Widespread outrage at the 2-C’s demise

Statewide support may prompt 3-C rail service

By Ken Prendergast
OARP Vice-President

All it took was nine days.

After more than a year of development, the final cost figures for starting Cleveland-Columbus (2-C) passenger train service were finally put in the hands of the Ohio Rail Development Commission on May 3.

On May 12, ORDC Executive Director Jim Seney announced to an angry 2-C steering committee that the rail commission had unilaterally decided it would not ask for state funding to make the train service a reality.

It appeared to be either government at its speedy best, or politics at its absolute worst.

Killing the two-year demonstration project that was designed to gauge rider interest — and not offer a reality check — was the final straw.

More Ohio trains due by autumn

By Ken Prendergast
OARP Vice-President

According to sources at Amtrak, expanded daytime passenger rail service is expected to arrive by late-summer in several Northern Ohio cities.

When the expansion does occur, travelers will be able to choose from four daily trains in each direction between Cleveland and Chicago. Toledo will gain a fifth daily round trip to Chicago via the Michigan cities of Dearborn (suburban Detroit), Ann Arbor and Kalamazoo.

In the opposite direction, Cleveland and Toledo will have four round trips to the East Coast among three routes.

That translates into Toledo being served by 10 passenger trains each day, with Cleveland seeing eight trains a day. Those are the highest levels of service to the two cities since before Amtrak began in 1971.
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It appeared to be either government at its speedy best, or politics at its absolute worst.

Killing the two-year demonstration 2-C project was a sure way to end momentum for developing passenger trains in Ohio. While the 2-C proposal had its share of flaws, a lot of good data was generated for the state to begin correcting those flaws with a better plan to serve more Ohioans. A non-attempt at seeking input from the steering committee before making the decision, the quick death of the project and the uncertainty of what would replace 2-C as the next course of action only made passenger-rail supporters angry.

The public, politicians and the press all expressed their anger at the outright rejection of the 2-C Corridor project. Regardless of what they may have felt about the project itself, council members, mayors, chambers of commerce, newspaper editors, urban planning agencies, transit agencies, environmental groups and others, from Cleveland to Columbus and beyond, all spoke up for passenger rail service. It showed OARP is no longer a lone voice in the wilderness.

Virtually all of these interests recognized that 2-C was a starting point, and that all the planning work for 2-C should not be abandoned. Most of these interests, to their credit, argued that the planning should be used to push the development of a larger, more useful service — the Cleveland - Columbus - Cincinnati - Indianapolis - Detroit - Chicago intercity rail — See “Outrage”, page eight

Cleveland and Chicago. Toledo will gain a fifth daily round trip to Chicago via the Michigan cities of Dearborn (suburban Detroit), Ann Arbor and Kalamazoo. In the opposite direction, Cleveland and Toledo will have four round trips to the East Coast among three routes.

That translates into Toledo being served by 10 passenger trains each day, with Cleveland seeing eight trains a day. Those are the highest levels of service to the two cities since before Amtrak began in 1971.

This expansion also means Sandusky will gain a third daily train to Chicago and the East Coast. However, several other Northern Ohio cities — Alliance, Bryan and Elyria — were left out of this latest round of expansion, even though they are on routes seeing additional trains. Amtrak scheduling conflicts with Norfolk Southern (NS) freight trains at these three cities (as well as at the Chicago suburban stop at Hammond/Whiting, IN) resulted in

— See “Expansion”, page eleven
Rail, bus use at 40-year high
Counted before gas prices surged

According to ridership numbers from the nation’s mass transit systems, ridership on trains and buses is at its highest level since Dwight D. Eisenhower was in the White House. And, even though mass transit ridership nationally is increasing faster than automobile use, federal funding for expanding rail and bus services continues to be outpaced by rising spending for highways.

The American Public Transit Association (APTA) reports that 9 billion trips were taken by Americans on transit last year. Ridership was at its peak in 1946, when 23.4 billion trips were made on trains, buses and trolleys.

But the numbers steadily fell as the federal government began to build the largest public works project in world history — the Interstate Highway System. Transit companies, many of which were still privately owned, went bankrupt as usage dropped to 9.3 billion trips in 1960. The depths of the American transit industry was reached in 1972, when only 6.5 billion Americans rode on decaying rail and bus systems. Since then, ridership has climbed steadily upward, even as government spending on roads grew much faster than the investments that were made to transit networks.

Even more interesting is that, between 1998 and 1999, use of trains and buses has climbed 4.5 percent, compared to only 2 percent growth for automobiles, APTA officials said.

“Let’s not break out the champagne here,” said William D. Fay, president of the American Highway Users Alliance, in an April 30 article in the Washington Post. The Highway Users Alliance represents the interests of the nation’s road builders and transportation officials.

Greater Columbus focus of commuter rail study

COLUMBUS — A year-long commuter rail study has begun in the wake of a sales tax levy failure, and may set the stage for a second levy attempt to pay for Central Ohio commuter trains.

Transit planners will identify the details of what track improvements and grade crossing issues are needed to start up commuter rail services. The study also will look at the economic development opportunities and traffic reduction possibilities that could result once the trains are up and running.

The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) envisions a system of commuter trains running on existing freight railroad routes running to and through downtown Columbus. This remains part of COTA’s Vision 2020 expansion plan, as does a downtown light-rail circulator, an expanded bus system and greater use of technology to govern the flow of transit vehicles and traffic.

Those elements would have been funded by a ½-cent sales tax hike which failed last November. Voters did approve a second ½-cent tax levy on the same ballot to maintain COTA’s present level of service indefinitely. After the election, COTA officials said they might put another expansion levy before voters after analyzing why that levy failed and what could be funded with a new levy. The commuter rail study is part of this fact-gathering process.

Funding for the $300,000 study will come from numerous sources. The U.S. Department of Transportation is providing $250,000 in Surface Transportation Program funds. COTA and the state have contributed $50,000 each, and the U.S. Department of Transportation has contributed $50,000.

His primary responsibility has been to oversee development of a Multi-Modal Transportation Terminal (MMTT) on High Street at the north end of downtown Columbus. The MMTT received $13.7 million from the Ohio Department of Transportation last year.

In the short-term, the MMTT will replace an older bus station downtown. In the long-term, COTA’s Vision 2020 proposes that the MMTT would be the central station for the commuter rail system, as well as be served by Amtrak intercity trains and downtown circulator trolleys.

While transit agencies in other metropolitan areas throughout the nation have tried to thrust commuter trains onto a freight railroad company’s privately-owned tracks, COTA is attempting to get the freight haulers to buy in to their commuter rail plans. This would make partners out of freight railroads, rather than putting them in the position of becoming adversaries.

COTA’s commuter rail study will seek ways to introduce the passenger rail services while, at the same time, increase the efficiency of freight rail service and reduce grade crossings, liabilities, and maintenance issues — all of which are things the freight companies want. Some of the proposed changes could include rerouting freight train traffic to other routes, thereby freeing up rail corridors into downtown for commuter trains.

During the study, planners will look at the correlation of land use patterns and the demand for transportation. From that data, suggestions will be made for the best places to put the trains.
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“Let’s not break out the champagne here,” said William D. Fay, president of the American Highway Users Alliance, in an April 30 article in the Washington Post. The Highway Users Alliance is actually an army of road builders and car manufacturers, not motorists. “Highway growth is the real success. By real numbers, far more people are driving cars than taking transit.”

Transit’s growth and popularity is due to several factors, such as worsening traffic congestion on roads and highways, increased investment in transit systems, stable fares and more innovative services that respond to customers’ needs.

Those elements would have been funded by a 1/4-cent sales tax hike which failed last November. Voters did approve a second 1/4-cent tax levy on the same ballot to maintain COTA’s present level of service indefinitely. After the election, COTA officials said they might put another expansion levy before voters after analyzing why that levy failed and what could be funded with a new levy. The commuter rail study is part of this fact-gathering process.

Funding for the $300,000 study will come from numerous sources. The U.S. Department of Transportation is providing $250,000 in Surface Transportation Program funds. The remaining $50,000 is coming from local sources — COTA, City of Columbus, Ohio Department of Development and Ohio Rail Development Commission.

Rail consulting firm Burgess and Niple was hired for $200,000, with $100,000 distributed to the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) to manage and coordinate the study, said Mike Bradley, a COTA planner.

Travel delays advisory

In mid-June, Amtrak issued a “Notice to Amtrak Guests” that “an unprecedented increase in freight traffic” in recent months is causing delays to passenger trains operating over the routes of CSX Inc.

Also, CSX is attempting to replace worn-out track which put them in hot water with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) earlier this year. Track repairs force trains to operate more slowly, or may take one of two tracks temporarily out of service. The FRA issued an audit of CSX tracks which showed serious deficiencies in track conditions. CSX tracks are used by many Amtrak trains east of the Mississippi River, including

* Lake Shore Limited — Chicago - New York City/Boston serving the Ohio cities of Bryan, Toledo, Sandusky, Elyria and Cleveland (CSX portion is east of Cleveland);
* Three Rivers — Chicago - New York City serving the Ohio cities of Fostoria, Akron and Youngstown (CSX portion is west of the Ohio-Pennsylvania state line).

Warning notices have been placed by Amtrak on its trains and in stations across Ohio. Amtrak officials said they do not have more than a few hours advanced warning of when or where delays may occur, thus travelers are encouraged to contact Amtrak before leaving home for the station to learn when their train is due.

Travelers should call Amtrak at 1-800-USA-RAIL (872-7245) for information 24 hours a day. This service is available in any language.
A conversation I recently overheard put the plight of Ohio rail passenger funding in Ohio in a quick, disgusting little nutshell.

It followed a forum on state funding for schools, where Ohio legislators and a staffer for Gov. Bob Taft each gave their pre-packaged statements. I listened to an irate member of a local school board berate a legislator about the state’s lack of action on funding our kids’ futures.

The legislator boldly responded that school officials should contribute more to politicians’ re-election campaigns. He cited the speed at which Ohio’s electric utilities recently pushed one of their legislative initiatives through the General Assembly — a direct result of the utilities lavishing our public servants with greased palms.

The school board member was as disgusted as I. And being an advocate of an Ohio-funded program of better passenger rail services, I knew exactly how she felt.

It seems our elected state officials have become little more than hired guns, the school board member remarked. When our elected officials seemingly place their political futures ahead of our children’s, how can we expect them to fund passenger rail services to enhance Ohio’s quality of life? I would hope Ohio can do better than this, but only if citizens demand better.

Interestingly, on the same day the Ohio Supreme Court blasted the state’s school funding practices, the Ohio Rail Development Commission deep-sixed the Cleveland-Columbus passenger rail project.

Hope springs eternal, and that was true on this day. In year’s past, an all-encompassing news item like school funding would have buried a passenger rail-related story in Ohio newspapers and on television. Instead, the two stories were lumped together by the media, from the capital city to the lake.

The next day, Phil Porter, a Columbus Dispatch columnist, wrote about the similarities of Ohio’s inaction on funding better schools and trains. "For more than two decades, both issues have been talked and studied to death by politicians. And yet, neither engine that could have pulled far out

Train of Thought

from Ohio Passenger Rail News Editor
Kenneth Prendergast

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kjprendergast@msn.com.

We reserve the right to edit all non-published submissions. Original photos should be sharp, bright prints—avoid slides and negatives. Always include your name and phone number!

Ohio Passenger Rail News
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Lakewood OH 44107-2161

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The next day, Phil Porter, a Columbus Dispatch columnist, wrote about the similarities of Ohio’s inaction on funding better schools and trains. “For more than two decades, both issues have been talked and studied to death by politicians. And yet, neither engine that could has pulled far out of the station.”

As the state pulled the rug out from under the 2-C trains, OARP did its best to educate the media about the consequences of Ohio lacking passenger trains. We faxed and e-mailed over 150 press releases and coordinated a Columbus press conference attended by forward-thinking urban planners, city officials, transit system managers and environmental leaders. The media responded by taking our state’s politicians to school.

“If politicians have the courage to take common-sense steps on trains and schools, they will do so only because the public demands it,” Mr. Porter continued. “In a corporate environment, such procrastinating would have been rewarded with pink slips years ago.”

Your state senators and representatives (not to be confused with those in Washington D.C.) are up for election this fall. Learn the names of the candidates who want to represent you in Columbus. Then, as an Ohio citizen, demand that they make passenger rail a key part of their agenda. If their answers don’t satisfy you, then it’s time to throw them from the train.

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Uncertainty in the U.S. Congress

By Ken Prendergast
OARP Vice-President

WASHINGTON D.C. — One bill that would provide capital investment funding for passenger rail service continues to gain support in the U.S. Congress while two others have faded into the political sunset. This comes at a time when passenger rail service is in desperate need of capital dollars for more locomotives and passenger cars, upgraded track, stations and other assets.

While Amtrak agreed in 1997 to no longer depend on Congress for operating funds after 2002, the other half of that agreement was that Congress would provide Amtrak with at least enough capital funding so the passenger railroad could arrive at the self-sufficiency goal on time.

Even as Congress so far this year has turned thumbs down on two of three proposed capital investment initiatives, the General Accounting Office (GAO) reported in mid-June that Amtrak faces $9.1 billion worth of capital investment needs over the next 15 years. The GAO is Congress' investigative and auditing branch.

This year's remaining legislative light at the end of the tunnel is the High Speed Rail Investment Act (HSRI), which more senators and representatives are supporting by signing on as co-sponsors. The legislation is referred to as S.1900 in the U.S. Senate and H.R. 3700 in the U.S. House of Representatives. The HSRI Act would sell tax credits to provide $10 billion over 10 years for passenger rail service improvements.

Even the highway lobby, through the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, has decided to co-promote the HSRI Act; it can be found at http://lautenberg.senate.gov/highspeed/ on the Internet.

Rail travel corridors to get first crack at these HSRI Act funds likely will be those designated by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDoT) as eligible for high-speed rail funding. Thus far, the only corridor in Ohio designated by the USDoT is Cincinnati - Indianapolis - Chicago. Two other corridors have applications pending with the USDoT — Cleveland - Columbus - Dayton - Cincinnati and Cleveland - Toledo - Chicago.

As of late-June, 47 out of 100 senators are sponsoring S.1900, while 109 out of 435 representatives have signed on as sponsors of H.R. 3700.

So far, only five of Ohio's 19 Congressional representatives have decided to co-

STILL WAITING... Americans seeking a balanced transportation system are waiting for the U.S. Congress to provide a stable and ongoing source of capital funding for passenger rail improvements. All other modes of transportation enjoy permanent, taxpayer-financed capital funding mechanisms.
This year’s remaining legislative light at the end of the tunnel is the High Speed Rail Investment Act (HSRI), which more senators and representatives are supporting by signing on as co-sponsors. The legislation is referred to as S.1900 in the U.S. Senate and H.R. 3700 in the U.S. House of Representatives. The HSRI Act would sell tax credits to provide $10 billion over 10 years for passenger rail service improvements. Even the highway lobby, through the American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), is supporting the bill. "ARTBA supports an integrated, multi-modal U.S. transportation network that includes passenger rail and we fully support S.1900, the High Speed Rail Investment Act," said Peter Ruane, president and chief executive officer of ARTBA, in an April 12 letter to U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-New Jersey).

Senator Lautenberg is the bill’s architect and champion. His staff has created a Web site to land-Toledo-Chicago. As of late-June, 47 out of 100 senators are sponsoring S.1900, while 109 out of 435 representatives have signed on as sponsors of H.R. 3700.

So far, only five of Ohio’s 19 Congressional representatives have decided to co-sponsor this important bill — Sherrod Brown (Democrat-district 13 of Lorain), Marcy Kaptur (D-9, Toledo), Steven LaTourette (Republican-19, Painesville), James A. Traficant Jr. (D-17, Youngstown) and Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-11, Shaker Heights).

If you live in these four areas, please take a moment to call or write these members of Congress to thank them for supporting H.R. 3700 (look for their phone numbers and mailing addresses in your phone book, or call your local library).

Interestingly, all the Ohio Congressional representatives supporting the bill are from the northern part of the state. Clearly, more Ohio co-sponsors are needed, particularly those who continue to support passenger rail service, like Tony Hall (D-3, Dayton), David Hobson (R-7, Springfield) and others. Please call or write them to ask for their support.

Senator Mike Dewine (R-Ohio) is a co-sponsor of S.1900, while Senator George Voinovich (R-Ohio) is not. Please thank Senator Dewine for his long-standing support of passenger rail service issues, most recently S.1900.

Senator Voinovich was the sponsor of one of the Amtrak capital funding bills that was shot down in June by a slight majority of senators. He proposed that states like Ohio should have the flexibility to use federal highway funds for intercity passenger rail projects, just as they already have for mass transit projects. However, the highway lobby was out in force to oppose Senator Voinovich’s legislation.

“We could not support legislation that proposed such a diversion of federal highway user fees,” Mr. Ruane said. “S.1900, however, as a stand-alone bill, offers a welcome and innovative approach that does not set up a ‘zero sum’ competition for finite HTF (Highway Trust Fund) resources between highway investment and passenger rail investment.”

OARP appreciates Senator Voinovich’s efforts to win the right for states to have this long-overdue spending flexibility. In the meantime, OARP hopes that the senator will turn his attention and efforts toward ensuring that S.1900 will pass in the Senate. OARP members should write to Senator Voinovich and ask him to support this bill.

The second bill that failed to pass in Congress was a proposal to increase Amtrak’s 2001 capital budget by $468 million. This is the level of capital funding Amtrak should have every year in order for it become operationally self-sufficient and to begin developing faster passenger rail services. However, it too would have eaten into funding for highway projects nationwide, and incurred the wrath of the highway lobby.
Stuck in traffic

Once again, federal transportation officials are putting a "Not Recommended" stamp on Greater Cincinnati's proposed light rail system.

The chief reason: backers of the project haven't yet identified a credible source of local funding.

Given the anti-tax sentiment spawned by the stadium project, and the anti-everything stance of the guy who ought to be pulling hardest for the light rail project, this one is probably going to be stuck in traffic for a long time.

That would be a shame.

Greater Cincinnati is one of the few major American cities that doesn't have a regional mass transit system.

Sure, Hamilton County has Metro, the bus system, and Northern Kentucky has TANK (Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky). But Metro gets nearly all its local operating funds from Cincinnati's earnings tax. Consequently, it operates a city-oriented bus network. TANK provides excellent service in its three home counties; its regional focus is limited to downtown Cincinnati and the airport.

The proposed light rail line would be just one piece, albeit the centerpiece, of a genuinely regional mass transit system.

other cities launched light rail projects, Chabot issued a press release railing against a "stealth campaign" to raise taxes here.

Cool your jets, Steve. This one ought to be easy for the do-nothing lobby to kill.

Admittedly, the editorial board at The Post has been pretty cautious about the light rail proposal. But we find ourselves growing increasingly comfortable with it — and increasingly frustrated by the timid politics that squeezes the life out of so many border-crossing ideas in Greater Cincinnati.

The fact is, even with the stadiums, the riverfront and the other projects now on the burner, the region can easily afford a decent mass transit system.

Answer truthfully: have you even noticed the half-cent stadium sales tax on your purchases? And if you can cope in a world where the cost of gasoline goes from 99 cents to $1.50 in a couple of months, how credible, really, is the argument that we can't afford a nickel a gallon for mass transit?

Here's something else to think about the next time you're stuck in traffic: how do you think about the following?

Linking our Communities

1-71 Corridor Transportation Study

Cincinnati Business Courier

CINCINNATI — Advocates of constructing a light-rail line in southwest Ohio now have a real-world example to add to their marketing campaign.

Usually, there is a three- to five-year lag after light rail is built before development occurs near stations. Cincinnati's rail project has bucked that trend in a big way. A local developer, Silverman & Co., is putting up a $10 million, 80,000-square-foot office building called One Kenwood Plaza.

It's location? Next to the site for one of the rail line's planned stations in suburban Blue Ash.

This has occurred even before there has been a decision whether to build the light-rail line.

"Office space in Blue Ash is 100-percent leased, and this will allow us to be very close to the proposed (light rail) station in downtown Blue Ash," said Hal Silverman, owner of the development firm, in the March 13 edition of the Cincinnati Business Courier.

"This is the first office development designed with the proposed light-rail line system in mind. We firmly believe that, someday soon, light rail will be an alternative form of travel for employees in the region," he added.

Previously, it seemed developers in metro St. Louis were the ones being a tad anxious. On the Illinois side of the Gateway city, where the light-rail system is being extended east, new rail stations near the site have not attracted development.

SCRIPPS
TANK provides mass transit system.

Answer truthfully: have you even noticed the half-cent stadium sales tax on your purchases? And if you can cope in a world where the cost of gasoline goes from 99 cents to $1.50 in a couple of months, how credible, really, is the argument that we can’t afford a nickel a gallon for mass transit?

Here’s something else to think about the next time you’re stuck in traffic on Fields-Erlton, or Glenway, or Dixie Highway, or Beechmont: if you could dump the car at a park and ride lot and get to UC (University of Cincinnati) or Paramount King’s Island or a Reds game or the zoo or the Newport aquarium or the airport via light rail, would you still rather drive?

Wouldn’t it be healthy to add some high-density housing, office and retail options — the kind of economy-enhancing developments that routinely spring up around light rail stops?

If you’re a Baby Boomer, or already a senior, consider the possibilities that open up if you don’t have to drive a car to every single destination. In an economy that allows employers to set up shop almost anywhere in the world, what will it take to keep and attract desirable companies and workers here? All other things being equal, quality of life is what’s going to tip the scale. Go to Portland or Denver or St. Louis and see what a good mass transit system does on that score.

So here’s hoping our pessimism about prospects for mass transit in Greater Cincinnati proves unfounded. At minimum, the light rail proposal deserves a fair trial before we hang it.

This editorial, from March 2, 2000, appears courtesy of The Cincinnati Post

The Cincinnati Post

The light rail line would initially run from Covington to Blue Ash, and eventually from the airport to Mason. Down the road, new lines would likely extend along I-75, out to western Hamilton County and to the eastern suburbs, and through Newport to Northern Kentucky University.

The single biggest obstacle is cost. The Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments estimates the cost of the first leg of a light rail system (including expanded bus service) at $700 million. At least 40 percent would have to come from local sources. (A modest fuel tax, less than 5 cents on the gallon, would be logical, but polling shows that voters hate gasoline taxes.)

As if that weren’t enough, federal reviewers — required under law to annually evaluate major mass transit proposals — are acutely aware that the region’s congressional delegation is at best lukewarm about the project.

Rep. Steve Chabot, a conservative Republican who periodically needs to be reminded that his congressional district extends beyond the borders of Western Hills, is openly hostile.

Indeed, after local planners heard a briefing this week summarizing how St. Louis, Columbus and Chicago have created a city-oriented bus network. TANK provides excellent service in its three home counties; its regional focus is limited to downtown Cincinnati and the airport.

The proposed light rail line would be just one piece, albeit the centerpiece, of a genuinely regional mass transit system, one that would expand bus service throughout Hamilton County and perhaps into the outlying counties.
Just the facts, please

Seems that some people have the inaccurate perception that Ohio is an unpopulated state, and therefore lacks enough warm bodies to fill passenger trains.

Maybe that perception could be excused if it came from an East Coast resident who thinks of Ohio as only being rural, but not from Ohio's own governor.

That proved to be the case, when OARP's Northeast Ohio Director Dominic Liberatore had a moment to talk with Governor Bob Taft recently at an Ohio Bicycle Federation conference. After Mr. Liberatore talked up passenger rail service, Governor Taft responded that Ohio doesn't have the population density to support rail.

In the interest of accuracy, OARP presents these population density statistics, as quoted directly from the World Almanac and the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

Pay close attention to the 14 U.S. states that have less population density than Ohio but whose leaders still choose to fund passenger rail service.

Most importantly, of the top dozen states, Ohio stands alone by not supporting the operation of passenger rail services. What it is is that the leaders of these states know that our leaders don't?

Yes...we looked it up! And here's what they say...

Table A-1. States — Area and Population

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</table>

National Comparison

International Comparison

Amtrak begins service policy

On July 4, Amtrak introduced its new Service Guarantee to its passengers and other customers. The Service Guarantee is unconditional, which means unhappy passengers can request vouchers or partial refunds for their trips. These can even be requested during the train trip from the conductor.

Amtrak's Service Guarantee is unprecedented in the travel industry, and is intended to ensure that Amtrak provides superior customer service.

However, some Amtrak onboard employees remain skeptical about the new policy, and have referred to July 4 as Amtrak Armageddon Day.

Amtrak management is confident that the Service Guarantee will allow the company to retain customers and improve its bottom line by $10 million.

Amtrak phones to become speech-enabled

The first phase of an automated, speech-enabled phone service is expected to be added this autumn to Amtrak's nationwide reservations telephone system (1-800-USA-RAIL, also 1-800-872-7245). Rather than use touchtone phone buttons, speech-recognition technology will allow callers to use their voices to make reservations and enquire about train schedules.
In the past four years, Amtrak has made a significant investment in upgrading its three call centers in Philadelphia, Chicago, and Riverside, Calif. The improvements have ensured that customer calls are answered more quickly and efficiently routed between the three centers.

### National Comparison
A check (✓) indicates whether that state is funding an on-going program of intercity or regional passenger rail services. States are ranked based on the number of people per square mile...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Population per Square Mile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>944.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>780.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>674.9</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>New York</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>374.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>273.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Florida</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>214.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>206.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>184.7</td>
</tr>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>172.0</td>
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<td>Virginia</td>
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<td>Georgia</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>85.1</td>
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### International Comparison
Ranked by number of people per square mile. All of the nations listed have extensive, publicly funded passenger rail programs, numerous routes and frequent trains.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population per Square Mile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
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<td>Switzerland</td>
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<td>Luxembourg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>322</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Source: World Almanac

### States supporting passenger rail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>U.S. Rank</th>
<th>Population Density</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>77</td>
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<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>15</td>
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</tr>
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<td>New Jersey</td>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>Ohio</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>California</td>
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<td>Illinois</td>
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<td>Missouri</td>
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<td>New Mexico</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>24</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bureau of the Census, U.S. Dept. of Commerce

Mark Carlson map

The first phase of an automated, speech-enabled phone service is expected to be added this autumn to Amtrak's nationwide reservations telephone system (1-800-USA-RAIL, also 1-800-872-7245). Rather than use touch-tone phone buttons, speech-recognition technology will allow callers to use their voices to talk to a computer to retrieve train status information for Amtrak service.

As additional phases of this service are added, Amtrak customers will be able to receive schedule and fare information and book reservations, automatically, without pressing any buttons. The award-winning SpeechWorks® technology will understand callers' requests and provide immediate answers.

The system will redirect a significant number of calls, allowing reservations sales agents to focus on customers with more complex needs, such as booking multi-train reservations. Amtrak also anticipates a cost savings from increased automation and reduced hold time.

For 1998, Call Center Magazine named Amtrak's telephone reservations call centers the best in the travel industry. The survey, which annually recognizes the most outstanding call centers, includes airlines, cruise lines, and rental car companies.

In the past four years, Amtrak has made a significant investment in upgrading its three call centers in Philadelphia, Chicago, and Riverside, Calif. The improvements have ensured that customer calls are answered more quickly and efficiently routed between the three centers.
The following is a reprint, in its entirety, of a staff editorial which appeared in the May 12, 2000 edition of The Columbus Dispatch.

Missing the trains
Ohio in danger of being left at the station

Just one week after Jolene Molitoris, the chief of the Federal Railroad Administration, visited Columbus and urged her home state to get on board national and regional plans to beef up passenger-rail transportation, a committee meeting today should seize the opportunity to help push Ohio onto that track.

A steering committee of the Ohio Rail Development Commission examining the merits of proposed Cleveland-Columbus trains should make every effort to push that project forward. Although the estimate of start-up costs keeps rising, even now, at $32 million to $52 million, the price pales in comparison with the more than $500 million that the Ohio Department of Transportation will spend over 10 years to widen most of I-71 between Cleveland and Columbus to at least three lanes in each direction.

The Dispatch has supported the 2-C trains as a worthwhile experiment that will help gauge the market for passenger rail between two cities that haven't been linked with such service for nearly 30 years. In addition, the line can help relieve the congestion along I-71 during the 10-year expand-and-rebuild project by offering an affordable alternative to driving with delays or flying on is slated to be a portal on a new Amtrak route between it and Michigan stops.

In a gathering yesterday to support the 2-C train, Columbus City Councilman Richard W. Sensenbrenner, a steering committee member, said: “More and more businesses are making decisions on places to locate based on quality of life. Rail is part of that. If we’re the only state in the Midwest without regional rail, we’re shooting ourselves in the foot.”

The I-71 road expansion won’t end the periodic traffic tie-ups that occur between the state’s two largest cities, and, as every motorist stuck in traffic should know, many hundreds of millions of dollars are spent every year to repair and resurface this and other highways.

No one is suggesting that trains replace automobiles, but governments at all levels — from the one in Washington to the one that oversees the neighborhood firetrucks — have begun to recognize the need to increase transportation options. Molitoris correctly points out that intermodal-transportation systems linking intercity trains, local transit and air can relieve highway congestion and spur development as they ease travel between cities and between jobs and homes.

OARP is not alone...

Here’s what others are saying about the Ohio Rail Development Commission’s May 12 dropping of the Cleveland-Columbus passenger rail project and about the future of passenger rail linking Ohio’s three largest cities: Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati. The Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers hopes you will find these quotes encouraging — and motivating.

“We at the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers are troubled and our patience is exhausted at what we view as a lack of leadership by the ORDC, and especially the administration of Governor Robert Taft. This latest decision also shows a lack of vision for the future transportation needs of Ohio, its citizens and its economy.”

— OARP Administrative Director Stu Nicholson, as part of OARP’s testimony given May 30 before the Ohio Rail Development Commission

“...that a state in the Midwest-Great Lakes region in seriously addressing alternative modes of transportation other than automobiles. Now is NOT the time to give up. But the cities, villages and other communities along the '2-C' Corridor need to redouble their efforts to work with state agencies and Amtrak to finally bring passenger service back to serve the people.”

— Columbus City Councilman Richard Sensenbrenner, in a May 11 press release.
NO one is suggesting that trains replace automobiles, but governments at all levels — from the one in Washington to the one that oversees the neighborhood fire trucks — have begun to recognize the need to increase transportation options. Molitoris correctly points out that intermodal-transportation systems linking intercity trains, local transit and air can relieve highway congestion and spur development as they ease travel between cities and between jobs and homes.

In fact, the Access Ohio plan, dating to 1993 and the Voinovich administration, includes passenger-rail connections among Ohio's eight largest cities as part of a multifaceted transportation system aimed at meeting the state's needs until at least 2020. The 3-C trains have been on this plan, which has received too little emphasis at the Statehouse. Last year, Gov. Bob Taft received a letter from a number of city leaders along the 2-C corridor, including then-Columbus Mayor Greg Lashutka, urging the new administration to keep the 2-C train on track. Sound advice that should be heeded.

Leaving Ohio and its capital city out of regional and federal plans for improving train service would be the same as turning down some of the federal tax dollars hard-working Ohioans have paid for these ventures. This would be a grave disservice to Ohio's people and its businesses, which need a modern transportation system that helps people get from here to there, while conserving energy and reducing pollution and aggravation behind the wheel.

This May 12 editorial appears courtesy of the Columbus Dispatch

"The State of Ohio is lagging way behind just about every state in the Midwest-Great Lakes region in seriously addressing alternative modes of transportation other than automobiles. Now is NOT the time to give up. But the cities, villages and other communities along the '2-C' Corridor need to redouble their efforts to work with state agencies and Amtrak to finally bring passenger service back to serve the people." — Columbus City Councilman Richard Sensenbrenner, in a May 11 press release.

"It shortchanges us as a state" not to have passenger trains
— Ronald L. Barnes, chief executive of the Central Ohio Transit Authority, as quoted in the May 13 Columbus Dispatch.

"We've supported 2-C from day one. We think it's important that the state stake a position in favor of intercity passenger rail."
— William Habig, executive director of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, as quoted in the May 12 Columbus Dispatch.

"Taxpayers quickly run out of patience with these public-policy circumnavigations to nowhere. Certainly building a $1 billion-plus high-speed bullet train could be viewed as breaking Ohio's bank, but some small demonstration of resumed passenger rail is long overdue."
— Columbus Dispatch columnist Phil Porter, in his paper's May 19 edition.

"I think what I'm able to do maybe personally, rather than some of the people who have invested emotion and belief in this project, is I can separate the passenger rail issue (3-C line) from the demonstration issue (2-C line). I think some of the people who have heavy emotional and intellectual investment merged the two."
— ORDC Executive Director Jim Seney, as quoted in Columbus Alivewire.
Widespread outrage at the 2-C’s demise

— “Outrage”, from page one —

lumbus - Cincinnati (3-C) corridor. The show of force was impressive.

But that didn’t happen by accident. Days before Mr. Seney’s official announcement, the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers had learned of OARP’s intentions. OARP quickly went to work, as our new administrative director, Stu Nicholson, notified news media and spread the word among the many organizations and individuals who have supported the cause for better passenger rail transportation.

As much as the 2-C steering committee was stunned at the sudden derailing of the passenger rail project, those in state government who were responsible appeared to be equally surprised at the howls of protests that followed.

It should be noted that, according to the Ohio law which created the ORDC in 1994, the agency must prepare specific plans for building and operating a passenger rail system.

“The system’s initial route will connect Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati,” Ohio law says.

The proposed 2-C project had its problems, to be sure, not the least of which was the fact that it might not conform to ORDC’s enabling legislation. And, it would have cost $19.4 million more to implement than the original estimate of $32 million. This was due to the fact that track-owning railroad CSX Inc. added $38.7 million worth of track and signal system improvements it wanted which was strongly critical of CSX. The audit found that CSX had seen a 60 percent increase in track-caused accidents over the last five years. The FRA audit singled out passenger trains as a victim of CSX’s defective tracks. Faster passenger trains have fewer safety tolerances on poorly maintained track than slower freight trains.

Other factors that hurt the 2-C proposal were its Ohio residents get to travel by rail only when trains have been imported for special occasions. One of those occasions was in October 1995, in which Ohio borrowed a sleek Turboliner from New York State to take Central Ohioans to baseball playoff games in Cincinnati and Cleveland. Here, Columbus residents board a train to Cincinnati.

In a Feb. 23 article in the Delaware Gazette, an Ohio CSX official predicted that those high costs would probably doom the 2-C project.

“The expense of the thing, given the potential ridership, just is too great,” said CSX Vice President Neal Zimmers.

CSX’s requirements sounded especially questionable coming on the heels of a track condition audit by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

JUST SPECIAL Columbus, OH residents get to travel by rail only when trains have been imported for special occasions. One of those occasions was in October 1995, in which Ohio borrowed a sleek Turboliner from New York State to take Central Ohioans to baseball playoff games in Cincinnati and Cleveland. Here, Columbus residents board a train to Cincinnati.

Widespread outrage at the 2-C’s demise

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“The expense of the thing, given the potential ridership, just is too great,” said CSX Vice President Neal Zimmers.

CSX’s requirements sounded especially questionable coming on the heels of a track condition audit by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

since it would require the construction of a third main track, costing perhaps $100 million, along its busy 42-mile segment between Berea and Greenwich. Service levels for the two-year 2-C demonstration project were therefore restricted to the two daily round trips.

Since the project was an outgrowth of the $500 million Interstate 71 rebuilding between Cleveland and Columbus, state planners kept the rail plan limited to between those two cities. Last year, OARP was unable to convince ORDC and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODoT) to expand the rail project to reach Dayton and Cincinnati. Those added markets would have allowed trains to tap into more ridership sources while creating mail and package express shipment opportunities.

At the other end of the corridor, restricting their northern endpoint to Cleveland would have isolated passengers from the rest of the Amtrak system, further limiting 2-C’s ridership and revenue potential. Better schedules, more frequent service and trains running beyond Cleveland would have allowed passengers and mail/express shipments to connect to other Amtrak routes.

The last flaw is that, other than $1.4 million sought from communities for stations, no funding partners were sought by Ohio. Other states like Illinois, Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania used less state funding than the $32 million Ohio was prepared to spend on 2-C to leverage much larger federal grants and encourage Amtrak’s financial participation. With funding coming from a mixture of sources to cre-
The system's initial route will connect Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati, Ohio law says.

The proposed 2-C project had its problems, to be sure, not the least of which was the fact that it might not conform to ORDC's enabling legislation. And, it would have cost $19.4 million more to implement than the original estimate of $32 million. This was due to the fact that track-owning railroad CSX Inc. added $38.7 million worth of track and signal system improvements it wanted to improve its freight service and upgrade worn-out railway Infrastructure.

which was strongly critical of CSX. The audit found that CSX had seen a 60 percent increase in track-caused accidents over the last five years. The FRA audit singled out passenger trains as a victim of CSX's defective tracks. Faster passenger trains have fewer safety tolerances on poorly maintained track than slower freight trains.

Other factors that hurt the 2-C proposal were its low estimates of ridership and revenues. CSX's frequent freight traffic meant there were to be only 8 daily trains with low ridership. Amtrak's second phase of expansion to be announced in 2001. In order to keep costs down, the new train would probably have to operate on a schedule based on existing freight train traffic and infrastructure conditions.

While this "ground level" 3-C service is being developed, ORDC should follow-up on the application it made last year with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to have the 3-C route designated as a high-speed corridor. At the same time, ORDC should create a multi-year, 3-C improvement program, perhaps 10 years in length, and allocate at least $15 million a year to it.

This funding can be used toward a building-block approach of adding trains and raising speeds. And, state dollars can be used to leverage federal funds for road-rail crossing improvements, modernizing railroad signal systems and station projects.

This is the same approach now being undertaken by states like North Carolina (Charlotte-Raleigh corridor), Michigan (Detroit-Chicago) and Washington and Oregon (Seattle-Portland) to produce frequent, 110 mph passenger train services.

Taking a building-block approach is essential for politicians and citizens in states like Ohio, whose awareness of passenger trains is limited mostly to memories of what once was. Or, they may argue that Ohio doesn't deserve passenger trains because we don't have the population density or traffic problems like those in the big East Coast cities. If that's the case, then state-funded services in places like Oklahoma and Vermont wouldn't be attracting ridership that's beyond the initial expectations.

Ohio is in the middle, and we're in a void, due to the sudden cancellation of the 2-C project. ORDC Chairman Jim Betts pledged to develop a 3-C Corridor steering committee to hopefully create rail service that links Ohio's largest metropolitan areas. Perhaps the anger that was expressed following 2-C's demise will wake up our state officials to the reality that OARP isn't the only voice calling for gaining the freedom of transportation choice.

Ohio officials can and must do better than what they have. Our state's economic future depends on us getting where we want to go.
2-C: what happened?

On May 9, Ohio Passenger Rail News Editor Ken Prendergast was putting the finishing touches on the next newsletter and needed to flesh out a couple of columns he was writing. The details would come from the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC), which was working on the Cleveland-Columbus (2-C) rail passenger project. What he learned would not only force OARP’s newsletter to be rewritten; it would change the editorial content of newspapers across Ohio for the next few days.

Mr. Prendergast said he expected to get details on the ORDC’s recommendation to the Ohio Department of Transportation’s Transportation Review Advisory Council. Imagine his surprise when he learned the ORDC was going to drop the 2-C project! Mr. Prendergast ended up talking with an unnamed person who confirmed that, yes, ORDC was indeed going to announce at the 2-C Steering Committee meeting on May 12 that it would drop the passenger rail project.

Mr. Prendergast called OARP President Bill Hutchison and explained the situation. OARP Vice President Bill Nicholson, Mr. Hutchison, Columbus Coordinator Bob Boyce and member Dave Schreiner attended the 2-C meeting on behalf of OARP. Also present were Mr. Conte, Matt Yingling of the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, and other officials. Only a few 2-C committee members were present, as word of the ORDC’s recommendation was just starting to spread.

The Columbus Dispatch, Cleveland Plain Dealer, other newspapers, radio stations and more media. The Dispatch ran a very well-written editorial and two editorial cartoons, plus feature articles. By the morning of May 12, the word was out in full force.

Mr. Nicholson, Mr. Hutchison, Columbus Coordinator Bob Boyce and member Dave Schreiner attended the 2-C meeting on behalf of OARP. Also present were Mr. Conte, Matt Yingling of the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, and other officials. Only a few 2-C committee members were present, as word of the ORDC’s recommendation was just starting to spread.

Amtrak officials, who had no idea what they were walking into, had a “deer in the headlights” look of complete surprise. Many questions were raised by this turn of events. How did ORDC arrive at its decision without a vote? Wasn’t ORDC supposed to develop a plan for 3-C Corridor service under the statutes of the Ohio Revised Code? Why have people come from all over the state to these 2-C meetings for the past 18 months only to kill the whole process?

ORDC Executive Director Jim Seney suggested that there would be another meeting of the 2-C committee to discuss the next steps, including federal designation of high-speed corridor status for the 3-C corridor. Mr. Nicholson said “With all due respect, my 18 years experience in the media tells me that the public perception will be that this project is dead through today’s actions.”

One ray of hope did emerge from all this. We came to realize that we were not alone—many individuals and organizations made strong statements of support. In addition, the actions of the ORDC in killing the 2-C project filled many with a sense of rage and frustration and is motivating many of us to do far more than we otherwise would have.

Community leaders all up and down the entire 3-C Corridor are outraged by the actions of the ORDC and we are in discussions with them about possible actions to keep the heat on for passenger train service. For our part, OARP will continue to pursue its goal of rail passenger service between Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Cincinnati by all means available. The defeat of the 2-C service at the hands of the state will not daunt us.
Transporation's Transportation Review Advisory Council. Imagine his surprise when he learned the ORDC was going to drop the 2-C project! Mr. Prendergast ended up talking with an unnamed person who confirmed that, yes, ORDC was indeed going to announce at the 2-C Steering Committee meeting on May 12 that it would drop the passenger rail project.

Mr. Prendergast called OARP President Bill Hutchison and explained the situation. OARP Administrative Director Stu Nicholson quickly put together a press conference, which was attended by Ron Barnes, chief executive officer of the Central Ohio Transit Authority, Kim Gibson of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), Columbus City Councilman Richard Sensenbrenner, Marc Conte of the Ohio Sierra Club and others.

Hundreds of press releases, faxes, phone calls and e-mails flew back and forth as OARP worked hard to organize opposition on very short notice. OARP did succeed in getting coverage by

out in full force.

Mr. Nicholson, Mr. Hutchison, Columbus Coordinator Bob Boyce and member Dave Schreiner attended the 2-C meeting on behalf of OARP. Also present were Mr. Conte, Matt Yingling of the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, and other officials. Only a few 2-C committee members were present, as word of the meeting apparently was not made clear.

Part of the reason may have been due to a fax sent by ORDC, prior to the meeting, thanking the committee members for all of their work. The nature of the fax suggested there would be no meeting that day. In a curious twist, 2-C committee member Kathy Wigton (OARP's Area 419 Director) did not attend the meeting because she was told by someone at ORDC that there would be no 2-C meeting that day.

The atmosphere at the 2-C meeting was tense. Person after person rebuked the ORDC decision and gave very good reasons why the planning

Community leaders all up and down the entire 3-C Corridor are outraged by the actions of the ORDC and we are in discussions with them about possible actions to keep the heat on for passenger train service. For our part, OARP will continue to pursue its goal of rail passenger service between Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Cincinnati by all means available. The defeat of the 2-C service at the hands of the state will not deter us from this goal.

We will enlist the support of any and all other organizations, seek new alliances and go the extra mile to win this battle. OARP already has many new friends, including the Columbus Dispatch and the Greater Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce. They understand the reasons for developing rail passenger service.

I encourage you, our members, to not lose faith. We will not back down! Former OARP President Tom Pulsifer said it best years ago: "Winners never quit and quitters never win!"

We will never quit.

Seney is new ORDC chief

COLUMBUS — The Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) has named James E. Seney as its executive director. Mr. Seney had been serving as Governor Bob Taft's Northwest Ohio regional development representative. He replaces Thomas O'Leary, who resigned in January to take a deputy director's job at the Ohio Department of Transportation's District 3 office in Ashland.

Mr. Seney, who took over the job April 24, was formerly the Ohio Department of Development's transportation liaison and was the department's representative on the rail commission for two years.

"We are fortunate to find a man with Jim Seney's experience in public life and economic development," ORDC Chairman Jim Betts said. "We believe his proven leadership will allow the commission to go forward without missing a beat."

Bill Tompos, ORDC's treasurer, served as interim executive director while a permanent suc-

cessor was being sought for Mr. O'Leary. Tompos is retiring as treasurer this summer, and a search for his replacement already is underway.

Mr. Seney is a former mayor of Sylvania (a suburb of Toledo), and a past member of the board of directors of the Inland Rivers, Ports and Terminals, Inc. and the Association for the Development of Inland Navigation in America's Ohio Valley. He also served as co-chair of the Ohio Port Authorities Council.

The commission has a staff of 20 and a $25 million annual budget. It is responsible for facilitating the development of a freight and passenger rail system to transport goods and people.
President's Column
Sleepwalking in Ohio

By Bill Hutchison
OARP President

Hmmm...Let's see. What's the situation if we want to make a trip in Ohio? Well, I'm afraid our options are not very good.

In every metropolitan area, the highways are a parking lot, choking on traffic and orange barrels. The interstate highways in Columbus and other areas are being overwhelmed by traffic levels unforeseen when the roads were built 30 years ago.

Drives of an hour or more just to get across town are becoming commonplace. Development patterns in the suburbs have resulted in few through roads, with outer-belts becoming traffic-choked main streets instead of the bypasses they were intended to be.

Huge reconstruction projects are underway, with no end in sight. Interstate 71 is to be torn up for 10 years between Cleveland and Columbus. Ohio Route 315, an important highway, has been under reconstruction for several years, is still not finished and won't be for another year at least. I-75 is now under review for the next round of reconstruction.

Face it. The highways are always going to be a mess, despite the billions spent on them.

Okay, then let's forget the roads. Wanna take the train? Forget it. Our peerless leaders decided we can't have train service for the foreseeable future. The whole process of study for the Cleveland - Columbus train service was thrown out the window when the Ohio Rail Development Commission unilaterally decided to deep-six the project. Nothing is currently in the wings to replace it and may not be for a long time to come.

Short hauls the airlines don't want to cater to. They'd rather serve long-distance routes, where the profit margins are higher. Ohio also has no major air hubs. The closest are in Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Covington, KY, which leaves most of us with a secondary level of service.

Locally, in all too many cases, transit is not an option. Buses run infrequently or don't go where you want to go. Much-needed light rail and commuter rail is still on the drawing boards in too many places. Suburbs have sprawled away from existing transit service and don't lend themselves well to new transit service.

Finally, in all too many places, you take your life into your own hands if you want to walk anywhere. Crumbling or nonexistent sidewalks and bike paths, no street lights and wide streets choked with traffic are all hazards for pedestrians and bicyclists to endure. If you are in a wheelchair, it's even worse. All too many street corners are not handicap-accessible. Columbus is being forced legally to fix over 10,000 such corners. The cost? $12 million.

This is a mobility issue that affects all of us. What about people who can't or don't want to drive? They are trapped at home or are forced to rely on the good will of others to do their daily activities. What about the job-seeker who can't afford to drive to a job in an outlying area? What about all the lost time due to construction or traffic jams? Good transportation is a quality of life issue that relocating companies consider. What kind of message are we sending them by not doing anything about this issue?

County to buy, restore historic Elyria depot?

ELYRIA — The Lorain County Commissioners have made an offer to purchase the historic, but vacant New York Central depot in the heart of downtown Elyria. The proposed $225,000 acquisition is the first step to redeveloping the 75-year-old depot with offices for Lorain County Transit (LCT) and a hub for its growing bus network.

Currently owned by retiring real estate investor Bill Kennedy, the depot would also accommodate multiple daily Amtrak passenger trains and Greyhound intercity buses.

The depot would be a model for other smaller cities across Ohio, where places are being sought to create easy transfers between several modes of transportation. It would also be a catalyst to the revitalization plans for Elyria's entire central business district.

In 1996, a $2.5 million effort to renovate the Elyria depot with offices, restaurant, and a train station was halted when the Ohio Department of Transportation rejected a $1.9 million historic enhancement grant for the project (the city, Ohio Rail Development Commission and Amtrak were to provide the remaining funds).

The depot restoration was the highest-ranking project in Ohio that year not to get a federal historic enhancement grant. That effort by Elyria was an outgrowth of OARP's 1994 Festival of Stations attended by officials from a dozen Ohio cities, including Elyria, Cincinnati, Hamilton and Sandusky.

One of the key factors the federal government...
and won't be for another year at least. I-75 is now under review for the next round of reconstruction.

Face it. The highways are always going to be a mess, despite the billions spent on them.

Okay, then let's forget the roads. Wanna take the train? Forget it. Our peerless leaders decided we can't have train service for the foreseeable future. The whole process of study for the Cleveland - Columbus train service was thrown out the window when the Ohio Rail Development Commission unilaterally decided to deep-six the project. Nothing is currently in the wings to replace it and may not be for a long time to come, since we are now back to square one.

Meanwhile, Ohio continues to lag while our neighbors progress. New York used $20 million in state funds to leverage a $185 million rail passenger program. Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois and Missouri all are spending significant amounts of money on their rail programs. They will have 110 mph high-speed service, while we are still stuck in traffic.

How about the bus? Well, in all too many places, you can't get a bus. There's no suburban stops in major metropolitan areas like Columbus and no long-term parking. I wanted to take a bus trip to Cleveland in June, but canceled when I found I had no way to get to the bus terminal by transit on a weekend. There's no place to park the car for the weekend at the bus station.

How about flying? Better get out the checkbook — a round-trip Cincinnati - Cleveland flight will cost you $754 on short notice. A friend wanted to go to a wedding in Cincinnati and found he had to pay a king's ransom for the privilege. Delays are becoming more common. Not long ago, I wanted to fly to visit my parents in St. Louis and ended up going back to my house in frustration after I had to endure the cancellation of numerous flights due to bad weather.

In addition, there is not much air service worth noting on many Ohio routes, since they are all forced legally to fix over 10,000 such corners. The cost: $12 million.

This is a mobility issue that affects all of us. What about people who can't or don't want to drive? They are trapped at home or are forced to rely on the good will of others to do their daily activities. What about the job-seeker who can't afford to drive to a job in an outlying area? What about all the lost time due to construction or traffic jams? Good transportation is a quality of life issue that relocating companies consider. What kind of message are we sending them by not doing anything about this issue?

Why are non-highway forms of transportation so scarce? It's because government at all levels has developed highways to the near exclusion of anything else. In Ohio, we spend about 98 percent of our transportation dollars on highways. That has resulted in a transportation "system" that is totally dominated by highways. In the private sector, that's called a monopoly. Bill Gates has nothing on Ohio!

The irony is that despite the billions spent on highways, they remain clogged and that's at least partly because, in all too many cases, there are no alternatives. What's wrong with this picture? I'm not suggesting that we take from Peter to pay Paul, but there is a need to diversify if there is to be any new funding for transportation.

The other night I was watching the local news and a story came on about the record-high gas prices, which recently topped $2 a gallon. This was immediately followed with another story about airline passengers stranded at Port Columbus Airport for two days because of bad weather. The problem is right there in front of us and nothing is done.

Ask yourself: "What is it our leaders don't get?"

Then ask former President Reagan's famous question, but in the context of transportation: "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?"

The answer is obvious.
More Ohio trains due by autumn

— "Expansion", from page one —

them being left out.

Unless stations in those cities are retrofitted with loading platforms that can serve more than one track, it is unlikely that those cities will see additional passenger rail service anytime soon.

The additional passenger trains to Ohio will be the Skyline Connection (using the train numbers 45 and 46, formerly proposed as the Manhattan Limited, but that name had already been copyrighted) and the Lake Cities (trains 350 and 355). Both of these services will start up on the same day, as they are part of Amtrak’s same negotiating contract with track-owning railroad NS. Amtrak may give the public only three weeks notice before the two services begin.

Amtrak initially proposed the Skyline Connec-
tion as a Chicago-New York City service, but a lack of electric locomotives to haul the train east of Philadelphia means that the City of Brotherly Love will temporarily be its eastern terminus. Once the new Acela high-speed trains begin operating on the Northeast Corridor, possibly in September, that will free up enough electric locomotives to extend the Skyline to New York City.

To switch mail/express cars while using the same train equipment for both eastbound and westbound runs each day, and without causing major changes to the existing schedule across Michigan.

With a wider choice of arrivals and departures, more Ohioans should be tempted to use passenger rail service to avoid congestion on the highways and in airports, and to avoid the rising fuel prices since passenger trains are more energy efficient than cars, buses and planes.

Those are the immediate benefits to Ohio, expected from the first phase of Amtrak’s nationwide expansion plan announced in February. But those benefits thus far are restricted to Northern Ohio, giving the rest of the state all the more reason to eagerly anticipate what’s in the second high-speed development. These two were included in the analysis because they “met MBNA (Market-Based Network Analysis) criteria, namely, state department of transportation interest or the necessary population density in the metropolitan service areas,” according to Amtrak’s NGS report.

This section of the report continues, noting that “given the preliminary nature of the corridor analysis and the fact that state and other institutional support may be forthcoming on selected corridors, Amtrak is not yet in a position to judge whether a particular corridor should or should not be developed.” Amtrak’s NGS report noted that these corridors will be ranked based on their capital cost estimates and ridership projections. If additional financial support (such as from private sources or state and federal governments) is needed, Amtrak’s ongoing MBNA will identify those amounts.

A wild-card in Amtrak’s expansion plan is a proposal to run a New York City-Los Angeles luxury train service, which may operate on a weekly basis. This service may pass through Toledo, but it isn’t yet known if this train will stop anywhere in Ohio.

Of the eight en route stops being considered for this train, only three are known — Pittsburgh, PA, Naperville, IL (southwest suburb of Chicago), and Chicago, IL.
means that the City of Brotherly Love will temporarily be its eastern terminus. Once the new Acela high-speed trains begin operating on the Northeast Corridor, possibly in September, that will free up enough electric locomotives to extend the Skyline from Philadelphia to New York.

The Skyline will operate on a daytime schedule in both directions between Chicago and Pittsburgh, and overnight between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Onboard services will include reserved coach seating and sleeping-car bedrooms, plus a lounge car and checked baggage. There will be no dining car, due to a shortage of equipment. And, like all Ohio Amtrak trains nowadays, the Skyline will have a long string of mail/package express car bringing up the rear. Mail/express revenues are expected to cover any passenger revenue shortfalls.

As for the Lake Cities, this will be the second time around for this train in Toledo. During an ill-advised spate of budget cutbacks in 1995, Amtrak shortened the Lake Cities' route by cutting it back to a Chicago-Detroit service.

Amtrak is restoring this service to Toledo by not only extending the Lake Cities' route, but by realigning it so the train makes a beeline from Dearborn to Toledo — bypassing the downtown Detroit station. Amtrak officials said this was necessary to give train crews enough time in Toledo phase of Amtrak's plans. And, central and southern Ohioans may not know that the Cleveland - Columbus - Cincinnati (3-C) corridor was included in the first phase of Amtrak’s Network Growth Strategy (NGS). No timetable was given for starting this service, however.

In Amtrak's 29-page NGS report, Amtrak identified the need to increase market share by developing higher-speed services on numerous routes, mainly those that have been designated as high-speed corridors by the federal government via its Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). Included are routes in the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (Chicago to Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, St. Louis), the Keystone Corridor (Philadelphia - Harrisburg), Empire Corridor (New York City - Albany - Buffalo) and others.

In addition to those routes, two corridors — the Texas Hub and the 3-C Corridor — have been subjected to Amtrak’s preliminary analyses for weekly basis. This service may pass through Toledo, but it isn't yet known if this train will stop anywhere in Ohio.

Of the eight en route stops being considered for this train, only three are known — Pittsburgh, PA, Naperville, IL (southwest suburb of Chicago), and Albuquerque, NM. Given these cities, and Amtrak’s goal to have this luxury train cross the continent in 60 hours, it is likely that the train will take either the Norfolk Southern route through Cleveland and Toledo, or the CSX route via Youngstown, Akron, and Fostoria.

But, more Amtrak services are needed to serve high-density travel markets, particularly across and within Ohio.

That’s where the second phase of Amtrak’s NGS may come in. This phase, due to be released in early 2001, could target short- to medium-distance routes. Also, this phase may include details about a potentially large acquisition of rail cars and locomotives. Unlike the first round of expansion, which Amtrak is funding with existing resources and those it can raise in the private marketplace, the second round is expected to require local, state and federal funding to make it happen.

Amtrak has kept the second phase under wraps. The still-developing contents of this second phase, just as it did with the first phase. Until Amtrak announced the first round, there were few leaks of information that gave any indication of what was in it.
OARP's testimony to the ORDC

We come before you today to express our displeasure and disappointment at the sudden and uncalled-for abandonment of the proposed Cleveland to Columbus (or 2-C) Passenger Rail Project. It is an action, we believe, that blindsided both those of us who support the expansion and improvement of rail passenger service and mass transit in Ohio, but also blindsided the Commission's own committee, who had spent a full year studying and fact-gathering in the belief that this was a viable and sensible alternative to the traffic jams that even now are being created with the reconstruction and widening of Interstate 71 between Cleveland and Columbus.

We believe the decision to kill this project is both premature and unnecessary. In short, it is a total waste of a year's worth of effort by the 2-C Committee. To simply dismiss all of their data and analysis only serves to further delay long-needed and long-overdue rail passenger service, not only between Cleveland and Columbus, but to the rest of the so-called 3-C Corridor that includes the cities of Springfield, Dayton and Cincinnati, as well as a number of smaller communities on or near the corridor.

We at the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers are troubled and our patience is exhausted at what we view as a lack of leadership by the ORDC, and especially the administration of Governor Robert Taft. This latest decision also shows a lack of vision for the future transportation needs of Ohio, its citizens and its organizations. Many of these same groups and their leaders sent a letter to Governor Taft last year in support of the 2-C plan. The response to this letter by the Governor was simply to pass the buck back to ORDC for comment. If this is leadership on a major issue, what we have seen so far is at best unimpressive and at worst an executive-level brush off.

When ODOT first asked for public comment on the 2-C plan, it got over 4,000 letters from citizens across Ohio favoring rail passenger service! We have to ask ... what is it that our leaders don't get?

Rail passenger service can benefit Ohio in many ways, and what better time to do it than right now, when we are in the midst of the most robust state and national economy in several decades? Passenger rail can serve more than just the discretionary or recreational traveler. With fast, timely and convenient service, it can also serve the many business travelers who otherwise would be driving cars along the I-71 Corridor, jamming our highways further, polluting the air we breathe, and spending totally unproductive time at the wheel. Instead, those same business travelers could be riding the rails and doing business.

We wonder if state officials truly understand what passenger rail could mean to Ohio's economy in terms of improving how business is done, creating new business and development, creating jobs and attracting the kind of growth to our core cities that is so badly needed? Are you aware that...
not only between Cleveland and Columbus, but to the rest of the so-called 3-C Corridor that includes the cities of Springfield, Dayton and Cincinnati, as well as a number of smaller communities on or near the corridor.

We at the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers are troubled and our patience is exhausted at what we view as a lack of leadership by the ORDC, and especially the administration of Governor Robert Taft. This latest decision also shows a lack of vision for the future transportation needs of Ohio, its citizens and its economy. Once again, the people of Ohio have been let down by their own government. And state leaders have done so at a time when virtually all of our neighboring states have not only joined together in the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, but have been actively supporting and expanding rail passenger service in their states for years, and continue to do so.

We would remind this Commission that the very legislation that created it, clearly states that it "will connect Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati with rail passenger service." We submit that in nearly six years of existence, ORDC is no nearer to this goal than when it was established.

Furthermore, we find the manner in which the decision to kill the 2-C Project was made questionable and troubling.

The fact this decision was made just two weeks after having received cost estimates from CSX, and before the 2-C Committee even had a chance to review leaves us to draw the conclusion that a conscious decision was made to de-rail the process. We are also disturbed that there was no public meeting, that we're aware of, where discussion and comment could be made. Instead, we appear to have had a decision made in private by state leadership. This is most troubling.

OARP is also concerned that the commitment of $32 million by the Ohio Department of Transrating this project is going to do anything to change those numbers? If anything, the delay caused by abandoning the project will only serve to delay necessary improvements to the infrastructure and drive those costs only higher.

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We want to remind state officials that their actions, and lack of action, are being watched closely by not only the members of OARP, but by local government and business leaders, chambers of commerce, civic organizations and statewide environmental and other pro-transit organizations.

We at OARP have always been willing to do our part to make this happen, even though we, as the state's only rail passenger advocacy organization, have not been allowed a seat on this Commission. We continue to offer our assistance and cooperation in making not only the 2-C Project, but for full, timely and convenient rail passenger service along the entire 3-C Corridor.

At minimum, OARP expects ORDC to work with Amtrak and other interested parties to develop an interim level of service by encouraging and establishing mail and express business, while moving ahead to obtain (a federal) high speed rail designation for the 3-C Corridor, in addition to such service already planned for Cleveland - Toledo - Chicago and Cincinnati - Indianapolis - Chicago.

We want to remind state officials that their actions, and lack of action, are being watched closely by not only the members of OARP, but by local government and business leaders, chambers of commerce, civic organizations and statewide environmental and other pro-transit organizations.

We wonder, as many of our members have, some for more than 25 years — when will Ohioans again be able to move by rail? We wonder when this Commission and the Governor will stand up and show the leadership that is not only expected, but mandated by the representatives of the State of Ohio? If not now, When?

We were told at the last 2-C committee meeting that spending the estimated $51 million on the 2-C Project was too risky. We would only reply with the words of the late Winston Churchill...

Faced with certainly greater troubles and a World War, he said...

"to avoid risk is to insure failure."
We're online at: www.oarprail.org

The Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers went "online" with its own domain and Web site in February. The new Web site found at www.oarprail.org on the Internet, will complement a highly effective e-mail system already in place for members to participate in discussions and receive news "as it happens." The Web site also provides up-to-date information on OARP events, as well as local, regional and national meetings and events affecting the future of rail travel in Ohio.

The OARP Board has been discussing establishing a web presence for the past year. Departing At-large Director Daniel Roberts took the initiative to register the "oarprail.org" domain name and arrange for the initial web site publication.

Mr. Roberts has generously agreed to donate the web cash costs of approximately $300 per year for the first two years of operation. After two years the Board will decide if the demonstration project will be continued and funded by OARP. The site www.oarprail.org will be the official World Wide Web presence for OARP.

The Web site provides access to summaries of the Ohio Passenger Rail News, press releases, the OARP calendar, the OARP Leadership Directory and links to a wide variety of sites relevant to improving passenger rail and public transit service in Ohio. Expansion of the Web site is always occurring, and members are encouraged to contribute useful material by contacting Mr. Roberts at Daniel_Roberts@oarprail.org or Secretary Ed D'Amato at Ed_DAmato@oarprail.org on the Internet.

Members are also invited to join OARP's e-mail discussion groups by selecting the "Discussion" button on the OARP Web site's main page. If you do not have access to the World Wide Web but do have e-mail you can still join the announcement or discussion list. To join the discussion list, send e-mail to the address: subscribe-oarp-discuss@egroups.com or to join the announcements list, send e-mail to subscribe-oarp-announce@egroups.com on the internet. Questions about either service should be e-mailed to Mr. Roberts at Daniel_Roberts@oarprail.org.

Travel Alerts

Easier car renting at Cleveland for Amtrak passengers

Amtrak travelers arriving at Cleveland can now take advantage of a new arrangement to rent Hertz cars during their stay. While there will not be a Hertz rental car desk at the Amtrak Lakefront Station in downtown Cleveland, rail travelers can take a taxi to a nearby Hertz office where rental cars are available. Under the new arrangement, rail travelers will have their taxi fare reimbursed by Hertz upon arrival at the rental car office.

The Hertz office nearest to the Amtrak station is located in downtown Cleveland, at 708 St. Clair Avenue, but is open only from 7 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Friday; 8 a.m.-12 noon on Saturday, and is closed on Sunday. At Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, there is a Hertz office open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This is the best bet for Amtrak travelers arriving on the four trains which serve Cleveland between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m.

"Through the addition of rental car desk service at the Lakefront Station," said Bob G. Brinkley, Amtrak's Cleveland division manager, "rail travelers will have the option of using a taxi to the downtown office or renting a Hertz car at the airport."
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Stu Nicholson back on board

At its regular meeting in March, the OARP Board of Directors reached a contract with Stu Nicholson to provide administrative services to the association. He replaces John Stacy, whose contract was not renewed in December. Mr. Nicholson joins Christine Vines as OARP's only paid advocates. Mrs. Vineis, whose contract was renewed in January, provides governmental and corporate relations services to the association.

If Mr. Nicholson's name sounds familiar to members in Greater Columbus and Greater Cleveland, it's because he worked recently as a television news reporter in those cities. Mr. Nicholson also was OARP's co-editor of the newsletter in the early 1990s, working alongside Ken Wilt.

The hiring of Mr. Nicholson came none too soon, as the Ohio Rail Development Commission in May dropped its plans for Cleveland-Columbus passenger rail service. Having Mr. Nicholson working for rail passengers was invaluable during that very busy time, in which he used his media and public-speaking skills to establish press conferences and deliver hard-hitting testimony to state government officials.

His communication and organizational skills continue to serve OARP's efforts to educate others about the need for passenger rail service between Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Cincinnati. OARP is very lucky to have him on our side.

OARP Election

By early June, members should have received in the mail a packet from OARP containing a mail ballot and information detailing a small blunder in the mail-ballot election procedures.

Normally, election results from the mail ballot are certified and announced at the Annual Meeting in May. However, since a bylaw-mandated deadline was missed for mailing out the ballots, certification of the mail-ballot election results will be made at OARP's Summer Meeting and Family Outing on July 29 in Cleveland.

Postponing the certification of the election results was approved unanimously by the general membership in attendance at the Annual Meeting in Columbus. While there were no uncontested races for any of the officer or board member positions, OARP apologizes for any inconvenience or confusion this may have caused our members.

If you did not received your ballot, contact:

OARP Election Committee
c/o Past President Mark Carlson
479 Humiston Drive
Bay Village OH 44140-3017
or e-mail: mdcarlson@ameritech.net

Ballots will continue to be accepted at the above address until the OARP Summer Meeting and Family Outing where ballots may also be hand delivered to the Election Committee.

Located in downtown Cleveland, at 708 St. Clair Avenue, but is open only from 7 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Friday; 8 a.m.-12 noon on Saturday, and is closed on Sunday. At Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, there is a Hertz office open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This is the best bet for Amtrak travelers arriving on the four trains which serve Cleveland between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m.

"Through the addition of rental car services at the station in Cleveland, Amtrak and Hertz are providing a service our customers want, a more complete travel package," said Barbara J. Richardson, executive vice president of Amtrak. "Through this partnership, our customers can make quick and convenient reservations and connections from the train to their rental car."

The Amtrak/Hertz partnership program was developed to capitalize upon the growing demand for car rental service at railroad stations.

The program offers customers who book travel to any of the participating locations and, who express an interest in renting a vehicle, an automatic transfer to a Hertz reservationist when calling Amtrak at (800) USA-RAIL (800-872-7245).

Customers booking Hertz rental cars through Amtrak have enhanced access to Hertz services and are eligible for special Amtrak/Hertz rental rates. For those wishing to contact Hertz directly, call (800) 654-3131.

OARP's Summer Meeting and Family Outing is very lucky to have him on our side.
Cleveland Short Tracks

Given the increasing amount of Cleveland-area rail transit news, and the limited amount of space in the Ohio Passenger Rail News, this column is appearing for the first time to provide brief summaries on local rail passenger developments. ‘Cleveland Short Tracks’ will appear on an as-needed basis to keep readers informed of all that’s happening rail-wise on the North Coast while ensuring that this newsletter retains its statewide content.

Red Line (Airport-Windermere)

Berea extension unlikely

High construction costs have doomed a 3-mile extension of the 19-mile Red Line southwest from Hopkins International Airport into the city of Berea. Construction costs of $200 million and operating costs of $10 million were expected, but would generate only 3,900 new transit trips each day.

Brook Park Mayor Tom Coyne is attempting to save the rail project because it would serve his city, including the massive International Exhibition Center. But, in this case, the projected ridership numbers don’t appear to justify the investment, not when GCRTA has in the planning pipeline several other large transit projects which may have more merit. For more information, see the Red Line extension Web site www.wilbursmith.com/extensions/ on the Internet.

Ridership keeps rising

The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) reports that ridership on the Red Line rose from 5,455,860 passengers in 1998 to 5,658,763 in 1999, a 3.7 percent increase. The growth last year was credited primarily to the return of the Cleveland Browns football team. Ridership continued to climb in early 2000, increasing by 2.4 percent compared to the same period in 1999.

New Triskett station opening

Located next to Interstate 90, a new, $8.4 million Triskett station has replaced an obsolete, 42-year-old facility. The old station was saddled by a claustrophobic, handicapped inaccessible pedestrian tunnel that linked the bus lane and parking lot to the train platform. That has given way to an all-glass, overhead walkway reached by stairs or an elevator. The parking lot also has been resurfaced, while work will begin soon on replacing concrete on the station’s access road.

Brookpark station rehab set

Reconstructive surgery will begin this fall on the Brookpark station, which is the second-to-last outbound stop on the west-side Red Line (before arriving Hopkins International Airport). For $7.5 million in local, state, and federal funds, the 33-year-old Brookpark station will be completely rebuilt and expanded. It will remain open during construction.

Even though it already has GCRTA’s largest park-n-ride lot (1,500 spaces), a second parking lot with several hundred spaces will be added to the west side of the station. Also, four bus routes converge on the facility. Construction should be completed by summer 2002.

Blue/Green Lines
(Downtown-Shaker Heights)

Blue Line extension MIS underway

As part of a Major Investment Study, a number of route options are being considered for extending the Blue Line several miles east or south of its current terminus at Van Aken Boulevard and Warrensville Center Road. In addition to continuing the Blue Line east to the large Chagrin Highlands development and to Interstate 271, or south to North Randall’s retail Mecca, the study is also looking at improving bus service instead of extending the rail line.

GCRTA retained consulting firm Parsons Brinckerhoff Ohio to conduct the MIS over the next year. In addition to transportation improvements, the study is evaluating proposed land uses in the study area that could improve transit ridership and reduce automobile traffic. For more information, contact GCRTA project director Richard Enty at (216) 566-5260 or visit the Blue Line MIS Web page at www.gcrta.org on the Internet.

Ridership inches up

Ridership on the Blue/Green Lines nudged upward from 3,460,872 passengers in 1998, to 3,464,920 in 1999, a 0.01 percent rise. However, ridership climbed more quickly in the first few months of 2000, with growth eclipsing 2 percent.

Bridge repair may delay trains

Delays to trains may occur later this year during a $3.5 million rebuilding of the Blue/Green Lines’ overpass of Holton Avenue, which is between the East 79th and Woodhill/East 93rd stations. This overpass is a low steel truss bridge.
Ridership keeps rising

The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) reports that ridership on the Red Line has increased. Even though it already has GCRTA's largest park-n-ride lot (1,500 spaces), a second parking lot with several hundred spaces will be added to the west side of the station. Also, four bus routes converge on the facility. Construction should be completed by summer 2002.

Bridge repair may delay trains

Delays to trains may occur later this year during a $3.5 million rebuilding of the Blue/Green Lines' overpass of Holton Avenue, which is between the East 79th and Woodhill/East 93rd stations. This overpass is a long, steel truss bridge built in the 1910s. The light-rail line uses two of the four track spaces across this bridge, with the other two track spaces vacated after a freight railroad abandoned a nearby rail yard in the 1970s.

Waterfront Line (South Harbor-Tower City)

Decision on downtown loop delayed

GCRTA's Board of Trustees has delayed selecting a preferred route for an extended Waterfront Line around the east side of downtown. The board would send their preference to the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency to seek funds for preliminary engineering on this route.

The delay is due to questions surrounding the proposed Red Line extension (see "Berea extension unlikely" above), and because more detailed planning is needed on the Euclid Corridor Transitway. Until those matters are resolved, GCRTA's won't consider the recommendations from a Major Investment Study of the $118 million Waterfront Line extension.

The extension would create a rail transit loop around downtown Cleveland. For more information on the Waterfront Line extension, see the Web site at www.mkcentennial.com/waterfront/index.htm on the Internet.

— See "Short Tracks", page fifteen

NEW CLEVELAND STATION? Funding is being sought for expanding the downtown convention center, including an attached, $80 million transportation center. The station would put existing Amtrak and light-rail trains, transit buses plus future commuter rail into a single facility. The station would offer restaurants, retail and walkways to hotels, the convention center, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, the Great Lakes Science Center/OmniMax Theatre and parking.
TRavelAgent Members

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

Akron/Stow    Parkside Travel USA    (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
Cleveland    Ohio Motorist Association/AAA Travel (216) 606-6080
Cleveland    Randall Park Mall Travel Agency  (440) 475-8747
Columbus      Ohio Automobile Club/AAA Travel  (614) 431-7823
Elyria        Tours & Travel Service, Inc.  (440) 323-5423
Mansfield     Mansfield Travel Center  (419) 756-8747
Massillon     Massillon AAA Travel  (330) 833-1034
Piqua         Miami County Auto Club/AAA Travel  (937) 773-3753
Sandusky      Sandusky Travel Service, Inc.  (419) 917-4633
Solon         Astro Amtrak Tours  (440) 519-7331
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: Dec. 1999

Summer Meeting and Family Outing

Directions via car

If you must drive (sigh!) downtown, try these directions (see map at right)....

From the southeast, south, southwest or west:
Arriving downtown on I-77, I-71, or I-90, exit onto East 9th Street and drive into the central business district. About a mile north, after you pass Rockwell Avenue, turn left at St. Clair Avenue. Continue west on St. Clair until you de-
and Family Outing

Directions via car

If you must drive (sigh!) downtown, try these directions (see map at right)...

**From the southeast, south, southwest or west:**
Arriving downtown on I-77, I-71, or I-90, exit onto East 9th Street and drive into the central business district. About a mile north, after you pass Rockwell Avenue, turn left at St. Clair Avenue. Continue west on St. Clair until you descend a steep hill into the Flats. You'll see Clubhouse on the River straight ahead (see “Parking Information” below).

**From the east:**
Arriving downtown on I-90, stay in the right lanes for Route 2, then exit at West 3rd Street (next to Cleveland Browns Stadium) and turn left. At the second traffic light, turn right on St. Clair. Continue on St. Clair, down the hill. You'll see Clubhouse on the River straight ahead (see “Parking Information”).

**PARKING INFORMATION:** At the bottom of St. Clair hill, turn right on West 10th (a one-way street). Park at a meter on your left next to the Waterfront Line. The meters are free on weekends. If all the metered parking is taken, continue on West 10th to the next intersection (Main Avenue). Turn left across the tracks. At the end of Main, turn left onto Old River Road (a one-way street). As you near a sharp-left turn back onto St. Clair, look for on-street parking. Clubhouse on the River is at the sharp-left turn of Old River Road, at the intersection of West 10th, St. Clair and the Waterfront Line. If you can't find parking, head back to the suburbs and take the train downtown!

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**“Short Tracks”, from page fourteen**

**Ridership jumps**

Thanks mainly to the return of the Cleveland Browns football team and the opening of the new station next to the football stadium, Waterfront Line ridership shot up 11 percent last year. Rides on the Waterfront Line increased from 630,304 in 1998 to 699,469 in 1999. Growth continued into early 2000, with ridership continuing upward at a 2-percent rate. The Waterfront Line is actually a 2.2-mile extension of the Blue and Green Lines from Shaker Heights, but its ridership is accounted for separately by GCRTA.

**More development on line**

A block south of the brand-new West 3rd/Browns Stadium station, construction has begun on Courthouse Square, a 25-story, $70 million office and hotel complex. The hotel will be operated by DoubleTree, and there will be ground-floor restaurants and retail. This new high-rise is being built at the north end of the Warehouse District on Lakeside Avenue, just west of West 3rd Street.

Later this year, another project with “court­house” in its name may see construction along the Waterfront Line. The $130 million Courthouse Plaza would feature two buildings, first a 20-story hotel/condominium tower and, later, a 490,000-square-foot office building.

The Burkherd Group proposes to link this complex with passenger walkways to the Waterfront Line's Settlers Landing station in one direction, and Tower City Center in the other. This complex would rise next to the nearly complete, 22-story federal courthouse.
# Calendar of Events/Meetings

## July 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact person &amp; phone number</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</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>8</td>
<td>Toledo Local Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Toledo Amtrak Station</td>
<td>Central Union Plaza</td>
<td>Bill Gill 419 / 472-6357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>ORDC — Committee Mtg.</td>
<td>9:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Salt Fork State Resort &amp; Conference Center, U.S. Rte 22, Cambridge, OH</td>
<td>ORDC 614 / 644-0306</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ORDC — Full Commission</td>
<td><em>10:45 a.m.</em></td>
<td>Salt Fork State Resort &amp; Conference Center, U.S. Rte 22, Cambridge, OH</td>
<td>ORDC 614 / 644-0306</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>OARP Summer/Family Meeting</td>
<td>9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Clubhouse On The River</td>
<td>Cleveland, Ohio</td>
<td>Ken Prendergast 216 / 529-7677</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## August 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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Education and fun combine in Cleveland, starting at 9:30 a.m. on July 29! That's when OARP will hold its Summer Meeting and Family Outing. Those attending will take a ride on the light-rail lines to see the do's and don'ts of how rail transit and neighborhoods should be designed together to make cities better places to live, work and play.

The day begins by meeting at Clubhouse on the River, 1330 Old River Road, in the heart of the Flats entertainment district. Not only does our meeting site provide a great view of the river and its boardwalks — but you'll see some of the exciting developments occurring along the light-rail Waterfront Line right outside the restaurant's windows.

Our first speaker will be Rich Enty, a planner for the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, who chairs the city's Transit Oriented Design Committee. He'll give us a primer of why building a rail transit line isn't the end of the job, but the start.

Next will be Mandy Gillernie, a project manager for EcoCity Cleveland.

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**Directions via RTA Rapid Transit**

Clubhouse on the River is located along the light-rail Waterfront Line and is a short walk from either the Settlers Landing Station or the Flats East Bank Station (see map on page fifteen).

**From Amtrak Station**, at a station walkway, flag down a Waterfront Line train at the track closest to the station. Take the Rapid to the **Flats East Bank Station**. Walk along West 10th Street, in the direction you were traveling, to the next intersection (St. Clair). To the right, on the other side of the Waterfront Line, is **Clubhouse on the River**.

**From I-71**, exit at West 150th Street, turn left under the highway, and turn left again at the next light. The **Puritas Red Line Station** is straight ahead, next to the Baymont Inn & Suites (216/251-8500).

**From I-90 Eastbound**, exit to West 140th/Bunts Road, turn right and head south ¼ of a mile. Turn left at Triskett Road and immediately turn left again into the Triskett Rail Line Station.
The day begins by meeting at Clubhouse on the River, 1330 Old River Road, in the heart of the Flats entertainment district. Not only does our meeting site provide a great view of the river and its boardwalks — but you’ll see some of the exciting developments occurring along the light-rail Waterfront Line right outside the restaurant’s windows.

Our first speaker will be Rich Enty, a planner for the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, who chairs the city’s Transit Oriented Design Committee. He’ll give us a primer of why building a rail transit line isn’t the end of the job, but the start.

Next will be Manda Gillespie, a project manager for EcoCity Cleveland and John Goodworth, GCRTA’s chief architect. They’ll tell us about the exciting Eco-Village neighborhood revitalization efforts designed around the West 65th Street station replacement, set to begin later this year.

Your $17 registration fee ($14 for each additional member of the family) includes morning pastries, fruit, coffee, tea and juice, three choices of lunch (see below), speakers, and an all-day transit pass (if you plan to arrive the day of the meeting by transit, check the box below so we can mail the pass(es) to you. Be sure to register at least a week in advance!).

Lunch items must be ordered with your registration. Please select from the following: half-pound Steakburger with chips, Herb Chicken Pita or Deli Stacker (with choice of meats and cheeses).

For further information, contact OARP Vice-President Ken Prendergast at (216) 529-7677 or email Ken at: kjprendergast@msn.com