



"the 6:53"



Ohio Rail Passenger News

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OHIO ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

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AMTRAK ON CAPITOL HILL

On June 21st, the U.S. Senate voted 64-36 to allow states to use highway dollars for improving intercity passenger rail service, effectively and finally including Amtrak in the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). If the House of Representatives and President Clinton both agree with the Senate's action, Amtrak would finally have access to meaningful capital funding, though on a state-by-state basis.

Highway dollars would be made available to Amtrak and the Alaskan Railroad through two funding categories: Surface Transportation Program (STP funds) and Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CM/AQ funds--pronounced see-mack). The Ohio Department of Transportation and Ohio Rail Development Commission could then access these funds for rail passenger projects, provided that state or local funds are made available to leverage the federal dollars. The funding split for an Amtrak project under STP and CM/AQ could be 80 percent federal, 20 percent state/local. Metropolitan planning organizations would play a local role in assigning the STP and CM/AQ dollars to Amtrak projects.

Both the state and local project assignment roles will be subject to lobbying from highway interests. In other words, OARP's fight would not end if the U.S. Congress and President Clinton approve of the change. OARP will continue to argue that TRANSPORTATION dollars should be spent not just on moving vehicles, but on moving people in the most resource-efficient manner. Already, OARP has learned that the American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials (AASHTO) is lobbying for the repeal of STP and CM/AQ in all non-highway applications.

The day following the Senate vote, June 22nd, the Railroad Subcommittee in the House shelved Amtrak's reauthorization bill as legislative efforts failed to unconditionally reform labor provisions affecting Amtrak employees. Without passage of a reauthorization bill, Amtrak would shut down October 1st, 1995. Members of the House and Senate issued warnings that the shutdown will occur unless an Amtrak authorization bill containing substantive managerial and labor reforms is first enacted. Specific reforms include:

1. weakening of labor protection provisions which grant certain employees up to six years termination pay under limited circumstances;
2. authority for Amtrak to contract out various services such as equipment maintenance.

House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chair Bud Shuster (R-Altoona, PA) suspended action on the House authorization/reform bill after a majority of committee members voted to weaken the reforms. Since then, negotiations between committee members, Amtrak, and labor interests appear to be making headway. However, at this writing, the outcome remains uncertain.

Amtrak's survival is further threatened by attempts to phase out operating subsidies within five years. Survival also has been put in doubt by attempts from the highway lobby and Rep.

Shuster to take all transportation trust funds "off-budget." If Rep. Shuster succeeds, all federally-funded transportation modes (highways, aviation, inland waterways) except Amtrak will retain dedicated capital funding unaffected by spending cuts being made to balance the budget. Additionally, highway, aviation, and waterway funding would be further isolated from on-going technological, social, economic, and environmental changes which demand a transportation policy apart from the protection of the status quo.

Amtrak's survival requires that Congress pass legislation to do the following--

1. Resolve the labor reform issues and authorize Amtrak capital and operating funding at the levels contained in the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation mark-up of the FY 1996 Transportation Appropriations Bill:

| CATEGORY | FY 96 | FY 97 |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Operations | \$216 million | \$392 million |
| Capital | \$230 million | \$251.5 million |
| Transition Costs | \$ 62 million | \$ 0 |
| Excess RR Retirement | \$120 million | \$150 million |
| Northeast Corridor | \$100 million | \$200 million |

2. Appropriate Amtrak funding at these authorization levels;
3. Preserve Amtrak operating subsidies for as long as other modes remain subsidized;
4. Keep all transportation trust funds "on budget" to prevent expansion of historic modal funding imbalances and to ensure the funds are more responsive to on-going changes in transportation policy.

OARP members and their friends should ask their House members to encourage the following members of Congress who serve on key committees to support the four provisions listed above:

Ralph Regula (R-Canton); David Hobson (R-Springfield); James Traficant (D-Youngstown); Marcy Kaptur (D-Toledo); Louis Stokes (D-Cleveland); Stephen LaTourette (R-Mentor); and John Kasich (R-Westerville).

Senators John Glenn and Michael DeWine should also be asked to insist that the Senate support inclusion of these provisions in the Conference Committee report, which define the final form of legislation.

Write to House members at U.S. House of Representatives, Washington D.C., 20515, and to Senators at U.S. Senate, Washington D.C., 20510. You can also call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121. Request that you be connected with your Representative's/Senator's office, and then ask for the transportation staffer.

THE CARDINAL & BROADWAY LIMITED: Good & Bad News

Barring any 11th-hour miracles, September 10th, 1995 will be a day that few Ohio rail advocates will forget, or forgive. On that day, Ohio will gain improved Amtrak service, lose a legendary train, and suffer poorer boarding times at some cities.

The good news is that the Cardinal has been saved. Amtrak had announced in April that it would cut the thrice-weekly Cardinal back to a Washington, DC-Cincinnati day train. The Chicago-Cincinnati, and the Washington, DC-New York City segments were to be eliminated September 10th. Instead, the Cardinal will remain between Chicago, Cincinnati, and Washington, DC. Aging Heritage Fleet equipment used by this train will be replaced by Superliners. The Cardinal will also be rescheduled, offering relatively decent departure times for Cincinnatians and those Ohioans who board at the cross-river stations of Mayville, South Portsmouth, Catlettsburg, and Huntington.

Westbound, #50 will depart Chicago at 8:10pm, depart the Queen City at 5:55am, and arrive in Washington DC at 8:10pm. Eastbound, #51 will depart Washington, DC at 11am, depart Cincinnati at 12:55am, and arrive in Chicago at 9:15am. Amtrak realized it would cost them more to cut the Chicago-Cincinnati segment than it would to keep it. Another factor in Amtrak's decision was the lack of an adequate location in Cincinnati to turn and service the train.

OARP President Mark Carlson had praise for Amtrak's decision to keep the Cardinal and improve its services, but noted that OARP cannot assume the Cardinal's future is set. "Instead of trying to do a quick fix to the Cardinal, they have created a brand-new service. We hope Amtrak has the wisdom and patience to allow this new service to strengthen its foothold in the market it serves," he said.

Now, the bad news. In keeping with its April announcement, Amtrak will eliminate the Chicago-New York City Broadway Limited September 10th. The Broadway, once the premier train of the Pennsylvania Railroad, has been in near-continuous operation since 1912. A new train, The Three Rivers will take its place, operating between New York City, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. Such a move will leave Akron, Youngstown, and Fostoria without service. The only remaining train between Pittsburgh and Chicago will be the Capitol Limited which travels via Cleveland and Toledo. The Capitol will be rescheduled slightly to connect with The Three Rivers at Pittsburgh (more later).

Amtrak's decision to eliminate the Broadway has not been the fault of its passengers, who continue to fill the train's coaches and sleepers each night. Youngstown OARP member Daryl Gordon rode the Broadway August 5th to Pittsburgh, and asked some good questions based on his observations. "I moved through four cars to the diner (for breakfast). The coaches seemed to be full of humanity. I can't see Amtrak's logic. I talked to a man who was going to Altoona from Chicago. Where does Amtrak think they are going to put all those people, plus those already riding the Capitol? How many will want to schlep their baggage and children, and transfer to another train in Pittsburgh in the middle of the night? How can Amtrak add all those mail cars (to the Capitol) and keep a certain consist?" Mr. Gordon asked.

They are the questions OARP and NARP have been asking for several months, to which Amtrak has the following answers: Amtrak will switch mail cars from The Three Rivers to the Capitol at Pittsburgh, but will not do the same in switching a through coach or sleeper. Amtrak is forcing eastbound passengers to get up at 6am on the rescheduled Capitol Limited to switch trains. Westbound passengers will change trains just before midnight.

The Capitol, a heavy Superliner consist, regularly carries four mail and baggage cars, plus 10 passenger cars. Transferring mail cars to an already heavy train will subject both the Capitol and The Three Rivers to delays. Also, sold-out conditions on the Capitol and connecting passengers from The Three Rivers will result in greater difficulties in gaining a coach seat or bedroom space on any portion between Pittsburgh and Chicago.

"Like a bad steak, this cut is tough to swallow. It appears Amtrak has done everything it can to make the Broadway worthy of getting the axe," said Mr. Carlson. The Broadway has been rerouted three times in the last five years. It has been stuck with shabby equipment. Congress has never given Amtrak enough capital funds to replace

this equipment. It lost its first-class diner in favor of a cafe car in 1993. It has been run on a schedule which favors mail shipments, not passengers in and out of Chicago, and makes it the least attractive train from the east for making connections in Chicago to western trains.

"Just because the Broadway moves the mail, that doesn't mean that it is performing the primary purpose of Amtrak, and that's to carry passengers. While a loss of mail will hurt the bottom line, Amtrak first priority is moving people. Amtrak's priorities are backward in this instance. The passenger should not take a back seat to the mail on Amtrak. We're supposed to learn from history's mistakes," Mr. Carlson said, referring to many pre-Amtrak passenger trains which catered more to carrying mail than people.

The Broadway's most recent reroute, in October, 1994, was its most positive. The train was rerouted off a slow, curving CSX line and put it on a faster Conrail route between New Castle and Pittsburgh. To make that reroute possible, Amtrak spent \$2.6 million to build a fully-sigaled, heavy-duty track connection between CSX and Conrail in New Castle, Pa. This track connection, after being in operation for only 11 months, will become dormant if the Broadway dies in September.

Also, the City of Youngstown and the federal government in 1992 spent several million dollars to restore the B&O Station to its original grandeur. The City of Fostoria, while spending less on a smaller station facility, turned a ragged depot into a pleasant passenger station. Akron was preparing to build a modern Amtrak station at Quaker Square. Officials in Youngstown and Fostoria have expressed their anger toward Amtrak. Lima, Crestline, and Canton, on the Broadway's pre-1990 route, know exactly what their counterparts in Fostoria, Akron, and Youngstown are going through.

Youngstown officials are fighting to get Amtrak's New York-Pittsburgh Pennsylvania train extended to Cleveland via New Castle, Youngstown, and Ravenna. OARP is assisting Youngstown officials in their endeavors.

Contingency proposals suggested by OARP were advanced to ease travelers' pain from the announced loss of the Broadway. By no means would they eliminate the pain. While the Pennsylvania extension has been one of OARP's goals for many years, it will not patch the wound left by the death of the Broadway. While a station at Ravenna or Hudson on the Capitol Limited route may offer Akron-area residents a new location to catch their train, it would not be as convenient for all Akron-area travelers. And while a connecting bus extended south from Toledo's station to Fostoria (and perhaps to Columbus) would continue some service, a longer trip and a nighttime transfer would not be as attractive.

The loss of the Broadway Limited will rank as one of OARP's worst defeats, and will prove to be one of Amtrak's biggest mistakes. The reduction of service won't end with losing 14 trains a week to Ohio, represented by the loss of the Broadway. To make up for that loss, starting September 10th Amtrak has chosen to reschedule its Capitol and Lake Shore Limiteds, resulting in a further downgrading of service to Ohio, Mr. Carlson noted.

Amtrak will reschedule the eastbound Lake Shore Limited one hour later so it will depart Chicago at about the same time as the Broadway had. Train #48 will depart Chicago at 8:15 pm, Bryan at 12:27am, Toledo at 1:49am, Sandusky at 2:39am, Elyria at 3:13am, and Cleveland at 4:01am, arriving New York City at 3:49pm and Boston at 6:10pm. Westbound, the Lake Shore Limited, train #49, will depart all stations one half-hour earlier than at present. Train #49 will depart Boston at 3:50pm, New York City at 6:40pm, Cleveland at 6:36am, Elyria at 7:09am, Sandusky at 7:43am, Toledo at 9:04am, and Bryan at 9:55am.

The eastbound Capitol Limited, train #30, will be rescheduled 25 minutes later so it can connect with The Three Rivers at Pittsburgh. Train #30 will depart Chicago at 6:50pm, Toledo at 12:10am, Elyria at 1:27am Cleveland at 2:04am, and Alliance at 3:27am Westbound times for train #29 will remain unchanged.

"This downgrading won't just affect northern Ohio. Central Ohioans, who have to drive long distances to catch a train, will now have to make their drives much later at night, if they choose to use Amtrak at all," Mr. Carlson stated.

News Briefs

TOLEDO CENTRAL UNION TERMINAL PROJECT UPDATE

To stay clear of renovations to Central Union Terminal (CUT), Amtrak's Toledo passenger station will move on August 22nd into a building adjacent to CUT. The building was last used by Conrail's Bridges and Buildings Department, formerly the United States Post Office. All Amtrak facilities will be placed in one room at the B&B building.

The facilities (waiting area, ticket office, and the offices for Field Manager Frank Stoy and Service Manager Paul LeClair) should prove to be an improvement over what was originally proposed. Amtrak was going to move into trailers for six to nine months during CUT's renovations.

In the final plan, Amtrak will be permanently relocated to the ground floor of CUT. The upper floors will be redeveloped for offices and other commercial uses. Intercity and transit buses also will serve CUT.

However, as of July 12th, Toledo's Port Authority Director Bob Greenlese said the transfer of ownership of Conrail to port authority, while imminent, had not yet taken place. Apparently, several outstanding legal details have yet to be ironed out.

John Loftus, Seaport director and CUT project chairman, is holding his breath, awaiting the outcome on Amtrak's federal funding situation. Amtrak, as one would guess, is a major player in the CUT project. Mr. Loftus predicted the project would remain intact, even if Amtrak does not.

Larry George, OARP's Area 419 Director, offered an opposing view, saying "Without Amtrak being there, the CUT project is pointless. It would be a monumental waste of money."

The CUT renovation is a \$5 million project, funded primarily through a 1993 grant provided by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). CUT is projected to open in the Summer of 1996.

A note from Mr. George: Toledo local meetings have been canceled until further notice. It is apparent that there has not been sufficient interest in the Toledo area for these meetings, as evidenced by the lack of recent turnout.

\$2.3 MILLION ELIMINATED FROM ORDC'S 1996 BUDGET

OARP understands that a major railroad which operates in Ohio, was eligible for, and took a credit on 1996 franchise taxes it would have paid to the state. The net result is that the Ohio Rail Development Commission will have \$2.3 million less to spend on rail improvement projects in the coming year. OARP has learned that Conrail was the railroad which took the tax credit.

This is disheartening news for OARP and for ORDC, a commission which relies on an annual average of \$6 million in railroad corporate franchise taxes for the bulk of its funding.

In questioning the ramifications, OARP discovered that efforts two years ago to find a permanent revenue stream for railroad development were hurried and not well-researched. Sources at the State House say that, while \$6 million in railroad franchise taxes should be collected in most years, it is theoretically possible that the state could collect no franchise taxes at some point.

Such a discovery does not bode well for ORDC, which is legally empowered to develop rail freight and passenger services by taking loans and issuing bonds repaid (i.e.: debt service) from corporate franchise tax proceeds. It appears that the ORDC's current revenue stream is capable of paying for smaller projects on only a short-term cash basis, rather than funding larger projects on a longer-term, more stable, debt service basis.

OARP is researching additional potential funding mechanisms, and will work with state officials to determine their feasibility.

Columbus Area Update

by Robert Boyce,
Columbus Area Coordinator

After a slow and cumbersome start, the Ohio Rail Development Commission appears to be getting down to some of the serious business for which it was created.

Committees are working on issues for commission action, mostly in the freight area because funds are yet unavailable for passenger development. However, the commission is exploring funding strategies for passenger service. The URS consulting team has completed its preliminary engineering studies, with reports on cost estimates for passenger rail service in the Cleveland-Columbus-Cincinnati and the Cleveland-Pittsburgh corridors, and the Canton-Akron-Cleveland commuter project.

The burnout affliction which has been sweeping through OARP ranks should be only temporary. Problems such as Amtrak's lack of direction, slow movement of the ORDC, and OARP's search for answers have been frustrating, but solutions should come in time.

The May 20th OARP Board meeting held jointly with Red Door members brought about some encouraging communication and positive reactions. President Carlson invited members to call him with suggestions they might have for the organization.

Mark recounted the history of OARP since its founding more than 20 years ago. He recalled his initial skepticism of the group's primary goal from its start: to establish a 3-C Ohio passenger rail corridor. He said he later saw the logic of concentrating on a step-by-step approach rather than trying to get rail service everywhere at once. Efforts started with the 3-C because that corridor has the largest rider potential. He pointed out that with preliminary planning completed by URS consultants, the 3-C project has reached its most developed stage in OARP's history. Funding is the hurdle to overcome in order to start final engineering work and to get the trains on the track.

Mark also said OARP has always stood firm on advocating a national passenger system. He said planning a strategy is important in meeting our goals. And strategies can change and they require continuous discussion and modifying.

The long time factor in getting Ohio trains on track was emphasized by several board members, who expressed it in terms of years rather than months. As George Bayless put it: "I may never see Ohio passenger trains in my time, but I'm working to get them for my grandchildren." George also pointed out that rail passenger development is captive to politics over which we have no control. "We are a small group," said George, "and while we can have some influence, we can't drive the outcome." He added that public opinion is a key factor, especially in Central Ohio where the state legislature sits.

Board members cited fund-raising as an urgent need in the OARP agenda. Ken Prendergast recounted his experience in raising funds for the CLE-PITT Corridor project. One key, he said, is to mingle with members of influential citizen groups and convince them of the need for passenger rail so they can carry the message up the ladder to the money sources. "Grassroots support is essential to success," he said, "and that's where efforts should start in order to reach the General Assembly."

**Columbus Area Local OARP Meetings are held on
the SECOND Saturday of every month, 9am - Noon,
at the Red Door Tavern, 1736 West 5th Avenue.**

COALITION FORMS TO STOP NEW INTERSTATE

OARP's Ken Prendergast, and especially Bill Hutchison, have been working in the last month to establish a coalition which would push for saner public policies toward transportation. The original name of the coalition was Ohio Transportation Alliance, but was subsequently changed because OTA could easily be confused for the Ohio Trucking Association. The new, formalized name is the Ohio Alliance for Transportation (OAT).

OAT could well become the foundation for a statewide coalition, one which doesn't necessarily become involved in specific projects. Instead, the coalition would seek transportation policy reforms at the state level, and at Ohio's 16 metropolitan planning organizations.

The motivation for the OAT coalition sprang from the proposed Interstate 73, which would link Toledo, Columbus, Portsmouth, and continue south to the Carolinas. While improvements to the existing US 23 highway north of Columbus to Toledo may be warranted, the proposal would involve constructing an outer-outer belt beyond I-270 around the Columbus area--threatening urban sprawl on a massive scale. The outer-outer belt idea has since been dropped.

On most sections, I-73 would be a totally new alignment through Ohio, and would consist of the following specifications: a 500-foot-wide right-of-way, five lanes in each direction separated by a concrete median, engineered for a maximum speed of 150 mph for cars, and 100 mph for trucks. The Ohio Turnpike Commission, who is leading the project, proudly states that coal shipments from West Virginia could be diverted from existing rail lines to trucks if I-73 were built.

The first phase of I-73 would be a connector between US 23 and I-71, leaving US 23 at Waldo, just north of Delaware, crossing US 33 west of I-71, and joining I-71 about 10 miles north of I-270. The outer-outer belt around Columbus would have been about 10 miles outside of I-270.

It is ironic that a highway project has galvanized the kind of support that's needed for developing existing transportation arteries, including rail lines. Most of the existing transportation routes between Toledo, Columbus, and Portsmouth are underutilized and could absorb additional road and rail traffic.

The OAT's initial coalition leaders are Audrey Lynch (chair) who is an environmental scientist, Mr. Hutchison (co vice-chair), and Yelena Boxer (co vice-chair) who is a central Ohio leader of the Sierra Club. The OAT's first meeting in late-June attracted better than 50 attendees. Organizations including the Washington DC-based Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP), Ohio Railroad Association (ORA), Citizen Action, and others have expressed support for OAT's mission. Here is OAT's mission statement:

OHIO ALLIANCE for TRANSPORTATION *Mission Statement*

The Ohio Alliance for Transportation is a 501.c (4) non-profit (non-tax deductible) organization dedicated to informing citizens on transportation issues throughout Ohio. We support citizens' involvement in transportation planning and implementation through education, research and the legislative process. It is the policy of the Alliance to promote sound transportation decisions on local, state and federal levels in an effort to maximize transportation efficiency with minimal disruption to sense of community and quality of life. We support moving people and freight in an energy efficient, economically feasible and environmentally sensitive manner.

Their address is: P.O. Box 21996, Columbus, OH 43221. To offer your support, you may call any of the following people: Audrey Lynch at 614-587-4575, Bill Hutchison at 614-898-7536, or Yelena Boxer at 614-461-0734.

On July 14th, Mr. Hutchison, Mr. Prendergast, Howard Harding, Mrs. Lynch, Ryan McKenzie of STPP, and David Beach of EcoCity Cleveland met at Tower City in Cleveland to determine if a local chapter working on transportation and land use reform issues can be organized in northeast Ohio.

OARP leaders, now and in the past, have stated that we cannot stand alone and expect to gain rail passenger service for Ohioans. There simply are too many obstacles for little 'ol OARP to overcome on its own. By pooling resources, talent, and energy into a coalition, we just might be able get something done on a large scale at long last.

ELECTION RESULTS

Elections to the OARP Board of Directors are conducted every year at our Annual Meeting. At the May 20th Annual Meeting held at the Jai Lai Restaurant in Columbus floor nominations were accepted for four regional Directors' seats and for two At-Large seats.

The election results are as follows:
Area 216 -- James Dingus (Cleveland)
Area 419 -- Larry George (Toledo)
Area 513 -- Frank Gordnier (Dayton)
Area 614 -- Bill Schuler (Pataskala)
At-Large -- Bill O'Brien (Columbus)
At-Large -- Robert Wickens (Maineville)

Congratulations to the new and re-elected members of the Board of Directors. The addresses and phone numbers of the members of the Board as well as other key positions can be found in the OARP Directory located in every issue of "the 6:53".

OARP LOSES TWO VALUABLE LEADERS

At the July 15th Board Meeting, the OARP Board of Directors accepted the resignations of Vice-President George Bayless (Dayton) and Secretary/Newsletter Editor Ken Wilt (Columbus).

Mr. Bayless served as vice president since May, 1994, as treasurer from 1989-94, and as Area 513 board member from 1988-89. In his letter of resignation, Mr. Bayless wrote: "Because of increasing pressures in my position as purchasing officer of National City Bank, and responsibilities as a trustee of the Miami Valley Regional Transit Authority, I find that I cannot give enough time to fulfill my responsibilities as vice president."

Mr. Wilt served as secretary since 1994, and as newsletter editor since 1992. In resigning as secretary, he said that time constraints and the workload associated with the position precluded him from giving it the necessary attention.

Regarding the newsletter editor position, Mr. Wilt resigned due to personal reasons, but will continue his OARP involvement through the production of the association's newsletter.

MORE TRANSIT, CLEANER AIR, AND DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT URGED IN CINCINNATI

By Ken Prendergast, *Special Projects Director*

In March, Downtown Cincinnati Inc. (DCI) advanced a proposal to remove Fort Washington Way (I-71) for a light rail line, a regional transit center, and new development. The plan also includes a landscaped boulevard, creating a pedestrian-friendly environment, more green space, and a softer edge to Downtown Cincinnati.

Then, in a related development on July 14th, an air quality monitoring station on the northeast side the Cincinnati measured excessive levels of air pollution--the fourth such exceedance at that station in the last three years. Clean air laws state that, if there are more than three violations at any one monitoring site over any consecutive three-year period, then the EPA's air quality rating for that city is downgraded. A downgrading typically requires placing more stringent sanctions on the city, including tougher air pollution controls on vehicles and industry.

Cincinnati, which had been a "moderate non-attainment area", now falls into the "serious" category--the first U.S. city in recent years to be downgraded to serious. At this writing, EPA is still deliberating what actions it will take. EPA could immediately slap sanctions on the area, capping federal dollars for highway expansion, forcing fuel retailers to provide reformulated gasoline, and requiring the development of more transit services and carpooling programs. Or, the city could beg EPA to delay sanctions so it can implement short term plans to clean up the air, according to Sally Hilvers, public information officer for the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA). Mrs. Hilvers also is a member of Cincinnati's Ozone Coalition.

"On Friday (July 14), about half of the pollutants were from mobile sources (automobiles, trucks, and buses). It could have been worse. We dropped our fare to 25 cents, which resulted in an 18 percent increase in ridership--that was with less than 24 hours notice. Local hospitals are encouraging transit use by providing free rides on downtown shuttle buses until Labor Day. It's a community service. They (the hospitals) are seeing a lot more cases of respiratory problems and fatigue," Mrs. Hilvers said.

Cincinnati, as many Ohioans know, is situated along several different river valleys. Air stagnates on a regular basis during the summer months. When emissions from vehicles and factories combine with heat and sunlight, ozone is created, and is trapped by stagnant air among the hills. Some Cincinnati officials have complained in the past that their city shouldn't be penalized by the EPA for the city's natural topography. Their opponents say the city has two choices: reduce emissions or bulldoze the hills.

The air quality problem is focusing attention on the DCI's plan for removing Fort Washington Way, a quarter-mile stretch of highway featuring 12 access ramps. Under DCI's proposal, I-71 traffic through Kentucky would be rerouted via the Daniel Carter Beard bridge (I-471) to meet I-275 seven miles south of downtown. Fort Washington Way would then be removed, opening up downtown's 100-acre front door west of Riverfront Stadium to the I-75 bridge. A new mass transit terminal, serving as a hub for proposed commuter rail, light and heavy rail lines, and expanded bus service, would be built where Fort Washington Way is today, and would be connected via a transit mall to Fountain Square.

DCI anticipates that this model would:

1. Enhance downtown development plans by reconnecting the city with the riverfront;

2. Improve traffic flow and relieve pressures on both sides of the city, as well as relieve the overtaxed I-71/I-75 bridge, and shift traffic to the I-471 bridge--all while improving air quality in compliance with the Clean Air Act; and,

3. Encourage people to use the transit system, by making transit travel convenient and inviting.

The proposal is a product of DCI's Transportation Committee and is being considered by the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) as a possible scenario under its 20-year plan.

"The DCI support this proposal as a catalyst for more discussion," said DCI Chairman Ban Hudson, CEO and president of U.S. Shoe Corporation.

"We have a rare opportunity to rethink how our downtown connects with the region," said John Schneider, chair of DCI's Transportation Committee, and managing director of First Valley Corp., referring to the impending reconstruction of Fort Washington Way in 1997-98.

"Faced with the prospect of spending millions of dollars to rebuild Fort Washington Way, we have some unique options to take another look at our interstate system downtown, and determine if that money might be better spent. This is our chance to reclaim some scarce real estate and improve the value of our waterfront and downtown," Mr. Schneider said.

Dave Phillips, DCI's chief executive officer agreed, saying "I believe our current highway system, which separates downtown from the riverfront, has contributed significantly to our current downtown economic crisis. We have made it too easy for people to bypass downtown. A 'rebuilt Fort Washington Way' may do even more to harm downtown's economic development."

OKI, Cincinnati's metropolitan planning organization, is taking seriously the downtown group's plan, not only because it was developed by an influential association of corporations, but because "it makes so much sense," said Lou Ethridge, an OKI spokesman.

"We can open up the riverfront for light rail and a transit terminal. It also opens up land for two stadiums, retail, offices, and condominiums. There's significant value in abandoning that piece of highway, especially when it's not seen as a necessary connector. It's rare when something comes along which few people have argued against," Mr. Ethridge said.

He added that OKI's long-range transportation plan heavily focuses on developing light rail, calling for five light rail corridors. A potential light rail corridor that has been the target of much attention is an Airport-downtown-Mason/King's Island routing. Major investment studies were initiated four months ago, and contracts were awarded to consultants who are studying alternatives on how move the region's people, not their vehicles.

Mrs. Hilvers explained that SORTA is preparing a blueprint for transit improvements that include light rail, commuter rail, busways, and a central location for transit in downtown Cincinnati.

"We're looking at new services which are cost-effective and community responsive. Rail has a lot of attraction. (But) we're a very conservative community financially, and the price of rail scares a lot of people. It's interesting that people see a highway under construction and they don't think that it's costing them. We pay the cost for dirty air, not the just the highway itself," Mrs. Hilvers said.

OARP'S RAIL TRANSIT RECOMMENDATION EMBRACED

By Ken Prendergast, *Special Projects Director*

The roller coaster ride that Cleveland's Dual Hub project has suffered appears to be over. One week it was up, the next it was off the tracks. Now, it may be mothballed for the foreseeable future. At OARP's suggestion, a new rail transit idea seems to be taking its place, one which can achieve many of Dual Hub's goals but at one-fifth the projected cost.

OARP recommended to GCRTA, NOACA, Cuyahoga County, City of Cleveland, Plain Dealer, and others that a Phase II extension of the new Waterfront Line be adopted, so a rail loop around downtown Cleveland could be created. The \$47 million Tower City-to-North Coast Harbor Waterfront Line extension of the Blue and Green Lines (which is now well under construction) would be extended again from its terminus at the lakefront Muni Parking Lot. Under OARP's vision of the Waterfront Line's Phase II, the light rail line would turn south from the lakefront to Playhouse Square via East 17th Street, which could be converted to a transit mall.

From Playhouse Square, trains would travel alongside Huron Road, reaching the Pointe at Gateway, where the line would descend below street level to the existing track approaches at the east end of the Tower City complex. Five downtown stations could be added, serving East 9th Street, Playhouse Square, Cleveland State University, and future development at the east end of downtown.

Dual Hub is the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority's \$728 million plan to relocate its Red Line (Airport-Tower City-Windemere) metro rail service to a Euclid Avenue alignment between downtown and University Circle. In July, GCRTA's efforts proved fruitless in gaining enough support for Dual Hub's preliminary engineering from the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), a local planning organization. Before Dual Hub can be built, preliminary engineering remains as the last step in what has proved to be a 15-year-long planning process. One of the most contentious issues was GCRTA's desire to build a 1-mile, \$300 million subway under downtown. Enough members of NOACA's board balked at the cost of the downtown subway. They also debated whether Dual Hub, as a downtown distributor, should be built before introducing any of the 15 suburban commuter rail and light rail projects that are in GCRTA's Transit 2010 plan. But GCRTA sought the downtown distributor as an essential foundation for them.

Dual Hub's shortcomings (high cost, inflexible downtown distribution, and a confusing service concept) prompted OARP to advance its own idea several months ago. Members of GCRTA's planning department said they generally liked OARP's alternative to Dual Hub. However, Dual Hub's preliminary engineering could study only those route alternatives prescribed by an alternatives analysis conducted in the 1980s. GCRTA said the engineering study could give credence to OARP's alternative routing, and could redirect its analysis to the route which we recommended. But, since preliminary engineering on Dual Hub is such a political hot potato, OARP's idea for a downtown rapid transit circulator seemed a moot point.

Then, something happened. Among the most vocal opponents of Dual Hub were officials of Cuyahoga County's

Planning Commission. Yet, they were among the first to publicly embrace OARP's suggestion of providing an at-grade downtown rail transit circulator. Infrastructure construction costs for the project could range from \$80 million to \$120 million. Also, a vital element is to re-equip GCRTA's rail fleet with new, standardized rail cars, which could cost between \$50 million and \$70 million. Dual Hub's cost assumed an identical re-equipping of GCRTA's rail fleet.

The length of the Waterfront Line's Phase II project would measure about 1.5 miles, a half-mile less than Phase I. The two most expensive components of Phase II would be a bridge over Conrail's lakefront tracks and, notably, the descent from Huron Road at the Pointe at Gateway to the existing track approaches at Tower City's east end. Included in OARP's cost estimate is streetscaping for the East 17th Street transit mall, and an extension of East 18th Street north to the Shoreway.

In concert with the Phase II extension of the Waterfront Line, the city's plans to extend East 18th Street north to an interchange with the Shoreway and to Burke Lakefront Airport should be realized. Both projects would enhance access by foot, bicycle, car, bus, and train to the eastern end of downtown, and should help to encourage high-density commercial and residential development in that area.

OARP's recommendation allows for the eventual inclusion of Dual Hub, but as a shorter Playhouse Square-University Circle surface rail alignment. It also allows for new commuter rail and rapid transit lines to feed into this downtown circulator.

A potential concern could center on having rapid transit trains crossing downtown streets at grade. This should not be a traffic problem. As with gates and flashers at road/rail crossings, the track circuits of the Phase II Waterfront Line could be tied into street traffic lights to allow trains to quickly cross intersections. This is the same technology that will be installed on the new 42nd Street

trolley which will traverse major thoroughfares in the heart of Manhattan.

One last item in OARP's recommendation would allow for even greater flexibility for rail transit users: replace GCRTA's aging rail fleet with standardized trains. New trains can be designed to serve the high-platforms of the Red Line, as well as the low-platforms of the Blue and Green Lines. Also, the downtown loop would allow for a new, loop-only light rail service operating fare-free 24 hours a day. This service, to ease travel within downtown Cleveland, would be in addition to the fare-paid trains traveling on the loop to/from the suburbs.

In July, the Cleveland Plain Dealer editorialized that GCRTA has done an admirable job of capturing the imagination of politicians and the public with its Waterfront Line project. The editorial also stated, with sobering truth, that GCRTA had done the exact opposite with Dual Hub. GCRTA's cause was not aided by the project's \$728 million price tag.

By creating an at-grade loop around downtown, the Phase II extension of the Waterfront Line can capture imaginations, without inducing sticker shock. OARP will strive to see that its plan will not be sent on the same roller coaster ride that made Dual Hub sick. The on-going revitalization of downtown Cleveland depends on its circulation system.



Computers produce near-miracles, such as this crystal-ball image of how the Waterfront Line & Settler's Landing Station in Cleveland's Flats will look next year. Photo: GCRTA

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Updated: June 1994

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Updated: July 1995

This updated directory contains significant changes... so please clip it out!

ORDC ISSUES SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING MEETINGS

A schedule for some upcoming meetings of the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) was recently released. Responsible public involvement at these meetings is encouraged, and OARP members are invited to attend.

ORDC BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING

September 28th at 9:30 a.m.
Riffe Center, Studio 3
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH

ORDC COMMITTEE MEETING

October 26th at 9:30 a.m.
ORDC Offices, LeVeque Tower, 15th Floor
50 West Broad St.
Columbus, OH

If you have any questions about the meeting times, agendas, or locations, you can call the ORDC at 614-644-0306, or 614-644-0310.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

OARP Board of Directors Meeting will occur on Saturday, October 21st, from 10 am to 3pm, at Bun's Restaurant, in Delaware, Ohio
NOTE: attendance by general membership is welcome, but board discussions are to remain confidential until published.

Ohio Alliance for Transportation will meet on Thursday, August 24th at 7pm at the Brown Township Hall, 3832 Main Street in Kilbourne, Ohio.

OARP Columbus Local Meetings are held the second Saturday of each month, from 9am to Noon, at the Red Door Tavern, 1736 W. 5th Ave.

General Membership Meeting to be held on September 23rd in Galion.
NOTE: this is a tentative date and location, subject to change. Details will appear in the next newsletter.

Your Contributions Make The 6:53...

Your passenger rail related articles, clippings, letters, and photos are welcome! We may edit and we can't guarantee that we'll use everything you send. But we'll try...

Please note that all signed articles in the 6:53 reflect the opinion of their authors, and not necessarily the views and positions of OARP and its officers.

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OHIO ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

825 South Tecumseh Road
Springfield, OH 45506
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