley Regional Transit Authority says that if it wins the contract it may build them locally, bringing 40 new jobs to the Dayton area. (Al Wolf)

January 25, 1994 Sandusky Register and Lorain Journal - Reports on the possibility that the old Amtrak station in Sandusky may be renovated for use as a police substation and/or a base for ambulances and transit buses. Although Amtrak serves Sandusky, they apparently don't use the station. (Steve LaConte)

January 3, 1994 This Week in Worthington - "Train Blocks Streets" after Conrail employees abandoned their freight train on December 23rd, 1993. The crews 12-hour shift was up, and the replacement crew didn't show up on time due to car trouble. Three major streets were blocked for roughly an hour and a half. Worthington City officials were not amused; Police were looking for someone to cite, but there was no one there. Train crews become personally liable for any accidents which might occur after their 12-hour shifts are up. Why the crew would leave it blocking major streets remains a mystery. (Dennis Wilt)

January 1, 1994 Atlanta Constitution - Atlanta, Georgia transit officials have begun a yearlong test- allowing bicyclists to take their bikes aboard trains at all hours and on all cars. Bikes had been banned during peak hours and only allowed on the last car. Riders may still not take bikes aboard city buses. (Dale Hooper)

January 1994 North Central Business Journal - Diane Fencl writes two stories about how communities are rallying to save their railroads and how industry, government, and community business leaders are working together to save rail lines from abandonment. One example she gives is Ashland County, which owns the Ashland Railway, a 36 mile segment running from West Salem to Mansfield, Ohio. A short line operator leases the line. She also mentions that in Medina County there is an effort underway to save the Akron-Barberton Beltline. (Charles Horn)

December 30, 1993 Wall Street Journal - Marj Charlier's piece in the travel section tells how ski resorts are trying to increase business by providing transportation (such as trains) to and from their facilities. The Sunday River Ski Resort in Bethel, Maine began service between Portland and Bethel in December. The train carried as many as 436 passengers a day during the holiday season, at $15 per round trip. Out west, the Rio Grande Ski Train has been taking passengers from Denver to the Winter Park Ski Resort every weekend during ski season for the last 53 years. That train holds about 1,000 passengers. The first ski train was organized in 1931. By 1936, the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad took 70,000 skiers out of Grand Central Station in the year's first quarter alone! (James Dingus)

December 7, 1993 Youngstown Vindicator - Story about the planned expansion of passenger rail service in the Youngstown area. The PL&W Railroad currently runs a steam train between Negley and Rogers, serving about 20,000 passengers per year. PL&W plans to purchase a diesel engine to pull passenger cars between Columbiana and Boardman (just south of Youngstown, near the Southern Park Mall). PL&W has three 75-seat passenger cars it intends to run on this new route every two hours, perhaps seven days a week. The round trip would cost $6. (Jack Slanina) (Thanks Contributors!)
Mary Louise Bussard, 700 S. Main Street, Marion, Ohio 43305 (917) 294-0155

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Updated: January 1994

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PRESIDENT EMERITUS: THOMAS PULSIFER, 1751 Wilshire Dr, Xenia 45385 513/722-9888

VICE-PRESIDENT: BILL HITCHISON, 5600 Princess Place, Apt D, Columbus 43231 614/886-9774

SECRETARY & GEN. COUNSEL: BENJAMIN F. FARAH, 115a Linda St, #150, Rocky River #116 216/331-0801

TREASURER: GEORGE BAYLESS, 2422 S Patterson Blvd, Dayton 45409 513/233-8794

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES: THOMAS PULSIFER, P. O. Box 86, Xenia 45385 513/722-9888

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At-Large: MANFRED O. ORLOW, 2801 Far Hills Ave, #205-E, Dayton 45419 513/234-9718

“THE 6:53” EDITOR: KEN PRENDERGAST, 80 Emerson Ave #1005, Berea 44017 216/891-6277

3-C CORRIDOR PROJECT DIR.: KEN PRENDERGAST, 80 Emerson Ave #1005, Berea 44017 216/891-6277

CLE-PITT CORR. PROJ. DIR.: KEN PRENDERGAST, 80 Emerson Ave #1005, Berea 44017 216/891-6277

DEVELOPMENT CO-ORDINATOR: JAMES STEVENSON, 192 Frankilt Dr, Berea 44017 216/234-5885

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National Association of Railroad Passengers/ NARP PASSENGER RAILNEWS HOTLINE (24 HOURS) 900/988-RAIL

NARP OFFICE PHONE (regular hours) 202/408-3862

900 Second Street, NE, Suite # 308, Washington DC 20002 Ross Capon, Executive Director

NARP Region 6 Directors: J. Howard Harding, James Stevenson, and Mark Carlson (addresses above)

OHIO NARP At-Large Director: James A. Dingus, Jr. 20600 Chagrin Blvd. #701, Cleveland, OH 44122-5968 216/561-9200

OARP’s OFFICIAL BUSINESS PHONE - equipped with answering machine 614/898-9774

Updated: March 1994

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Send your newsletter items to:

OARP News/the 6:53
c/o Ken Wilt, Editor
5315 Stonemeadow Ave #E
Columbus, Ohio 43220-6209
Fax 614/451-5761  Phone 614/451-5764
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