Railroad merger sidetracks trains

By Ken Prendergast and John DeLora

While it is too soon to tell what the long-term effects will be from the June 1 split up of freight railroad Conrail Corp. among Norfolk Southern Inc. (NS) and CSX Corp., the restructured rail systems have gotten off to a rocky start. A number of technical and corporate culture problems have left many freight trains stopped on mainlines and clogging freight yards, causing serious delays to most Amtrak passenger trains in Indiana, Michigan and Ohio.

Since the Conrail split, the Michigan and Ohio Associations of Railroad Passengers (MARP and OARP) have been monitoring the on-time performance of Amtrak passenger trains in our regions, and the reasons for their delays.

CSX, which got 42 percent of Conrail, had relatively minor problems. Norfolk Southern, which got the rest of Conrail, ran into severe problems, mainly involving incompatible computer programs. Within days, trains began arriving later and later. By the end of the first week, United Parcel Service was switching much of its

Yellow signals loom. Several days before June 1, when freight railroad Conrail Corp. was acquired and split among CSX Inc. and Norfolk Southern Corp., Amtrak's Pennsylvanian sped west beneath a signal bridge toward Chicago. This passenger train, that runs on Conrail tracks which have since been transferred to NS, was on time this day. However, this and many other trains operating east of Chicago have begun suffering serious delays due to problems associated with the takeover of Conrail.

Columbus to decide its transit future Nov. 2

Polls show voters will say “yes” to levies.
Columbus to decide its transit future Nov. 2
Polls show voters will say “yes” to levies

By Ed D’Amato
OARP Secretary

COLUMBUS — The Board of Trustees for the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) voted to place a two-part sales tax initiative on the November 1999 ballot to expand the COTA bus system and to bring commuter rail to Columbus. The expansion plan, called “Vision 2020: Transportation for a Great Community,” would be phased in over 20 years beginning in 2000.

Facing crippling traffic congestion and a separation of inner-city residents from suburban employers who need labor, the plan will provide viable alternatives for all commuters, suburban and inner-city alike, to get to work.

By 2020, Columbus is expected to see a 34 percent increase in the number of automobile trips, a 63 percent increase in the number of miles driven, and a 91 percent increase in the amount of time drivers will spend on the road. The focus of Vision 2020 is to address these problems.

COTA is currently funded by a temporary, 1/4-percent Franklin County sales tax that must be renewed every 10 years. The proposal will include a renewal of this temporary tax to keep the current COTA bus-only system intact. A second levy—the addition of a permanent, 1/4-per-

— See “COTA levy”, page eight

The Passenger Rail News
479 Humiston Drive
Bay Village OH 44140-3017

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Train of Thought
from The Passenger Rail News Editor
Kenneth Prendergast

Laws of physics tell us that objects in motion tend to stay in motion. Conversely, objects that are motionless tend to stay still.

Such is the case with rail passenger services. The rules of passenger rail service tell us that states and regions with at least a visible number of passenger trains tend to see more investments than those regions that have little or no service.

Recognition of this principle has forced rail advocates and political leaders, who have had dreams of high-speed trains dancing in their heads, to take a “walk before you run” approach to railway development. But, for those regions which have no passenger trains to begin with, simply learning to crawl has proven to be tough enough.

The reasons for these difficulties can be traced to those pesky laws of physics.

Corporate and governmental policies could help provide a nudge, however. Corporate policies refer to Amtrak’s position regarding new trains and routes. To its credit, Amtrak has taken a business-like approach toward the creation of new services. For Amtrak to invest in a new service, company officials must take a hard look at how the new service will affect the company’s bottom line.

Fortunately for Amtrak—but unfortunately for regions lacking service—there are literally dozens of requests each year by cities and states across the nation for new trains. This is unfortunate for regions lacking any train service because they must compete with regions that have train service and are wanting more.

A course in basic economics will teach anyone that adding two new trains to an existing route—such as Chicago-Milwaukee which has 14 trains a day—will generate more new revenues than new costs. Starting up two trains on a route like Cincinnati-Dayton-Columbus-Cleveland, which hasn’t seen regular passenger service since 1970, means a large expenditure must be made just to get the route ready for passenger trains. Putting into motion this motionless object will take a huge financial shove.

Having said all that, it appears that a source of motivation to get these
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2-C Corridor to become 3-C?

By Ken Prendergast
OARP Vice-President

Should plans for new Cleveland-Columbus passenger trains be expanded beyond the state capital to include Dayton and Cincinnati? That's a question that Amtrak and the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) will answer with new cost and revenue estimates.

OARP members already know the answer to that question should be a resounding "yes." But, what seems simple to OARP members is actually a slow process. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODoT) was reluctant to include rail as part of a solution to ease traffic during the $500 million reconstruction and addition of a third lane along most of Interstate 71 between Cleveland and Columbus.

While rail eventually won ODoT's conditional support, it removed rail from consideration as a means to mitigate traffic congestion. Instead, ODoT officials said they would pursue rail passenger service between Cleveland and Columbus on its own merits. With a small, two-year demonstration, transportation planners wanted to get a sample of rail's potential to attract passengers.

If the demonstration could be worked out, and it proved successful, ODoT officials would be able to justify a much larger investment in passenger rail service. The kind of investment in rail with Amtrak's projected revenues. Amtrak estimated $1.5 million would be generated by two daily round trips, and $2.3 million from four daily round trips. Amtrak assumed a one-way Cleveland-

nati, Dayton and Springfield marketplaces because they can provide a significant increase in ridership and revenue,” ORDC Executive Director Tom O'Leary said in the Cincinnati Post.

A good comparison can be made in the difference between the costs of having two trains operating round-trip between Cleveland and Columbus, or running four round trips. While the train-miles double from two round trips being increased to four round trips, the operating costs rise from about $7.2 million to $9.5 million (including lounge car costs). The cost increase for acquiring the trains—about $6.4 million rising to $6.7 million—is even less dramatic (the only difference is $320,000 in additional training costs).

State transportation planners also weren't happy pressing transportation problems.

That same year, Dayton will host the Century of Powered Flight celebration, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first flight of the Wright brothers. Not only were they Dayton natives, but they tested the first airplane at Huffman Prairie in Dayton—not at Kitty Hawk, NC. Event promoters are expecting three million visitors to Dayton in 2003.

Lastly, Amtrak has agreed to waive some costs for which it originally said it would bill Ohio. One of these is a lease charge for the two-year demonstration period. Also, Amtrak will review their policy regarding the sale of locomotives and rail cars. Non-Amtrak equipment could also be used as long as it meets safety standards.

A steering committee overseeing these financial analyses, as well as marketing and safety issues is to make a recommendation to ODoT by September whether this project should proceed.

ACTION ALERT!

Last year we wrote letters, made phone calls, and testified at hearings on the rail passenger service between Cleveland and Columbus proposed by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODoT). Thanks to your excellent response, the effort to get train service really got a big push at a critical time. We are now at a critical time once again.

As early as September, a committee is expected to recommend to the ODoT that train service should be started up on Ohio's busiest intercity travel corridor. It will likely begin as four round trips a day.
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As early as September, a committee is expected to recommend to the ODoT that train service should be started up on Ohio's busiest intercity travel corridor. It will likely begin as four round trips between Cleveland and Columbus, with a later extension to Springfield, Dayton, and Cincinnati. But, ODoT won't push for the trains unless Governor Robert Taft and the leaders of Ohio's legislature say so.

That means they need to hear from you! Write as many letters and make as many phone calls as possible so they make the RIGHT decision! Let's go for the win! Tell 'em you want train service!

Write to:

The Honorable Robert Taft
Governor of Ohio
Riffe Center
Columbus, OH 43215

Speaker Jo Ann Davidson
Ohio House of Representatives
The State House
Columbus, OH 43266-0603

President Richard Finan
Ohio Senate
The State House
Columbus, OH 43266-0604

To find out who your state legislators are, call the State House switchboard at (614) 466-2000 or contact your local library, or city/village hall. Do not confuse your state legislators with your U.S. Congressional representatives and senators!
CINCINNATI — A study by a consultant hired by the city is recommending that the best place to locate a railway station in central Cincinnati is at a site just west of the new Bengals football stadium. If the plans are realized, it would mean placing a train station closer to downtown Cincinnati than it has been in decades. It would also mean putting rail passengers within a few blocks of the city’s primary convention, business and tourism attractions.

The study by R.L. Banks & Associates of Washington D.C. was commissioned after planners concluded that an intermodal hub, near the Freedom Center, being sought for light-rail, buses, and taxis wouldn’t have enough room to also accommodate diesel-powered commuter and intercity passenger trains.

Of nine locations studied, a station in the vicinity of 3rd Street and Central Avenue (dubbed the Crosset site) would be accessible to the Chicago-Washington D.C. Cardinal train (with a back-up move), plus future passenger services from St. Louis, Cleveland, and the Midwest high-speed trains from Chicago and Indianapolis. East-west commuter rail service, which is being studied by the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI), could also use the Crosset site.

Two other possible orientations of the station in this same general area were considered. They are Longworth Hall, a former Baltimore & Ohio Railroad warehouse and “The Hole”, both west of the Crosset site, and therefore, a little farther away from downtown.

Cincinnati Union Terminal, which is Amtrak’s present station in the city, also was considered in the study. But a lack of space for expansion and frequent freight train traffic past the terminal kept it from being recommended by R.L. Banks. Also, looked at and rejected was the old Amtrak station site (1972-1991) on Old River Road. Its inaccessibility by customers and trains removed it from consideration.

The Crosset site has existing rail infrastructure, is relatively flat, and has space for handling multiple passenger trains without interference from freight trains. A small station could be built to serve the present level of passenger rail traffic, and expanded to handle additional, future passenger trains and routes.

Just as important, the Crosset station could also be served by the proposed I-71 light-rail line, which would eventually link Greater Cincinnati International Airport at Covington, KY with Paramount’s Kings Island near Mason, OH. Redevelopment opportunities also exist nearby at Longworth Hall, which could also serve as a passenger station if the Crosset site doesn’t work out.

Longworth Hall is large enough that it could be redeveloped with retail, restaurants and commercial office space. There also is enough vacant land surrounding Longworth Hall to establish a number of tracks and passenger platforms, and possibly a mail and express facility.

Unfortunately, trains to Cleveland would probably still have to transit the busy Mill Creek Valley railway corridor. Although Norfolk Southern’s new third main track could be used, NS has identified this as a new north-south service lane through Ohio and Kentucky as part of its post-Conrail route structure. This service lane will put even more traffic through Cincinnati.

The next steps are for the city to act on the consultant’s recommendations, for more detailed designs to be made of a station facility, and for funding to be secured for its construction. This could occur as part of the planning for the Cincinnati-Indianapolis-Chicago high-speed service. Designation of this route as a high-speed corridor by the Federal Railroad Administration earlier this year makes it more likely that federal money could be acquired to help pay for engineering, design, and hopefully, construction costs.

Much of the information for this article was compiled by Dave Dawson, Executive Director, Citizens Transit Alliance, Inc., in Cincinnati and OAPB member Bob Wickens.
New Royal Oak shelter

ROYAL OAK — The Royal Oak Downtown Development Authority (RODDA) has put out a request for bids for a new shelter. The design resembled a 1920's-era Chicago elevated shelter, and had only a back wall of steel plates with a sloping roof. The bids came in substantially higher than the project budget of $125,000.

MARP's Tim Backhurst and John DeLora appeared before a June 16 board meeting of the RODDA. MARP pointed out that for a fraction of the cost, a standard bus shelter with a roof could be installed which would give far greater protection to passengers.

Based partly on MARP's presentation, the RODDA voted to reject the bids and to refer the project back to a committee. The general consensus of the board was to get something done on this issue. MARP offered to work with the City Planning Department in designing a new facility, which was underway in early July. The next issue of The Rail Passenger News will have an update.

Was location study unnecessary?

CINCINNATI — Planners at the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) notified city officials that diesel-powered Amtrak and commuter trains could be accommodated at the planned transportation center near the Underground Railroad Freedom Center. This is the site originally proposed to unite Amtrak trains, commuter trains, light-rail transit, city buses, taxis and cars in the heart of the riverfront district.

Riverfront design consultants questioned whether Amtrak and commuter trains could fit into the transit center being developed. That prompted city officials to hire R.L. Banks & Associates to recommend alternate sites for a railroad station (see above article). However, the late-breaking developments suggest the study may have been for naught.

ORDC planners said that an exemption can be granted to allow Amtrak and commuter trains, which are larger than light-rail trolleys, to fit into the two-level transportation center, now under construction. The news was warmly received by Cincinnati officials.

“"This is what we’ve been saying for months,” said City Councilman Todd Portune, as quoted in the Cincinnati Post. “The window of opportunity is while everything is torn up. It’s going to be foolish to do anything else but lay the track at the same time.”

Construction on the $40 million transportation center is being permitted by the reconstruction of Fort Washington Way (the riverfront highway) and the construction of a two-level Second Street. Without the highway’s reconstruction and the new, dual-level Second Street, there would be no room for the transportation center.
Traffic to trucks due to late-arriving trains. As June continued, the problem worsened, and freight trains were backed up for 30 miles outside Chicago, partly due to severe crew shortages made worse by the computer failures, which meant NS couldn’t tell replacement crews where to find a number of trains.

On most days since June 1, the two- to three-track railway west of Cleveland has been reduced to a single-track railway because of the number of stopped freight trains, thereby causing significant delays to Amtrak’s Lake Shore Limited, Capitol Limited and Pennsylvanian which use this route. Similar delays have been experienced in the vicinity of NS’s (formerly Conrail’s) Conway Yard west of Pittsburgh. Delays of a similar nature have been experienced by travelers on Amtrak trains to Grand Rapids and Detroit.

While the safety of the traveling public does not appear to be at risk, the reputation of passenger rail service does. Amtrak trains occasionally suffer delays, especially during the summer months when travel is peaking. But the extent and cause of delays is what concerns MARP and OARP. Nearly all Amtrak trains east of Chicago now operate over tracks owned and operated by NS or CSX.

Ever since Conrail was split among NS and CSX, delays to passenger trains of an hour or so are common, with some delays exceeding five hours. MARP and OARP argue that this is simply not acceptable. How much time should MARP and OARP, the Federal Railroad Administration, spend trying to correct this problem?

WASHINGTON - Support continues to grow for giving states the flexibility to use federal transportation funds for intercity passenger rail. The latest organizations that have called on Congress include the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National Governors Association.

“Cities and towns are sending a signal to Washington that intercity passenger rail must play a key role in solving air and road congestion, and in driving economic development,” said George Warrington, Amtrak’s president and chief executive officer.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is asking Congress to pass Senate Bill 1144, that would provide more equitable federal transportation funding. The bill, which is being pushed by Senator George Voinovich (R-Ohio), would grant states the flexibility to invest National Highway System (NHS), Surface Transportation Project (STP) and Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ) funds contained in the $216 billion Transportation Efficiency Act (TEA-21) in intercity passenger rail and the development of high-speed rail corridors. States are currently prohibited from using these federal funds on transportation solutions that include intercity passenger rail.

In the past three years, states and cities have contributed more than a half-billion dollars for joint capital projects with Amtrak, with $300 million this year alone.

Loudly and clearly that intercity passenger rail is a part of the solution for furthering economic development, relieving congestion and increasing mobility,” said Governor Tommy Thompson (R-Wisconsin), Amtrak’s chairman of the board. “Granting flexibility will put intercity passenger rail on more equal footing with other transportation modes, and will help Amtrak achieve its goal of becoming a successful business enterprise.”

The National Governors Association and the U.S. Conference of Mayors are among those in a growing list of supporters calling on Congress to give passenger rail eligibility for federal transportation funds. Other public policy organizations in this list include the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Association of Counties and the National League of Cities.

There also is an impressive list of private businesses, environmental organizations, labor unions and transportation associations who support flexible funding for passenger rail. These include Alstom Inc., American Passenger Rail Coalition, Bombardier Transportation, CSX Corp., General Electric, General Motors, High Speed Ground Transportation Association, IBM Global Services, Renfe Talgo of America, Inc., Siemens Transportation Systems, Inc., Sierra Club, Surface Transportation Policy Project, Transportation Trades Department of the AFL-CIO.
Amtrak trains occasionally suffer delays, especially during the summer months when travel is peaking. But the extent and cause of delays is what concerns MARP and OARP. Nearly all Amtrak trains east of Chicago now operate over tracks owned and operated by NS or CSX.

Ever since Conrail was split among NS and CSX, delays to passenger trains of an hour or so are common, with some delays exceeding five hours. MARP and OARP argue that this is simply not acceptable. How much time should MARP and OARP give CSX and, especially, NS before we consider filing protests with the appropriate regulatory bodies?

NS put out a press release saying it would have the problem “under control” by the end of June, but that didn’t happen. Noted railroad stock analyst James Valentine of Morgan Stanley Dean Witter said that, although the service disruptions were bad, they were nowhere near the meltdown that Union Pacific suffered in 1997.

He said that, according to customers, small progress was being seen by the end of June, and he felt that the corner was being turned. However, he added it could well be into September or the end of the year by the time everything is running smoothly. NS was dealing with the problem by hiring back hundreds of recently retired or bought-out Conrail operating crew personnel.

A difficult transition period from the Conrail split was expected by most informed observers, but not a prolonged one. As noted earlier, MARP and OARP will be monitoring the operations of NS and CSX and how they affect Amtrak travelers. If you are traveling on trains east of Chicago, please send trip reports to MARP or OARP (depending on which organization you belong to, or which route you are traveling). If your train was on time or close to on time, we would like to hear of progress reports, as well.

Birmingham Amtrak station to move, twice

Maybe they should just put the Birmingham, MI station on wheels. The Amtrak shelter sits on land which the Big Rock Chop House had leased from Erb Lumber, owner of the land. Big Rock, which occupies the former Grand Trunk station building, has purchased the land and has told Amtrak that it wants all of the parking area for its patrons. Amtrak’s lease expires Aug. 1.

As a result, Amtrak is moving a few yards to the south onto land still owned by Erb. New platforms and a new shelter will have to be built. A new access from Eton Street to the stop will also be necessary. The new site will have even less visibility than the current one, which is notoriously hard for first-time users to find.

The good news comes from the other side of the tracks, in the City of Troy. City officials there have approved a site plan for a new shopping mall and housing on the south side of Maple Rd. (15 Mile Rd.) and West of Coolidge. Developers have included a 24,000-square-foot plot for a “transit facility.” The developers are going to turn the former Ford tractor plant site into 300 residential housing units and a large shopping mall. The site plan looks very attractive, and will allow much better access from the south than the current site.

MARP has met briefly with the Planning Director for the City of Troy, and will be in touch with the city as development proceeds. The target date for completion of the shopping mall and housing development is 2002.

Birmingham is served by three daily round-trip Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac trains.
Euclid Corridor project approved

$325 million sought for bus, rail improvements

CLEVELAND — The Euclid Corridor transit project progressed into the final design phase following approval by the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency — a metropolitan planning organization that distributes federal and state funding to local infrastructure projects.

The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA), area Congressional representatives, and other officials are now seeking funding from the federal government to pay most of the cost of the $325 million transit project. Already, $70 million in state funds have been secured. GCRTA will commit a significant share, as will the City of Cleveland and affected major property owners. If all the funding can be put together, construction on this East Side transit project could begin as early as 2001 and be completed within eight years.

Construction of a transitway down the middle of Euclid Avenue is the project’s primary component. The transitway will be used by new electrically powered, extra-long buses that would be articulated — or “hinged” in the middle so the train-like buses could negotiate downtown intersections. The Euclid Avenue transitway will run from downtown to East Cleveland via University Circle. Service frequency will be increased from a bus running every five minutes, to one every 120 seconds.

The electric buses will stop at rapid transit-style stations at major cross-streets. Euclid Avenue will be landscaped, while the old traffic circle will be restored at University Circle — home to most of the city’s museums and other cultural institutions.

than 20,000 daily riders today.

Other elements of the Euclid Corridor project include the redesign and extension of East 17th and 18th streets. Two large transit centers also will be built downtown to unite the Euclid Corridor electric trolley buses to dozens of countywide bus routes.

Proposed Euclid Avenue transitway at Playhouse Square.

While Euclid Avenue is often considered the Main Street of Cleveland (and East Cleveland), political leaders from Cuyahoga County’s 55 other municipalities and other cities in surrounding counties wanted guarantees from NOACA and GCRTA that their public transit needs wouldn’t be neglected while such a large investment is made into a single transportation project that measures only 7 miles in length. The Cuyahoga County Commissioners brokered a deal with GCRTA and NOACA to provide for the transit needs of other parts of the metro area.

broad-based transit needs of the entire county.”

GCRTA spokesman Dan Minnich said expansion of major transportation improvements to the West Side may be included at future meetings to set the guidelines of a possible study.

“We will definitely look at extending major transit improvements to the West Side, though it may not necessarily be an extension of the Euclid Corridor,” he said.

Numerous movers and shakers in the community are pushing the Euclid Corridor project, including Cleveland Mayor Mike White, Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones, Congressman Steve LaTourette, the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Cleveland State University, Playhouse Square Foundation, Midtown Corridor Inc. and University Circle Inc.

GCRTA officials, Congressional representatives, and others are trying to acquire federal transit money to help pay for Euclid Corridor. While a report by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) didn’t rank the project highly — a critical barometer for any project to get federal funds — Mr. Minnich said he expected that would change in a new report due this summer.

“That (old) report was based on information developed back in November,” he said. “Since then, the Ohio Department of Transportation has put $70 million into the project and is being used to leverage federal dollars. The fact that we have this money is a big factor that they (the FTA)
While Euclid Avenue is often considered the Main Street of Cleveland (and East Cleveland), political leaders from Cuyahoga County's 55 other municipalities and other cities in surrounding counties wanted guarantees from NOACA and GCRTA that their public transit needs wouldn't be neglected while such a large investment is made into a single transportation project that measures only 7 miles in length. The Cuyahoga County Commissioners brokered a deal with GCRTA and NOACA to provide for the transit needs of other parts of the metro area.

The Euclid Corridor was approved 32-1 by NOACA's governing board. Parma Mayor Gerald Boldt cast the lone dissenting vote. He leads Cuyahoga County's second-largest city, and didn't feel his community was seeing its share of transit investments.

Part of the brokered deal requires that an analysis be completed to determine the viability and funding strategy to extend major transit improvements to the West Side of the City of Cleveland via Lorain Road or any other east/west corridor. This could involve the westward extension of the Euclid Corridor's electric trolleys through some of the transit-oriented ethnic neighborhoods of the West Side.

Another part of the deal by NOACA stipulates that GCRTA will make its next major transit project an extension of rail service to the suburbs. GCRTA officials said a number of rail expansions already being planned would fit that description, including extensions of the existing Rapid system or creation of new diesel-powered commuter trains on freight railroad tracks. U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Lakewood) has his own preference.

"We asked for the extension of the Rapid (Red Line southwest from the Airport) to Berea," he said. "I certainly think that we need to look at

New Elyria-Cleveland Airport bus service!

ELYRIA — OARP sponsor Lorain County Transit is starting up regular bus service, running Mondays through Fridays, from Elyria to Cleveland Hopkins International Airport. The boarding site is on the south side of Elyria, at the Value City parking lot on Elyria-Oberlin Road. This site is served by LCT's daily Lorain- Elyria-Oberlin buses.

At Hopkins Airport, convenient connections can be made to the rest of the world, or to the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority's (GCRTA) Red Line rapid transit for downtown Cleveland and other metro Cleveland destinations. Trains run every 6-15 minutes, from 4:30 a.m.-10 p.m. daily. GCRTA's "Rapid" station is an escalator/elevator ride down from the airport's baggage claim area.

For schedule and fare information for LCT's Elyria-airport buses, call (440) 329-5545 during regular business hours or visit their Web site at www.loraincounty.com/lct any time.
Illinois puts rail on fast track

Midwest system is coming to life

By Ken Prendergast
OARP Vice-President

Illinois Governor George Ryan approved legislation that will create a huge infrastructure program called Illinois First, which includes funding to upgrade much of the Chicago-St. Louis Amtrak route for 110 mph speeds. While the amount of money in Illinois First for high-speed rail is only $70 million, it will combine with other state, federal and Amtrak funds to make high-speed service a reality on this route in as little as four years.

The plan, while not a billion-dollar “bullet train” in the Japanese or European sense in which trains routinely reach speeds in excess of 150 mph, does create a building-block approach toward realizing high-speed service.

Passage of the high-speed rail funding in Illinois has gotten the attention of officials in other Midwest states, notably in Wisconsin where Governor Tommy Thompson is seeking funding to create 110 mph passenger rail service between Chicago and Milwaukee, with future extensions to Madison and Minneapolis. Michigan, the Federal Railroad Administration, and Amtrak already invested tens of millions of dollars to rebuild a long section of the Detroit-Chicago rail line so that Amtrak passenger trains will soon be able to operate at 100 mph speeds.

Nine Midwest states last year developed plans for an 11-route network for faster trains, including 110 mph speeds on most lines. The high-speed rail development plan, dubbed the Midwest Regional Rail System, includes funding for improvements to tracks, signals, stations and operating grants to Amtrak.

Here is a breakdown of how the $70 million will be invested in the Chicago-St. Louis high-speed rail project:

- $10 million state match (already committed) to complete the Positive Train Control signal/traffic control system project on the 112-mile segment between Dwight and Springfield. The American Association of Railroads and the Federal Railroad Administration are picking up the tab for the lion’s share of this project. Total investment in the PTC project is about $50-60 million;
- $30 million to improve the track between Dwight and Springfield to allow 110 mph running, thereby cutting 30 minutes from what is already a speedy, 1-hour, 56-minute trip;
- $10 million to fix grade crossing signals between Dwight and Springfield, including the rewiring of circuits to accommodate faster trains by allowing proper timing between gate activation and train arrival; and
- $20 million as part of a 50/50 match with Amtrak funds to purchase four sets of equipment for the corridor.

Columbus to decide its transit future

— “COTA levy”, from page one —

cent sales tax—would pay for bus service expansion and commuter rail. Having a permanent portion of the sales tax will allow COTA to leverage federal money for the construction costs of the commuter rail system. Federal funds will probably pay about half of these costs.

COTA had considered placing a single, ½-per-cent, permanent tax on the ballot, but decided to split it into one permanent and one temporary tax to give COTA more accountability to taxpayers. Current polls indicate support by a majority of voters to increase the tax. In 1995, COTA placed a tax increase on the ballot, but it failed after a rail component was dropped from consideration. This caused support by many suburban residents to disappear. This time around, Franklin County voters will finally have the opportunity to decide whether rail transit should be part of their community.

Help wanted!

Tired of seeing Ken Prendergast’s name atop newsletter articles or in the photo credits beneath many pictures? So is he! Lately, the situation has gotten better, but more contributions to the newsletter are always needed.

With your help, we can make this a more well-rounded publication that better represents the geographic areas it covers. Follow the submission guidelines on Page two for sending all photos and some articles. If you are
Chicago and Milwaukee, with future extensions to Madison and Minneapolis, Michigan, the Federal Railroad Administration, and Amtrak already invested tens of millions of dollars to rebuild a long section of the Detroit-Chicago rail line so that Amtrak passenger trains will soon be able to operate at 100 mph speeds.

Nine Midwest states last year developed plans for an 11-route network for faster trains, including 110 mph speeds on most lines. The high-speed rail development plan, dubbed the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MRRI), included routes from Chicago through Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio to cities such as Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, East Lansing, Flint, Grand Rapids, Indianapolis, Kalamazoo, Port Huron, South Bend, and Toledo. A number of Chicago-area skeptics of the rail plan have since become converts. They now recognize the plan will eliminate local pressures for building a third Chicago airport.

Just completing lines to Detroit, St. Louis and Milwaukee would be "like developing a little Midway Airport and dropping it in the heart of the Loop," says Paul A. Karas, president of Grove Management Co., a Chicago infrastructure consultancy. His comments appeared in the June 21 edition of Crain's Chicago Business. "What's the logical outcome of the status quo? Congestion on the roads and at the airports is just going to get worse."

Illinois' new law includes bond money in the amount of $150 million for highway-rail grade crossing improvements, $70 million for work related to high-speed rail, and another $30 million for other passenger and freight rail items. This is on top of millions of dollars the state has already invested in the Chicago-St. Louis route—and several other lines emanating from Chi-

The remainder of rail funding in Illinois First will be invested in other Illinois passenger corridors and will yield the following improvements:

- $11 million to provide cab signals for Amtrak trains between Aurora and Galesburg, allowing for 90 mph service and cutting 20 minutes of the travel time;
- $1.5 million for various projects on the Milwaukee and Carbondale lines. The Carbondale trains (as well as trains from Indianapolis and Cincinnati) will benefit from track improvements at Grand Crossing which is being funded from other sources;
- $5 million for station improvements statewide; and
- $10 million for a freight program. Chicago-area rail advocates report that this is for fixing freight bottlenecks around Chicago, and that the Chicago-Joliet segment (used by Chicago-St. Louis Amtrak trains) is an obvious candidate for these funds, with both freight, commuter and planned high-speed service on it.

Additionally, Metra (the Chicago-area commuter rail agency) is spending $11 million for improvements on the Chicago-Joliet line. This includes improved traffic control systems, tracks and switches to allow the faster operation of passenger trains (commuter and high-speed) over the line.

While the improvements budgeted represent only a portion of the total $450 million cost of attaining 110 mph service over the entire Chicago-St. Louis route, the state's investment is a huge step forward. Ultimately, the Illinois Department of Transportation and Amtrak are working toward operating 10 round-trip trains per day, on a 3-hour, 42-minute schedule for the 282-mile route. Currently, there are only three round trips per day on this route, on a 5-hour, 30 minute schedule. Once all the improvements are implemented, the trains are expected to cover their operating costs from passenger and package express revenues.
Clock is ticking on Summer Amtrak travel discounts

Time is running out for you to take advantage of several summer travel promotions on Amtrak. Many of the fare discounts are intended to benefit families, seniors, and children, but there are others who will benefit. The following are some of Amtrak's most popular travel promotions:

**Amtrak Explore America Fares** - For one low fare, travelers can visit one, two or three regions of the country for a period of up to 45 days, with as many as three planned stopovers along the way. Summer fares range from $239 to $399, with a special $99 fare for travel within the state of Florida.

**North America Rail Pass** - Amtrak and VIA Rail Canada offer the North America Rail Pass, which gives travelers 30 consecutive days of travel anywhere in the U.S. and Canada, with unlimited stopovers. The summer fare is $645.

**Amtrak Vacations** - Amtrak offers a variety of complete vacation packages year-round providing transportation, lodging and tours to places like New York City, Niagara Falls, Colonial Williamsburg, Myrtle Beach, Orlando, Chicago, Branson, MO, Seattle, San Francisco and many others popular destinations. Travelers can customize their own package to include additional destinations, car rentals and Amtrak's Air Rail plan (see below).

**Amtrak Air Rail** - Amtrak Air Rail Packages allow vacationers to travel one way by train and the other way in their own car, thus allowing for complete flexibility. In cooperation with Amtrak, VIA Rail Canada, Delta Air Lines and other transportation companies, Amtrak offers nearly 1,000 packages across North America. (Chicago - New Orleans) and Sunset Limited (Los Angeles - Orlando) will feature interpretive guides providing on-board commentary on geographical highlights, cultural and natural history while customers enjoy the breathtaking views. Trails & Rails are in partnership with the National Park Service, Eastern National and National Park Foundation.

**Amtrak Degas Express** - In partnership with the New Orleans Museum of Art, art lovers can take Amtrak’s Crescent (New York - New Orleans), City of New Orleans (Chicago - New Orleans) and Sunset Limited (Los Angeles - New Orleans - Orlando) to enjoy works of French Impressionist painter Edgar Degas. The travel package includes discounted rail tickets, hotel accommodations and admission to the exhibit.

**Kids Always Ride For Half-Price** - Amtrak’s year-round 50% discount for children ages 2-15, traveling with an adult is the best family vacation value in the travel industry. (Kids under 2 ride free).

**Kids Fare Better Than Half Off On The Auto Train** - For only $29 one-way or $58 round trip, kids (ages 2 to 15) can ride on Amtrak’s Auto Train. Amtrak’s one-of-a-kind Auto Train carries passengers and their cars, automobiles, vans, and motorcycles every day between Lorton, Va., in suburban Washington, D.C., to Sanford, Fla., just outside of Orlando.

**Seniors Discount** - Seniors, 62 years of age and above, will feature interpretive guides providing on-board commentary on geographical highlights, cultural and natural history while customers enjoy the breathtaking views. Trails & Rails are in partnership with the National Park Service, Eastern National and National Park Foundation.

**Travel Alerts**

**Capitol Ltd.–Florida connection problems**

Connections at Washington D.C. will no longer be guaranteed between train #30, the eastbound Capitol Limited, and train #91, the southbound Silver Star. The Capitol Limited operates daily between Chicago, South Bend, Toledo, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Washington D.C., and a number of smaller towns enroute. The Silver Star, also daily, links New York City, Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Richmond, VA, Raleigh, NC, Charleston, SC, Savannah, GA, and many cities in Florida including Jacksonville, Orlando, West Palm Beach and Miami.

While the connecting time at Washington D.C. between trains #30 and #91 is 1½ hours, Amtrak has not been able to make this connection. Now, passengers wishing to make the connection will have to wait in Washington D.C. until 11 p.m. to catch southbound train #97, the Silver Meteor. Fortunately, there is more frequent service out of Washington D.C. to Virginia cities like Richmond, so the wait won’t be anywhere near as long as it will be to points farther south.

The reason for this change is the continuing late operation of train #30, primarily due to freight congestion.
offers a variety of complete vacation packages year-round providing transportation, lodging and tours to places like New York City, Niagara Falls, Colonial Williamsburg, Myrtle Beach, Orlando, Chicago, Branson, MO, Seattle, San Francisco and many others popular destinations. Travelers can customize their own package to include additional destinations, car rentals and Amtrak’s Air Rail plan (see below).

Amtrak Air Rail - Amtrak Air Rail Packages allow vacationers to travel one way by train and the other way by plane on United Airlines.

Cruise Rail - Cruise Rail means vacationers can take Amtrak to Miami, Tampa, Port Canaveral (Orlando), New Orleans, Los Angeles and Vancouver, B.C., for a three-, four- or seven-day ocean cruise.


Mayors form Amtrak advisory council

Mayors from throughout the U.S. have organized a 21-member Amtrak Mayors’ Advisory Council to bolster local support for intercity passenger rail, raise awareness of its important transportation role, and support Amtrak’s efforts to improve and expand.

“There is a clamoring for more and better rail service in big cities and small towns throughout the U.S. and collectively, these mayors will raise their voices to support a stronger Amtrak for their community,” said Mayor John Robert Smith, Amtrak Board member and mayor of Meridian, Mississippi.

Fortunately, there is one mayor from each of the three states covered by The Passenger Rail News. From Indiana, there is Elkhart Mayor Jim Perron. Michigan has Dearborn Mayor Michael Guido. Finally, Ohio is represented by Mayor Chuck Sanders of Waynesville, near Xenia. Most states have no representation.

New Michigan discount fare!

With every full fare-paying adult, up to two kids may travel for free on the Grand Rapids-Chicago Pere Marquette. The special offer is available for travel on Monday through Wednesday only and will run through Aug. 31.
Pennsylvanian marketing underway

By Lee Bullock
President, Amtrak Intercity

Amtrak was pleased to host the members of the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers, state and local officials from cities throughout Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania, local media, and of course paying customers aboard the inaugural run of its newly-extended Pennsylvanian (Philadelphia-Pittsburgh extended to Cleveland, Toledo, South Bend and Chicago). This train, now operating between Philadelphia and Chicago via northern Ohio and Indiana on a daylight schedule, presents Amtrak with an opportunity to “show off” train travel to customers who haven’t tried passenger rail travel before.

Many of these communities had not been served by daytime passenger trains since well before Amtrak’s inception. There are many residents who heretofore had not considered train travel because of the pre-dawn arrival and departure times of services we provided prior to the Pennsylvanian’s extension. We realize that for our new service to be successful, we have a job on our hands, re-acquainting residents of northern Ohio and Indiana with the benefits of travel by train.

In order to develop public awareness and to introduce this new service to communities and prospective customers along the route, Amtrak initiated a marketing program aimed at positioning the extended Pennsylvanian favorably, with demographic groups our marketing data have determined are most likely to try train travel. Amtrak is sponsoring radio traffic reports in Cleveland and Pittsburgh, continues to place spot radio advertisements in Fort Wayne and South Bend, Ind., Sandusky and Toledo, Ohio, and Erie, Huntingdon, Lewistown, and Paoli, Penn. Amtrak service has also been promoted on the Pittsburgh Steelers Radio Network.

We were happy to host OARP [Past] President Mark Carlson in Wilmington, Del., in January to solicit your organization’s input and discuss additional ways to promote the Pennsylvanian. Our marketing plan is ongoing and has shown results. Ridership aboard the Pennsylvanian continues to increase steadily relative to its pre-extension levels.

OARP Vice President Ken Prendergast and I had the opportunity to discuss prospects for Amtrak’s expanded train service while on board the inaugural run. Mr. Prendergast commented on the substance of our conversation in the “Train of Thought” editorial column in the December 1998 issue of The Passenger Rail News. However, Mr. Prendergast’s apparent misinterpretation of the essence of my statement, “Well, now that you’ve got this train, you have to promote it,” deeply concerns me.

The suggestion that Amtrak was shifting responsibility for marketing the new Pennsylvanian to the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers was a misrepresentation. We have always looked to advocacy organizations like OARP to support the goals of Amtrak, that of carrying more passengers and providing a convenient travel alternative for the public. Operating a financially viable, customer-focused and market-driven passenger rail system is the best means of doing so, and the responsibility for providing this service and marketing it rests with Amtrak.

From the advocacy community, I ask what Amtrak is doing to support the goals of Amtrak, and to continue the positive working relationship.

Help support Sen. Voinovich’s bill

Your help is needed to win passage of a very important piece of national legislation. U.S. Senators George V. Voinovich (R-OH) and John H. Chafee (R-RI) introduced a bill that would let states spend their flexible Transportation Efficiency Act funds.

The bill, S. 933, The Officially vacations in

Texas Eagle (Chicago-Dallas-San Antonio) as well as the Pennsylvania route have benefited.

Organizations like OARP have been helpful in telling the story of a renewed, more customer-focused Amtrak to the traveling public and policymakers on the federal, state, and local level. We value that alliance and look forward to continuing a positive working relationship.
acquainting residents of northern Ohio and Indiana with the benefits of travel by train.

In order to develop public awareness and to introduce this new service to communities and prospective customers along the route, Amtrak initiated a marketing program aimed at positioning the extended Pennsylvania favorably with demographic groups our marketing data have determined are most likely to try train travel. Amtrak is sponsoring radio traffic reports in Cleveland and Pittsburgh, continues to place spot radio advertisements in Fort Wayne and South Bend, Ind., Sandusky and Toledo, Ohio, and Erie, Johnstown, Harrisburg and Altoona, Penn. We also purchased newspaper advertisements in

The suggestion that Amtrak was shifting responsibility for marketing the new Pennsylvania to the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers was a misrepresentation. We have always looked to advocacy organizations like OARP to support the goals of Amtrak, that of carrying more passengers and providing a convenient travel alternative for the public. Operating a financially viable, customer-focused and market-driven passenger rail system is the best means of doing so, and the responsibility for providing this service and marketing it rests with Amtrak.

From the advocacy community, I ask what Amtrak asks of the general public, give us a try, we have a new service which we think addresses the

**Help support Sen. Voinovich’s bill**

Your help is needed to win passage of a very important piece of national legislation. U.S. Senators George V. Voinovich (R-OH) and John H. Chafee (R-RI) introduced a bill that would let states spend their flexible Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) dollars on intercity passenger rail investments.

Chafee chairs the Committee on Environment and Public Works; Voinovich chairs its Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure. TEA-21 is the big highway/transit law enacted last year. The new flexibility in the proposed legislation, S.1144, dubbed the “Surface Transportation Act of 1999,” applies to National Highway System, Surface Transportation Program and — in certain situations — Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funds (see “Governors, mayors want rail funds” page five).

Under current law, intercity passenger rail is the only major form of surface transportation on which federal law forbids states to spend gasoline-generated funds. This lack of federal matching dollars for rail passenger improvements means that states will instead look to make investments in highways and aviation only.

When you write letters asking your U.S. Senators to support this bill, please refer to it by its name and number (Surface Transportation Act of 1999 — S.1144). Give personal reasons why you want your senators to support this bill. And, if you live in Ohio, please don’t forget to send a letter of thanks to Senators Voinovich and Mike DeWine for supporting this bill. Write to your senators at the “U.S. Senate, Washington D.C. 20510” or call them at (202) 224-3121.
TRavelAgent Members

PLEASE PATRONIZE THESE AUTHORIZED TRAVEL AGENTS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE OHIO ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS:

Akron/Stow  Parkside Travel U S A  (330) 688-3334  Joel Brown
Alliance  Alliance AAA Travel  (330) 821-2323  (330) 456-6315
Canal Fulton  Massillon AAA Travel  (330) 854-6616
Cincinnati  Joy Tour & Travel, Inc.  (513) 777-8221  Roberta Sprague
Cleveland  Ohio Motorist Association/AAA Travel  (216) 606-6080
Cleveland  Randall Park Mall Travel Agency  (440) 475-8747  (800) 999-2434  Robert Peck
Columbus  Accessible Travel Agency  (614) 792-3555  (800) 837-2822  Jude Cuddy
Columbus  Ohio Automobile Club/AAA Travel  (614) 431-7823
Elyria  Tours & Travel Service, Inc.  (440) 323-5423  (800) 443-7789  Mike McClister
Mansfield  Mansfield Travel Center  (419) 756-8747  Jay Gilbert
Massillon  Massillon AAA Travel  (330) 833-1034  Cheryl Anderson
Piqua  Miami County Auto Club/AAA Travel  (937) 773-3753
Sandusky  Sandusky Travel Service, Inc.  (419) 626-4633  Roberta Slyker
Solon  Astro Amtrak Tours  (440) 519-7331  (800) 759-7404  "Amtrak AI" Mladineo
Troy  Miami County Auto Club/AAA Travel  (937) 339-0112

Authorized Amtrak travel agents who wish to join OARP, maintain current membership status, and be listed in the TRAM DIRECTORY should send a $50 check, made payable to OARP, to: Tom Allen, Treasurer; 610 Executive Blvd; Delaware OH 43015-1159. The TRAM annual listing fee entitles you to list your CITY, the NAME OF YOUR AGENCY, one LOCAL PHONE NUMBER, one LONG DISTANCE PHONE NUMBER, and the name of one CONTACT at the agency. Renewals will be billed by the Treasurer. Updated: Sept. 1998

Directory of the region's associations of railroad passengers

Ohio

OARP's 24-hour News and Information Hotline  614 / 470-0334

PRESIDENT  Bill Hutchison  wwh12@juno.com
474 Delaware Court  614 / 470-0334
Westerville 43081

PAST-PRESIDENT  Mark Carlson  mdcarlson@ameritech.net
479 Humiston Drive  440 / 331-3161
Bay Village 44140-3017

VICE-PRESIDENT  Ken Prendergast  kjprendergast@email.msn.com
12029 Clifton Blvd #505  216 / 529-7677
Lakewood 44107-2161

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Columbus 43235-7526

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610 Executive Blvd

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CHAIRMAN  James Riley  rileyj@wmich.edu
3017 Lowell  616 / 342-4379
Kalamazoo MI 49001

VICE-CHAIRMAN  Alan Gebauer  2705 Warwick Dr  248 / 338-8447
Bloomfield Hills MI 48304-1861

SECRETARY  John DeLora  sfna@mich.com
20707 Edgewood  810 / 772-7842
St. Clair Shores MI 48080-1862

TREASURER  Terrance Donnelley  910 Highland Dr  906 / 249-9920
Marquette MI 49855-9319

DIRECTOR  Clark Charnetski  734 / 761-3814
2646 Traver Blvd  Ann Arbor MI 48105
Support OARP’s 3-C Corridor Campaign

by sending a tax-deductible donation check payable to:

“OARP 3-C Campaign”
Tom Allen, Treasurer
610 Executive Blvd.
Delaware OH 43015

In September the state’s 2-C Corridor committee will make its recommendation to the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODoT).
Not only does OARP want to make sure that trains are recommended by the committee, but we also want ODoT to accept their recommendation.
OARP has created a special campaign to fund our professional representative and other OARP educational efforts to achieve our primary goal — 3-C passenger trains.

The Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers is incorporated in Ohio as a non-profit association under the IRS Code, Section 501(c)(3) as a publicly supported educational organization. Dues and donations to OARP may be tax-deductible in accordance with the IRS Code.

Regional Calendar of Events/Meetings
August 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<th>Address</th>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Columbus Local Meeting</td>
<td>9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Red Door Tavern</td>
<td>1736 West 5th Avenue</td>
<td>Bob Boyce 614/486-7038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>2-C Initiative – Committee Mtgs</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>ODoT West Broad St. “Hilltop” Office Complex</td>
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<td>Don Damron 614/644-0306</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>OARP Board Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Delaware Library</td>
<td>Delaware OH</td>
<td>Bill Hutchison 614/470-0334</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Columbus Local Meeting</td>
<td>9:30 a.m.</td>
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<td>Bob Boyce 614 / 486-7038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>ORDC — Committee Mtg.</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Riffe Center 31st Floor</td>
<td>77 South High Street</td>
<td>John DeLora 810 / 772-7842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ORDC — Full Commission</td>
<td>*10:45 a.m.</td>
<td>Riffe Center 31st Floor</td>
<td>77 South High Street</td>
<td>John Stacy 614 / 470-0034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>2-C Initiative – Committee Mtgs</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>ODoT West Broad St. “Hilltop” Office Complex</td>
<td>Don Damron 614 / 644-0306</td>
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<td>Don Damron 614 / 644-0306</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Lorain County Meeting</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Oberlin Public Library</td>
<td>65 South Main, Oberlin</td>
<td>Phil Copeland 440 / 365-7970</td>
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### October 1999

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<td>Bob Boyce 614 / 486-7038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>MARP Annual Meeting</td>
<td>12:00 noon</td>
<td>Kalamazoo Central Library</td>
<td>315 Rose St., Kalamazoo</td>
<td>John DeLora 810 / 772-7842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>OARP Fall Membership Mtg</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>John Stacy 614 / 470-0034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Don Damron 614 / 644-0306</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-23</td>
<td>NARP Board Meeting</td>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Toronto Colony Hotel</td>
<td>89 Chestnut St., Toronto Ont.</td>
<td>Jane Colgrove 202 / 408-8362</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All meetings are subject to change. We firmly suggest that you confirm dates, times, and locations for all meetings.*

Anyone wishing to have their meeting or event listed in this directory, please send the information to:

Ken Prendergast, Editor  
12029 Clifton Boulevard #505  
Lakewood OH 44107-2101  
216 / 529-7677  
e-mail: kjprendergast@email.msn.com.

Deadline for submissions is the 15th of the even numbered months.
What’s in Columbus’ transit tax levy?

By Ed D’Amato
OARP Secretary

As early as 2005, Central Ohioans could be zipping past traffic jams in Fast Trax commuter trains. They could also be enjoying a convenient link to a downtown light-rail circulator and a bus system doubled in size, with 24-hour service on a dozen routes.

Those components would be realized if Franklin County voters support a pair of transit levies, each a 1/4-percent sales tax. The levies would fund the Central Ohio Transit Authority’s (COTA) “Vision 2020: Transportation for a Great Community.”

The Vision 2020 plan has four major components:
- At the core of the plan is to double existing bus service, expand cross-town bus routes and offer 24-hour service on major bus routes to get people to their jobs at any time of the day or night.
- Introduce Fast Trax commuter trains. The plan has 41 rail stations and a gradual phase-in of eight south light-rail line along High Street, between the Brewery District and the Short North area. The exact termini for the light-rail line have not yet been determined.
- As for the commuter rail component, it will be implemented in two tiers. First-tier routes would include:
  - Downtown to north Columbus and Worthington along the CSX (former Conrail/New York Central Railroad);
  - Downtown to Westerville (former Pennsylvania Railroad);

How you can help

By Ed D’Amato
OARP Secretary

Although polls indicate support by most voters to increase the Franklin County sales tax to pay for COTA’s Vision 2020 expansion plans, opposition has already emerged. Factions which helped defeat a 1997 tax to build a sports arena in Columbus, voiced opposition as soon as COTA’s board voted to place the levy on the November ballot on May 26.

Central Ohio OARP members can help promote the levy by writing letters to The Columbus Dispatch and other local papers, calling local radio talk shows, and asking community organizations to support the initiative.

OARP members can also help by volunteering to become a “COTA Ambassador.” COTA is recruiting
Those components would be realized if Franklin County voters support a pair of transit levies, each a 14-percent sales tax. The levies would fund the Central Ohio Transit Authority's (COTA) "Vision 2020: Transportation for a Great Community."

The Vision 2020 plan has four major components:
• At the core of the plan is to double existing bus service, expand cross-town bus routes and offer 24-hour service on major bus routes to get people to their jobs at any time of the day or night.
• Introduce Fast Trax commuter trains. The plan has 41 rail stations and a gradual phase-in of eight routes on existing rail corridors in and out of downtown Columbus. On the busiest corridors, separate tracks will be constructed.
• Develop intelligent transportation systems. This would use new and existing technologies to shorten travel times and allow transit vehicles to better navigate congestion. The plan would employ the global positioning system (GPS) to track bus and train movements. Electronic clocks at stations would tell visitors at what time the next bus or train is due. Also, a signal prioritization system would allow bus drivers to change traffic lights to improve the spacing of buses.
• Improve downtown mobility by building a new multi-modal transit center for commuter trains as well as Cleveland-Columbus-Cincinnati (3-C) Amtrak trains, adding more shuttles, and building a north-

- Downtown to far-east Columbus on CSX/Ohio Central tracks, through Whitehall and Bexley, with a future spur on new right-of-way to Port Columbus International Airport; and
- Downtown to north-northwest Columbus on CSX (former Chesapeake & Ohio RR) which would also serve Ohio State University and Upper Arlington.

Commuter trains on some of these routes would operate over new tracks to separate fast passenger trains from slower-moving freight traffic.

Second-tier routes would be:
• Downtown to west-northwest Columbus including Hilliard on CSX (former Conrail/NYC RR);
• Downtown to southeast Columbus including Groveport and Canal Winchester on the Indiana & Ohio Central (former CSX/C&O RR);

What others are saying...

"This decision will affect poor people. It will determine the future of families and their ability to survive," said Samuel Gresham, president of the Columbus Urban League, as quoted in Columbus Alive, June 3, 1999, on the need for more transit to get job-seekers to high-growth areas of employment at the city's outer edge.

--- See "What's in levy", page III
The Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors voted unanimously to endorse the passage of two 0.25-percent sales tax levies on the November ballot to fund the future operations of the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA).

"The bottom line is, an enhanced mass transit plan will help us improve business by linking workers to jobs," said Dimon R. McFerson, chairman of the Chamber board and chairman and CEO of Nationwide. "COTA's proposal is right in line with what the business community needs — practical solutions to our mass transit challenges that support our work-force and its anticipated growth."

Chamber President and CEO Sally A. Jackson explained that the permanent levy allows Columbus to leverage federal funding opportunities that are not available to the community today since COTA does not have permanent funding.

"Columbus is missing the opportunity to benefit from federal transit dollars, while Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Dayton all leverage hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funds each year to improve and expand their transit systems," she said.

Moreover, the 10-year temporary tax provides the accountability the local business community demands, chamber officials said. Mrs. Jackson said that four out of five businesses view the addition of bus service and routes to link workers to current and emerging employer sites as a high priority.

"Businesses also strongly supported the creation of commuter rail service using existing rail to link surrounding suburbs with downtown, adding bus service between suburban areas, and increasing the accessibility of service."

But your exit is at the opposite end of the platform, where signs point to Nationwide Arena. At the top of the escalator, you and your spouse join up with friends at a predetermined meeting spot before walking to the nearby sports bar.

During the game, as the Columbus Bluejackets are embarrassing the Rangers, the snow starts to fly. By game's end, a couple inches of wind-driven snow have fallen, sending the city's normally congested highways into a skidding chaos. While others are fretting the drive home, you have no worries. Hundreds of hockey fans, some of whom probably shouldn't be driving in any weather, pour into the train. Fans excitedly share their opinions about who wins. But you are quite content. Highlander or the Ohio Lights, fittin' through the

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**a special Train of Thought**

from The Passenger Rail News Editor Kenneth Prendergast

December 2009

Picture a cold Wednesday evening in Columbus in 2010. The forecast

Dave Kanzeg photo

Central Ohioans may soon enjoy the benefits of rail transit, just as people have benefitted from rail in booming San Diego, where several railway routes carry 150,000 people a day.
At left, a Denver Regional Transit District light-rail train accelerates to 65 mph away from the Mile High City's central business district. At right, an electric light-rail train in Cleveland exchanges passengers with a diesel-powered commuter train borrowed from San Francisco. Columbus will gain these modes of transportation if voters there approve two transit levies on Nov. 2.

**What others are saying...**

on COTA's "Vision 2020" plan and the Nov. 2 public vote that would make the plan reality:

“We need an improved mass transit system and that's why I've been willing all who will listen to get behind COTA's efforts," said Columbus City Councilmember Maryellen O'Shaughnessy, as quoted in *Columbus Alive*, June 3, 1999 article in which she also noted a recent survey showing traffic congestion to be one of the top complaints of
What's in Columbus' transit tax levy?

"What's in levy", from page I

- Downtown to the far west side including New Rome on Norfolk Southern (former Conrail/PRR); and
- Downtown to southwest Columbus and Grove City on CSX (former Baltimore & Ohio RR).

The downtown-Worthington line would be the first route placed into revenue service, beginning operations in 2005. From then on, other routes would be brought into service every few years with all eight routes in operation by 2020.

As the rail routes are implemented, the COTA buses would become more of a cross-town system than a hub system like it is now. Trains would become the primary hub and buses would feed into rail lines at strategically placed transit centers throughout Columbus. COTA is choosing commuter rail over light-rail for all routes (except the downtown circulator) because it is more cost effective and faster to build than light rail since it can use existing corridors.

For now, the plan does not include extension of the commuter rail lines to cities in surrounding counties like Delaware, Newark, Lancaster, Marysville, or Powell even though many people commute to Columbus daily from these areas. The reason is that COTA does not have the authority to operate into areas outside of Franklin County except when those areas offer special contracts to COTA.

The transit authority is, however, carrying on conversations with the surrounding counties and hopes to develop plans to extend the trains (as well as bus routes) to those areas sometime in the future, once funding from outlying areas is made available.

It is interesting to note that currently 60 percent of COTA riders use the buses to commute to work. Also, more than 60 percent of all current riders own at least one automobile. COTA also carries 10,000 commuters per day on express buses from suburban areas.

For COTA's "Vision 2020" plan and the Nov. 2 public vote that would make the plan reality:

"We need an improved mass transit system and that's why I've been calling on who will listen to get behind COTA's efforts," said Columbus City Councilmember Maryellen O'Shaughnessy, as quoted in a Columbus Alive, June 3, 1999 article in which she also noted a recent survey showing traffic congestion to be one of the top complaints of city residents.

"I like the idea of increasing the sales tax for mass transit. It's an excellent idea to cut down on our traffic," said Lisa Buffer, a Canal Winchester resident, in The Columbus Dispatch, March 22, 1999.

"With two issues on the ballot and organized opposition, we have just started a long, difficult process," said Ronald Barnes, COTA general manager, in The Columbus Dispatch, May 27, 1999.

Most voters favor doubling COTA's tax

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<tr>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Oppose</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
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<td>51%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Source: Ohio State University College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Figures do not total 100% because of rounding.
Cincinnati — A current study of transportation for this area, being coordinated by the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI), is concentrated on the first phase of a light-rail system which would extend from Cornell Road in Blue Ash to the southern end of Covington.

Later phases of light rail would extend the system to the airport and to Kings Island, as well as north along the Interstate 71 corridor. The OKI master plan has commuter and passenger rail extending to the east and west. But today, we need to be concerned about getting the study for the first phase completed, which requires federal dollars and, thus, the support our congressmen, Reps. Rob Portman, Steve Chabot and Ken Lucas.

If the study money is not forthcoming, Greater Cincinnati may not be able to receive federal funds for light rail for many years, if ever. KPMG, the international CPA/consulting firm, has conducted an economic/financial fiscal impact analysis of the first phase of light rail. This first phase will cost $600 million and it is anticipated that the federal government's share will be half of that amount, with state and local funding coming in at 25 percent each.

This study shows the return on investment for the $300 million non-federal share and it was conducted with very conservative projections. Economic/financial impacts include inter-industry sales, job taxes, state and local taxes, state and local corporate income taxes, local property taxes and local tangible property taxes.

competing cities use federal dollars to make themselves more successful at luring businesses and tourists. If this happens, growth will stagnate and Greater Cincinnati will have little chance of becoming a world-class destination.

If we accept what OKI is telling us that in 15 to 20 years the expressways in Greater Cincinnati will be at gridlock, then we should be overjoyed that the KPMG analysis regarding light rail is so favorable.

This opinion piece appears courtesy of the Cincinnati Business Courier.

Conservatives’ report says rail transit works

Rail transit is effective in getting people out of their automobiles, according to a new study, “Does Transit Work? A Conservative Reappraisal.” Paul Weyrich and Bill Lind of the Free Congress Foundation undertook the study that was released today at a conference of the Congress for New Urbanism.

The study was applauded by Republican Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, who wrote in the foreword, “Read (this study) and I think you’ll see why even conservative state governors want more and better public transit, not less.”

Messrs. Weyrich and Lind state that transit’s effectiveness is often measured erroneously by comparing the number of auto trips to the number of trips on public transportation. This is the wrong measurement, according to the authors, who propose a new measurement that better calculates the importance of transit: transit-competitive trips. The authors cite the example of San Diego, where the San Diego Trolley is at-gridlock,” the study states.

For transit to be competitive, the authors say that three criteria must be met. First, transit must be available. Second, the available public transit must be high quality, and third, the trip purpose must be one for which transit can compete.

“When we ask what percentage transit carried of the trips for which it can compete, we get a very different picture, one that accords much more closely with the real importance of mass transit in urban areas,” the study states.

The study notes that 54.4 percent of American households had public transit available in 1993. The number tells us that transit could not compete for any trips from almost half the households in America because they had no transit available.

In San Diego, Messrs. Weyrich and Lind note that the San Diego Trolley is attracting riders who have a commute of under 4 miles. In the study, they cite a number of trips to nearby attractions, both within the city and to neighboring communities.

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The impact on this area from all of the above provides an incredibly impressive return on investment. The bottom line is that, in 1999 dollars, the $300 million investment returns $443 million. Tax revenues will return the $300 million investment by 2017 and the system will still have a remaining useful life of more than 20 years at that point.

The study excludes many indirect financial benefits which are real and which make the return on investment even more significant. Further, there are many non-financial benefits such as travel-time savings, reduced pollution, and the reduction of urban sprawl.

Some of the politicians opposing rapid transit systems for the Greater Cincinnati area do so because of their philosophical convictions that the federal government should not spend money for such purposes. However, money is available in the federal budget and many cities have benefited from these funds.

A number of cities the size of Cincinnati or smaller are building light rail with federal dollars. If we do not follow suit, we will sit by while you’ll see why even conservative state governors want more and better public transit, not less.”

Messrs. Weyrich and Lind state that transit's effectiveness is often measured erroneously by comparing the number of auto trips to the number of trips on public transportation. This is the wrong measurement, according to the authors, who propose a new measurement that better calculates the importance of transit: transit-competitive trips. The authors cite three case studies in Chicago; St. Louis, Mo.; and San Diego in answering "yes" to the question, "Does Transit Work?"

"Each of our case studies shows independently, and all together demonstrate conclusively, that high-quality rail transit can compete effectively for work and recreational trips in the area that transit serves," said Messrs. Weyrich and Lind. "Total trips is a poor yardstick by which to measure the effectiveness of public transit. These three case studies establish beyond question that when we measure transit with the correct yardstick, transit-competitive trips, it measures up well."

In Chicago, they note that between 50 percent and 60 percent of the trips made to the central business district are on transit. The importance of transit to Chicago is further illustrated by considering what would happen if the transit trips shifted to automobiles. The authors note that the Dan Ryan/Kennedy Expressways carry 200,000 vehicles per day, while parallel Chicago Transit Authority rapid transit lines and the Metra commuter rail lines carry 182,000 riders. "If all 182,000 rail riders..."