Amtrak to mail in the *Three Rivers*

Railroad, state officials pursue corridor services

Making lemonade out of lemons isn’t that difficult. All you have to do is apply the right amount of pressure.

That’s what the Ohio Rail Development Commission, Amtrak, local officials and the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers are striving to do following Amtrak’s announcement that it will end service to the Ohio cities of Youngstown, Akron and Fostoria on or about March 1, 2005. The pressure would be applied to secure funding for an important track connection that will allow the creation or realignment of passenger rail services to serve travelers on routes and at departure times they want to travel.

But, the loss of rail service to those three Ohio cities, if left unmitigated, is leaving a sour taste in some people’s mouths.

“It certainly saddens us to be leaving these communities,” said Amtrak spokesman Marc Magliari in an interview with Toledo Blade reporter David Patch. “But it is a decision that was designed to improve overall the quality of our passenger service.”

‘A matter of economics’

Amtrak’s choice to end its Chicago-New York City *Three Rivers*, with daily eastbound and westbound trains through Ohio, plus Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, was the result of the national rail passenger corporation’s decision to no longer haul bulk mail and packages. The *Three Rivers* was one of Amtrak’s most mail-laden routes, with some trains hauling up to 25 boxcars and RoadRailers (total 79 train cars at one time).

Since both parties couldn’t come to an agreement, Amtrak decided it was time to get out of the mail-shipping business and focus entirely on carrying passengers. Norfolk Southern Corp. has agreed to purchase Amtrak’s 300 boxcars and RoadRailers, saving the passenger railroad $12 million a year in debt-service payments.

An Ohio railroad ‘tie’

The move will discontinue passenger service to three Ohio cities that had lost Amtrak service less than a decade before, and that spent nearly $300,000 on better...
Amtrak’s Three Rivers Train #40 accelerates to 79 mph on CSX tracks through Struthers, OH, five miles east of downtown Youngstown. The day before this foggy Sept. 4, 2004 scene was captured alongside the Mahoning River, Amtrak filed a 180-day notice for ending its Three Rivers service. However, state and Amtrak officials are discussing new, conveniently scheduled passenger rail services in the populous Cleveland-Pittsburgh travel corridor. This is one of four corridors in the Ohio Hub study eyed for fast, frequent passenger trains. Meanwhile, rail advocates want the Three Rivers retained, as it is a key link in Amtrak’s national system.

Hub planning picks up momentum

But stronger, pro-rail constituency needed to fuel it

By Ken Prendergast
Director, Ohio Corridors Campaign


Those are some of the factors emerging as the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) completes its first phase of planning work for developing rail passenger service and relieving freight train traffic congestion along busy Ohio transportation corridors.

Previously called the “Ohio & Lake Erie Regional Rail-Cleveland Hub Study,” the feasibility study now is being dubbed simply “The Ohio Hub Study.”

With that new name comes a new planning focus. Envisioned is a network of rail services linked into a spine route, the Cleveland - Columbus - Dayton - Cincinnati (3-C) Corridor. In essence, the 3-C Corridor becomes the “Ohio Hub” for routes to/from cities like Toledo, Detroit, Chicago, Indianapolis, Buffalo, Toronto, Youngstown and Pittsburgh.

ORDC is recasting the planning effort in this manner for several reasons. First, planning data is showing the 3-C Corridor to have, by far, the highest ridership and financial performance potential of any proposed rail passenger service in Ohio.

Second, the name “Ohio Hub” is proving to be more politically salable to the entire state. And, third, ORDC’s own legislative mandate, passed when the commission was created in 1994, requires that it first pursue 3-C Corridor service. Although, other services can be developed simultaneously.

As opposed to past planning efforts by the state, ORDC, through the leadership of its Executive Director James Seney, appears to have a stronger commitment to seeing this through to the creation of actual service which Ohioans can use. Mr. Seney recognizes that developing rail service isn’t so much an engineering challenge, but a political one. And, he is using the experience he gained while at the Ohio Department of Development to investigate creative financing opportunities to afford developing the system.

For example, Mr. Seney discovered the ORDC’s ongoing investment in road-rail grade-crossing safety devices can be used to leverage federal funding for developing rail passenger service and opening freight traffic bottlenecks. Thus far, ORDC has invested nearly $50 million of its own money for such grade-crossing devices along Ohio’s proposed rail passenger corridors.

To become eligible for federal funding, however, “Ohio Hub” planning needs to...

— See “Ohio Hub” on page six

What’s inside...

♦ Who signed the letters?
♦ Ohio Mobility Partners’ Access Ohio testimony
♦ OARP mulls phone bank
♦ oarp.com relaunched
♦ Ohio rail roundup

Ohio Passenger Rail News
479 Humiston Drive
Bay Village OH 44140-3017
Address Service Requested
As the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) prepares to release its Ohio Hub Study, it’s important for us, in the grassroots advocacy community, to remember our history. There’s a simple reason why: we don’t want it repeated.

At first, it seemed that Jan. 11, 1996 was a great day in OARP’s history. Can’t remember it? Let me refresh your memory.

That was the day the Ohio Rail Development Commission’s (ORDC) board voted unanimously to seek $60 million from the state’s capital budget. State funding would be used for developing two daily round-trip passenger trains between Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Cincinnati (3-C Corridor), as well as for extending Amtrak’s daily, New York City-Pittsburgh Pennsylvania route west to Cleveland and Toledo.

ORDC’s vote followed two years of planning work by consultants, hired by the Ohio Department of Transportation, as part of its first “Access Ohio” long-range plan. The full “Access Ohio” plan noted that, during public hearings held statewide in 1992, “one of the most frequently heard requests was for increasing intercity passenger rail services.” The public had spoken and, on Jan. 11, it seemed their government was listening.

However, that great day was forgotten less than a month later. On Feb. 8, 1996, then-Governor George Voinovich’s Chief of Staff Paul Mifsud—who the press called the most powerful non-elected person in Ohio’s government — stood before the ORDC commissioners and told them they were “in outer space” for seeking $60 million worth of intercity passenger trains.

Mr. Mifsud instructed the ORDC to instead seek capital budget funding for commuter rail service between Cleveland, Akron and Canton (CAC Corridor), and for rebuilding a freight rail line between Springfield and Lima. Mr. Mifsud, who would succumb to cancer in 2000 after serving six months in prison for a state ethics violation, claimed CAC had a groundswell of support and that intercity passenger trains lacked it.

OARP mobilized its members and friends and, on March 14, got the ORDC to support a compromise — $37.5 million in capital funding for removing key impediments to 3-C, CAC, the Pennsylvania extension and the Springfield-Lima freight rail line. It was a more affordable, statewide request. But, when the state capital budget came out in June 1996, only about 5 percent of the initial request was approved for.
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Ohio Passenger Rail News
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#55
Amtrak to mail in the Three Rivers

“Three Rivers” from page one

station facilities to get it back. Ironically, the end of mail, the switching moves associated with it and the shorter train will result in the Three Rivers traveling up to an hour faster between Pittsburgh and New York City.

“Amtrak says it will no longer carry mail to focus on providing better passenger service. Reducing passenger train service in Ohio to its lowest level in Amtrak’s history isn’t what we hoped Amtrak had in mind,” said Ken Prendergast, director of the Ohio Corridors Campaign. The Campaign is a program of the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers (OARP).

Actually, Ohio passenger rail service levels after March 1, 2005 would tie the previous record low — from Sept. 10, 1995 to Nov. 9, 1996 — when Amtrak offered Ohioans an average of just under five trains per day (the Cardinal through Cincinnati was, and remains, thrice-weekly). That previous record low in the last 150+ years of Ohio railroading occurred after Amtrak discontinued the Toledo leg of the Chicago - Detroit Lake Cities and, ironically, the Broadway Limited through Youngstown, Akron and Fostoria. On Nov. 9, 1996, Amtrak reinstated service on the latter route with the Three Rivers.

We are not alone

Ohio isn’t the only state being affected. Amtrak will first discontinue the Pennsylvania Nov. 1, 2004 between Pittsburgh and Harrisburg. In March, the Three Rivers round trip will remain between Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Philadelphia and New York City, but the name of the train may change, as will its schedule. It will leave Pittsburgh with only one daily round trip to Philadelphia and New York City — the fewest number of trains on that route in 25 years. That reduction came despite double-digit ridership growth there in the last couple of years.

However, Amtrak said it would continue the pre-Nov. 1, 2004 level of service if the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation subsidizes one daily round trip, as it did through the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s with Amtrak’s Pennsylvania. PennDOT officials are considering Amtrak’s request, even as they and Amtrak officials agreed this past summer to start a $140 million, Harrisburg - Philadelphia improvement project that will yield 110-mph train speeds and cut up to 30 minutes from the 2-hour running time. In other words, Pittsburgh - New York City rail travel time will be reduced by 1½ hours in a few years, yet there is a chance there will be only one daily round trip over the length of that route to offer the faster trip.

“We’re trying to determine the impact of Amtrak’s decision,” PennDOT spokesman Kirk Wilson said in a Pittsburgh Post-Gazette article. “Once we determine our position, we’ll meet with them again.”

Lemons to lemonade

If PennDOT does decide to restore the second daily round trip, Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) officials expressed an interest in having it extended to Cleveland — via Youngstown — as part of the first stage of developing the Cleveland - Pittsburgh Corridor. ORDC’s “Ohio Hub Plan” (see second article on Page One) envisions six to eight daily round trips on this corridor, offering trip times of no more than two hours.

“(Ohio) ridership on the Three Rivers was minimal, barely over 12,000 passengers in 2003, which reflects the fact Amtrak considers Ohio the railroad equivalent of a ‘fly-over’ state,” said James Seney, executive director of the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC).

“That’s why virtually all of our Amtrak service rolls through in the middle of the night,” he said. “That’s not going to generate good ridership numbers or revenue from fares. The real solution to the lack of ridership is daytime corridor trains as we’re proposing in ORDC’s Ohio Hub Plan. Our plan projects ridership well beyond what we’re seeing today on any of Amtrak’s existing trains.”

Amtrak’s Three Rivers route

To be discontinued...

Amtrak’s Three Rivers route route

(Not all stations shown)

Ken Prendergast map

The ‘missing link’

To open the Youngstown route for Cleveland - Pittsburgh trains, and include an Akron-area stop in Ravenna, restoration of the “Ravenna Connection” would be required. Costing perhaps $5 million to build, the Ravenna Connection would restore a 4,500-foot-long “missing link” between Norfolk Southern Corp.’s Cleveland Line and CSX Inc.’s New Castle Subdivision. There were actually two track connections here at one time, but the last was ripped out in the mid-1980s after the collapse of Youngstown’s steel industry.

Condominiums now under construction next to one of the former track connections may present complications. The other abandoned connection has bad sight lines for motorists crossing it at grade on Diamond Street. If a station were built on the other side of Diamond Street from the new condos, however, it could be a marketing opportunity for the housing developer. Discussions with the developer are planned.

A $130 million facelift

When Cleveland - Pittsburgh service was first studied in 1984 by Amtrak, PennDOT and ORDC’s predecessor agencies, the engineering analysis showed that costly and risky "fly-over'state," it need not just make a

And then there was one....

In 1984, when Cleveland - Youngstown - Pittsburgh Amtrak service was

...
first studied, the following track and signal construction projects were identified as necessary for removing barriers to rail passenger service. Only one missing link remains — the "Ravenna Connection":

- Build direct connection track from Cleveland Amtrak station to Pittsburgh route (built in 1990 for $2.4 million);
- Convert all "crossovers" between NS' two main tracks from hand-switches to powered ones between Cleveland and Ravenna to raise train speeds (work finished in 2001 for $10.5 million);
- Replace 1930s-era signal system with satellite-based rail traffic control on NS between Cleveland and Ravenna to reduce freight congestion (built in 2001 for about $30 million);
- Restore "Ravenna Connection" track between NS and CSX mainlines for $5 million (this is the only previously identified capital project that remains un-built, and prevents the direct routing of any Cleveland - Youngstown rail traffic);
- Upgrade Youngstown Center Street Junction for higher train speeds (built in 1993 for an estimated $10 million);
- Construct track connection in New Castle, PA between CSX and Conrail—now NS (built in 1994 by Amtrak for $2.6 million);
- Reinstall track-side signal system and convert all hand-switches to powered ones on NS between New Castle and Rochester, PA to raise train speeds (under construction in 2004 for about $13 million);
- Replace aging viaducts on NS between New Castle and Rochester, PA to raise train speeds (under construction in 2004 for an estimated $20 million).

**SOURCES:** Railroad and governmental documents, news articles and interviews.

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**Hamilton’s flag stop becomes a red flag**

HAMILTON — Starting Nov. 1, Amtrak's Cardinal will make stops in this city only when a passenger has made a reservation to get on or off there, or if a passenger stands on the track-side platform and waves at the locomotive engineer. OARP and city officials are concerned this development could eventually cause Amtrak to drop the station stop altogether.

Such "flag stops" are usually reserved for tiny towns in rural locations, such as Thurmond, WV, on the Cardinal route. It’s population? Seven. By comparison, Hamilton’s population is 60,000, located on Cincinnati’s outskirts. Yet, its 2003 Amtrak ridership of 1,451 was the lowest in Ohio. Of the 33 stops along the Cardinal’s 921-mile route, only six cities have less ridership. The combined population of those cities is less than 40,000, according to the Journal-News in Hamilton.

Both the eastbound and westbound trains are scheduled to serve Hamilton a few minutes on either side of 4 a.m. Plus, the trains stop there only three days a week — Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Another factor in the low ridership is the poor condition of the CSX-owned station, located at the corner of Martin Luther King Boulevard and Henry Street.

"My understanding is that Amtrak is not content with the condition of that station," said Ralph Reigelspöger, Hamilton's director of public works, in a Sept. 9 Journal-News article. "We’re looking at grants to have a new platform constructed. They (Amtrak) might end stops there altogether and we want to keep all modes of transportation open."

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Kevin McChord photo
OMP making tracks to better policies

By Brian Williams
OARP Administrative Director

The Ohio Mobility Partners is finally mobile. We’re on the road to transportation reform. It is not yet a major force in steering Ohio transportation policy toward a multi-modal future, but it is on track to do so. Reporters at major Ohio newspapers and radio and TV stations now are aware of the Ohio Mobility Partners’ (OMP) agenda, and letters and op-ed columns in newspapers around the state have touted OMP’s goals.

And now we’ve taken our message to Governor Bob Taft, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and to state legislators in a five-page response to “Access Ohio,” the long-range plan being put forth by ODOT. The plan threatens Ohio’s economic future with a narrow vision that continues the costly over-reliance on highways and neglects the rails, waterways and other modes that could take pressure off roads and give Ohioans the balanced transportation system they want.

A variety of recent and ongoing initiatives are expected to make OMP far more influential in the coming year:

- OMP has applied for a capacity-building grant from a national foundation that would allow Dominic Liberatore and policy analyst Brian Williams to focus more time on the OMP cause. That would, at last, make OMP more than a part-time organization that exists primarily on paper.
- OMP has applied for funding to hold a mid-winter, alternative-transportation lobbying day and rally at the Ohio Statehouse in February. OMP may also partner with another organization to bring in a national speaker and the picture of transit to a wider audience.

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission and John Gideon of the Central Ohio Bicycle Advocacy Coalition, among others.

OMP also coordinated with OARP’s Corridors Campaign to help push the Ohio Hub passenger rail plan that will be unveiled this fall by the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC). Officials at ORDC, such as executive director James R. Seney, can serve to remind us to be realistic and pragmatic, rather than expect change to come too quickly. At the same time, OMP and OARP can enlist an army of alternative-transportation supporters who can help advance passenger rail — as well as transit, waterways, bicycling and small airports — in Ohio.

While OMP’s greatest accomplishment in recent months was planning, writing and promoting its response to the ODOT plan, its biggest challenge right now is to make sure Ohio’s governor and legislators are well-informed on the deficiencies of the plan.

“Access Ohio” is a two-volume, nearly 300-page document. Its full name — “Access Ohio 2004-2030: Statewide Transportation Plan” — suggests it is intended to be both long-term and comprehensive across the state. Indeed, ODOT’s planners show a thorough understanding of Ohio’s regions, rural and urban challenges, social and economic changes and the necessity of promoting under-used modes of transportation to take the pressure off an overextended highway network.

But the plan’s recommendations seem to ignore all the warnings issued throughout the document. Rather than launch a bold crusade to increase the capacity of the state’s entire public and private transportation infrastructure, the plan is a timid expansion of the current, unbalanced transportation system.

Ohio is at an economic and social crossroads. The continued movement of jobs and homes outward from cities, the shift of business to urban fringes, the increase in service jobs with non-traditional hours, the growth in valuable but road-clogging distribution jobs and the aging of Baby Boomers are just some of the factors putting increased pressure on an already over-burdened highway system, according to ACCESS OHIO, the Ohio Department of Transportation’s 2004-2030 statewide transportation plan. The report said:

“In the absence of any major national socio-economic change, technology changes, changes in business practices, or populations patterns in Ohio, it is projected that preferences for travel by motor vehicle by both passenger and freight will continue. The implications are for increased demand on Ohio’s roadways which, if no action is taken, will result in additional wear and tear on roadway surfaces and increased congestion for longer periods of time.”

Unfortunately, ACCESS OHIO does not offer a plan to avoid those implications or to address the great changes that are defining 21st Century Ohio.

It’s as if the foundation has crumbled and the state wants to redecorate the house.

ACCESS OHIO is a thoughtful, intelligent and compr
A separate event, possibly in conjunction with OARP’s annual meeting in May, would bring in a noted advocacy “guru” to energize citizens, as opposed to lobbyists and organization professionals, and let them know how they can make the case to their elected officials for sensible transportation policies.

A fundraiser was intended as much to generate attention to OMP and its cause as to raise some dollars. It was in Columbus Aug. 10 at Ben & Jerry’s Ice Cream in the Arena District, and attracted about 50 people. It mobilized some OMP supporters and brought in fresh faces attracted by a display of the Central Ohio Transit Authority’s new bicycle racks.

OMP also made plans to meet with the statewide Council of Regional Governments at its September meeting to ask their support of the multi-modal agenda.

The response to ODOT’s “Access Ohio” plan is OMP’s biggest accomplishment this summer. Through much of August, Mr. Williams reviewed the enormous document — along with ODOT’s public surveys and Gov. Taft’s Jobs and Progress plan — and consulted with Mr. Liberatore, new OARP At-Large Director Kimberly Gibson of the

tracking your leaders’ views on Amtrak funding

Want to know if your elected leaders support full funding for passenger rail in Ohio and across the nation? This past summer, three letters were circulated — one each for governors, U.S. senators, and U.S. congresspersons — for them to add their signatures, indicating their support for $1.8 billion in federal funding for Amtrak in 2005. Ohio Gov. Bob Taft was one of 19 governors signing on. Sen. Mike DeWine was one of 51 colleagues signing the senatorial letter, yet Sen. George Voinovich declined. And, in the U.S. House of Representatives, 200 congresspersons signed their own letter. Here is a list of Ohio congresspersons and whether they signed the pro-Amtrak letter:

They signed the letter... Brown (D-Elyria), Jones (D-Cleveland), Kaptur (D-Toledo), Kucinich (D-Cleveland), LaTourette (R-Painesville), Ney (R-Bellaire), Ryan (D-Niles), Strickland (D-Portsmouth);

They didn’t sign the letter... Boehner (R-Hamilton), Chabot* (R-Cincinnati), Gillmor* (R-Port Clinton), Hobson (R-Springfield), Oxley* (R-Findlay), Portman (R-Cincinnati), Pryce (R-Columbus), Regula (R-Canton), Tiberi* (R-Columbus), Turner (R-Dayton).

Names marked with * also voted for a House amendment in Sept. 2003 to eliminate Amtrak.

OMP thanks those who signed the letters and supported our passenger rail network.
Ohio Mobility Partners to the Ohio Department of Transportation’s “Access Ohio” plan exists alongside a variety of other underfunded and underused modes that occasionally link up — but with little centralized authority or strategies to link them.

"As the plan notes throughout: “It is important to acknowledge that in most cases ODOT funding is strictly limited to roadway construction, maintenance, and related improvements. ODOT is prohibited from using motor fuel tax revenues for transit or rail projects.”

But what role does ODOT play in seeking and advocating other sources of funding for other modes of transportation? Should ODOT argue to other policymakers that it needs new funding sources for an integrated transportation system? Or is ODOT’s role merely to make piecemeal improvements to the status quo?

Sadly, the answer may be in Gov. Bob Taft’s 2003 Jobs & Progress Plan: Ohio’s Transportation Improvement Strategy. In eight lengthy pages — and contrary to the wishes of Ohioans in ODOT’s own survey — it took the state only one fleeting sentence to dismiss waterways, airways and railroads as somebody else’s problem because they are on private property:

“Ohio also has an exceptional rail, water and aviation network, although those are privately owned and not under state management.”

Using that argument, the Ohio Department of Development should not bother with any aid to private industry, which operates on private property and with private capital.

parking spaces, a motor vehicle rental fee or a vehicle lease-purchase tax. It would be used in part to bring some form of transit to all 88 Ohio counties (up from 59 today) and improve service to a “Grade D” level.

RAIL

State funding for rail is primarily through the Ohio Rail Development Commission, which works to preserve freight lines and is pushing an “Ohio Hub” passenger-rail plan that includes a Cleveland-Columbus-Dayton-Cincinnati corridor (which would extend north to Buffalo and Toronto) and an east-west corridor through Cleveland. The state also has $200 million for grade-crossing improvements.

Still, state rail infrastructure spending in Ohio is 47th among the 48 contiguous states, ahead of only Kentucky.

Like all other non-highway transportation in Ohio, ORDC does not get Ohio fuel tax funds. It is, according to ACCESS OHIO, “primarily funded through the General Revenue fund and State Special Revenue revolving loan fund to support its rail acquisition, rehabilitation and economic development programs. ORDC is allocated Federal Highway Administration funds from ODOT to perform its grade-crossing safety functions.”

ACCESS OHIO proposes that ODOT assist in acquiring property for future passenger rail and to use TRAC funding for future links between urban light rail and inter-city traffic fatalities are pedestrians or bicyclists, but 0.0 percent of safety funds and programs are aimed at them) but does not propose funding or sufficient programs to overcome that imbalance.

Instead it offers to “support” programs that “promote, educate and enforce rules of the road by bicyclists and pedestrians” — but not motorists. The report notes that a majority of fatalities are the fault of pedestrians and bicyclists. But what that and other sources fail to note is the daily, universal anecdotal evidence in any Ohio city of tragedies avoided by pedestrians and bicyclists who manage to get out of the way of aggressive drivers flouting — or ignorant of — the law.

PORTS/WATERWAYS

The Ohio River System moves more tonnage per year than the Panama Canal — yet operates at only 30 percent of its capacity, according to ACCESS OHIO. Including Lake Erie ports, shipping on Ohio waterways is one-third capacity along 716 mile. of navigable waters bounding the state — making Ohio the 4th largest U.S. maritime state in terms of total tonnage moved.

The report notes the efficiency of water transportation, which “reduces highway congestion and deterioration. One fully loaded barge carries the equivalent of 58 trucks. One tow (15 barges) carries the equivalent of 870 trucks.”
Transportation policy is fundamentally about jobs: creating them and getting people to them. But Jobs and Progress – like most of ACCESS OHIO – is limited to highway-related jobs and little else. It ignores the fact that railroads, highways, airports, and even bikeways also create and sustain jobs and progress. Both documents focus in large part on 26 "macro" highway corridors that need to be maintained and expanded in all corners of the state.

The effort to increase plans and funding for alternative modes of transportation is not in any way an attempt to increase resources for those essential highway corridors. Rather, it is a call for greater balance and to make realizations available to all Ohio citizens and businesses.

Toward that end, here is a summary and assessment of ACCESS OHIO’s plans for alternative modes of transportation:

**TRANSIT**

ACCESS OHIO reports that Ohio ranks 10th in the number of public transportation passengers, but only 24th in receiving federal discretionary grants for transit. It also notes ODOT support of Ohio transit systems has dropped from $30 million to $18 million in the last two years – a time when it said the fleets of Ohio’s bus systems are aging and in need of replacement.

Transit spending in Ohio now is back to 1980 levels – even lower when adjusted for inflation, according to the Public Transit Association. Ohio is 28th in the country in per capita spending on transit – less than 1/10th of spending in Michigan and also behind such states as North Dakota and Wyoming.

ODOT must ask for transit money out of the state’s General Revenue Fund every two years because transit in Ohio has no dedicated tax, as the highways have. Transit systems may apply to ODOT’s Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) for major projects funded through federal gas tax, but must have a 20 percent local match.

ACCESS OHIO has a goal of finding a dedicated source funding for transit – possibly from an excise fee on

**BICYCLING/PEDESTRIAN**

Thirteen years after the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 revolutionized transportation funding, and six years after its successor transportation bill further pushed funding for non-highway modes of travel, Ohio is one of five states that has yet to meet any of the TEA-21 benchmark criteria identified by National Center for Biking and Walking. Few states did well in the center’s survey of 49 states and the District of Columbia, but Ohio was one of the worst.

ACCESS OHIO touts Ohio’s 5,000 miles of trails and bikeways, but more than one-fourth of that total is the Buckeye Trail, which was privately developed. And much of the remaining total is disjointed segments serving localized areas scattered widely across the map. They were not developed through ODOT and have little to do with any coordinated transportation policy.

The plan notes that “No data currently is available to accurately determine the amount of bicycle and pedestrian travel occurring in Ohio or the trends affecting them. Without this information, it is difficult to measure changes in the proportion of non-motorized travel.” That raises a question: Why doesn’t ODOT do a study?

Federal law is explicit that, at minimum, states consider bicycles and pedestrians in planning for all new and improved transportation facilities. ODOT does not have a bicycle/pedestrian plan as part of ACCESS OHIO, but will separately develop a bicycle “policy” that will identify the types of roads around the state that it considers most conducive to bicycle routes. There will be no state map identifying desired routes.

As for bicycle and pedestrian safety, ACCESS OHIO has little mention of the national Safe Routes to School effort or Fair Share for Safety programs. It does note that bicycle and pedestrian accidents account for a disproportionate share of fatalities and serious injuries (7.8 percent of Ohio

**AIRPORTS**

Jet fuel is not subject to Ohio’s motor-fuel tax because air travel provides a public transportation purpose. But airport users pay $23 million in state taxes on other fuel, aircraft sales and leasing, aircraft parts and labor which goes into the General Revenue Fund (not a dedicated air or transportation fund). In return, airports get back $2 million split among 125 mostly small airports – far short of the $10 million a year that ACCESS OHIO says those airports should have for essential improvements.

ACCESS OHIO calls for dedicated funding for those airports, and suggests using an unspecified larger portion of the taxes generated by them. It also calls for road improvements and better inter-modal connections at airports.

**CONCLUSION**

It is tempting to simply criticize ACCESS OHIO for not giving greater importance and resources to alternative modes such as public transit, passenger rail, pedestrian safety, bicycle access, waterways and small airports or to programs such as Safe Routes to School. But that would be a bit unfair, given the broad complexity of ODOT’s responsibilities and the fact that it exists in a political environment of tight state budgets, legislators disinclined toward change and constituents focused on automobiles.

Nonetheless, Ohio must meet the need of changing demographics (a rapidly aging population), an ever-dispersed economy (the movement of jobs to suburbs beyond the reach of urban workers and efficient transit) and the growing congestion of highways in an automobile-dominated system. Keeping jobs and people in Ohio requires new thinking on the part of political leaders and transportation planners.

View the DRAFT “Access Ohio” document online at:

http://www.dot.state.oh.us/planning/File%20Directory/AccessOhio.htm
Ohio Rail Roundup

Toledo railway not terminal — Four different entities have pledged a total of $1.1 million toward the acquisition of an 11-mile segment of the Toledo Terminal Railroad to preserve the right of way for future transit use and a hiking/biking path. The rail line travels south from near the Ohio-Michigan state line to the city of Maumee. Envisioned is light-rail line or a busway as part of a technology corridor passing west of downtown Toledo, linking the University of Toledo and the Medical College of Ohio. Pledging funding are the University of Toledo Foundation ($1 million), Toledo Area Metroparks ($1 million), City of Toledo ($50,000) and Wood County Park District ($50,000). Segments of the rail line still used for freight service would remain intact.

The ins and outs at COTA — The August resignation of Ronald Barnes as chief executive officer of the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) and the COTA board’s selection of William Lhota as his replacement should bring more local confidence in COTA. Such confidence, many say, is important for when the Columbus transit authority puts a local funding share for the proposed North Corridor light-rail line on the Franklin County ballot. Mr. Barnes resigned after admitting that he and a former COTA board member broke Ohio ethics laws involving an improper consulting contract. Mr. Lhota has served as chairman of the Columbus Regional Airport Authority, American Electric Power and the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce.

Politicians for breakfast — OARP, Ohio Rail Development Commission and Toledo Metropolitan Area Planning Commission, has sung the praises of the Toledo Corridor project. OARP plans to work closely with local government entities in the area on the project. Local government entities along the corridor are planning to request a meeting with representatives from the commission to discuss the project’s potential to improve the corridor. The commission is planning to meet with local government entities in the area to discuss the project’s potential to improve the corridor.

A new lease on life — Central Railroad of Indianapolis, a RailAmerica Corp. subsidiary, has leased 276 miles of CSX’s Ft. Wayne Line from Crestline, Ohio to Tolleston, IN, near Chicago. The lease will ensure the former route of Amtrak’s Capitol and Broadway limited remains an active railroad corridor. The portion west of Dunkirk, OH is proposed to be used for Columbus - Lima - Ft. Wayne - Chicago passenger rail service and become part of the state’s Ohio Hub planning process. Meanwhile, another Rail-America subsidiary, the Indiana & Ohio Railroad, has acquired CSX’s Midland Subdivision between Columbus and Cincinnati. However, there are no plans to use that corridor for Ohio Hub passenger trains since the line bypasses Dayton and Springfield.

Give credit to railroads — The U.S. Senate approved the Jumpstart Our Business Strength Act (Senate bill 1637) which, among $143 billion worth of other components in the bill, includes tax-credit financing provisions for passenger and short-line freight railroads. Over four years, $165 million would be distributed to states using a formula that could give Ohio up to $15 million for passenger rail improvements, leveraged by a 50 percent state match. However, the rail tax credits weren’t in the House-passed version (House Resolution 4520). A conference committee will decide what stays and goes in the final bill. Ask your congressperson today to support S.1637’s rail tax credits.

Mark Carlson photo
Looking east down the Ft. Wayne Line toward the CSX crossing, as seen from Lima’s rebuilt passenger depot.

Gibson named to OARP board

The last vacancy on OARP’s board of directors was capably filled in August when board members appointed Kimberly Gibson to fill an at-large post.

Mrs. Gibson, of Columbus, is the regional growth strategy program manager for the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission which distributes state and federal funds to metro-area infrastructure projects. She has been an advocate for public transportation and rail services in the region. She has also been a member of the board of directors for the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce and the Ohio Chamber of Commerce. She is also a member of the Ohio Association of Regional Rail Authorities.

OARP considers phone bank

OARP’s board of directors is considering using an automated phone-bank service to notify OARP members of pressing matters that require a time-sensitive response. Such pressing matters might include an Amtrak funding vote in Congress, a state funding vote in Columbus, a proposed loss of rail service, etc.

Under the proposal, the phone-bank service would provide pre-recorded information about why the call is being made, and what is being asked of them. Calls would be limited to emergency matters only, last less than 30 seconds and occur, at most, four times per year. If no one is available to answer the call, the automated service would leave a message on the member’s answering machine or voice mail. If a member decides he or she no longer wants to receive phone-bank calls, he or she can opt-out of them.

The board is having a lively discussion regarding the phone-bank proposal. Recognizing that some OARP members might consider a phone-bank call intrusive
Hub planning picks up momentum

"Ohio Hub" from page one ——

has to be conducted. Outreach is already underway on several fronts. ORDC has started the Jobs Through Rail Coalition, which is being managed by Brandon Lynaugh of Strategic Public Partners. Mr. Lynaugh’s name may sound familiar to some, as he was recently employed by the ultra-conservative Buckeye Policy Institute, which has spoken out against passenger rail. Mr. Lynaugh has since come to appreciate the economic development potential of expanded, modern rail systems and is contacting major employers throughout the state to encourage their support for the ORDC’s efforts.

Others are getting involved, not the least of which is the Ohio Corridors Campaign, which has been conducting strategy sessions with community leaders from throughout the state. These are being held in Columbus, hosted by the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission. The Ohio Corridors Campaign continues its liaison relationship with the national Rail Infrastructure Coalition, created by the Railway Supply Institute, and is developing a relationship with GO21, a Northern Virginia-based organization seeking more public investments in rail infrastructure.

Also involved in outreach efforts is OARP’s Ohio Mobility Partners, the Midwest High Speed Rail Association, the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments’ Passenger Rail Committee, plus environmental organizations and faith-based groups seeking revitalization of Ohio’s inner cities.

But the big push for outreach and education will occur this November and December, when the ORDC will conduct a series of eight public meetings around the state to provide information about, and seek public input on the Ohio Hub plan. Cities or regions where the meetings will likely be held include: Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Cincinnati, Toledo-Lima, Akron-Canton, Youngstown-Alliance, and Galion-Mansfield. More details will follow.

OARP members are strongly encouraged to attend these meetings and to speak out as individual, concerned citizens. OARP board members, staff and regional coordinators will be present to serve as association spokespersons for any media that is present. Plus, OARP members and other passenger rail supporters will have the added benefit of being able to hear more about the Ohio Hub plan from ORDC’s Mr. Seney, who will speak at the OARP Fall Meeting in Toledo (see back page for meeting registration information, or visit www.oarp.com on the web).

Coinciding with the Ohio Hub study’s release, OARP will publish a special edition of the Ohio Passenger Rail News to detail what’s in the study, why Ohio needs a better rail system, and what citizens can do to help make it happen. The special newsletter will be an important tool you can use in communicating with friends and associates about the need for the development of rail in Ohio and for recruiting new OARP members. Extra copies will be printed and supplied upon request. Or, you can pick up extra copies at the ORDC’s public meetings.

This is already a busy, exciting time, and will become more so in the coming months. Let’s make it happen!
PLEASE PATRONIZE THESE AUTHORIZED TRAVEL AGENTS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE OHIO ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS:

Akron/Stow  
Parkside Travel U S A  (330) 688-3334  
Joel Brown

Alliance  
Alliance AAA Travel  (330) 821-2323  
(330) 456-6315

Canal Fulton  
Massillon AAA Travel  (330) 854-6616

Cleveland  
Ohio Motorist Association/AAA Travel  (216) 606-6080

Columbus  
Ohio Automobile Club/AAA Travel  (614) 431-7823

Elyria  
Tours & Travel Service, Inc.  (440) 323-5423  
(800) 443-7789  
Mike McClister

Mansfield  
Mansfield Travel Center  (419) 756-8747  
Jay Gilbert

Massillon  
Massillon AAA Travel  (330) 833-1034  
Cheryl Anderson

Parma Heights  
A to Z Amtrak Tours  (440) 888-6666  
(800) 837-8728  
“Amtrak Al” Mladineo

Piqua  
Miami County Auto Club/AAA Travel  (937) 773-3753  
Robert Slyker

Sandusky  
Sandusky Travel Service, Inc.  (419) 626-4633

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: Dave Shreiner, Treasurer; 9705 Township Road 301; Millersburg OH 44654. 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. 2003

Directory of the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers

Toll-free OARP telephone number: 888 / 488-8439  
Visit OARP on the web!  www.oarp.com

OARP Regional Co-ordinators

NORTHEAST REGION  
Cleveland  James Stone  216 / 438-5711

Elyria  Phil Copeland  440 / 365-7970

Warren  G. Douglas Hudson  330 / 544-3203

NORTHWEST REGION  
Toledo  Bill Gill  419 / 536-1924

Lima  Vacant

Mansfield/Galion  Vacant

Sandusky  Steve La Conte  419 / 668-6225

SOUTHWEST REGION  
Cincinnati  W. Mike Weber  513 / 891-9251

Dayton  Linda Leas  937 / 253-9448

Clermont  Ronald D. Garner  513 / 444-3098

Springfield  Vacant

CENTRAL REGION  
Columbus  Robert Brown  614-466-1782

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PAST-PRESIDENT  Ed D’Amato  ejdamato@sbcglobal.net  PO Box 841  Berea 44017-0841  330 / 256-7218

VICE-PRESIDENT  Mark Carlson  mdcarlson@core.com  479 Humiston Drive  Bay Village 44140-3017  440 / 263-OARP

SECRETARY  Larry Robertson  robertson.9@osu.edu  2022 Langham Road  Columbus 43221-1914  614 / 459-0359

TREASURER  Donna Shreiner  dshreinerhome@valkyrie.net  9705 Township Road 301  Millersburg 44654  330 / 276-7201

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Join the 3-C, CTC Corridor Campaigns

Be a part of focused campaigns to bring advanced passenger trains to the Cleveland-Columbus-Dayton-Cincinnati (3-C) Corridor and/or the Cleveland-Toledo-Chicago (CTC) Corridor.

Members of these campaigns will receive the Ohio Passenger Rail News on a quarterly basis, plus a twice-monthly, interactive Ohio Passenger Rail News eEdition sent by e-mail, as well as special concerns for action, use of campaign staff (to be expanded soon) and other benefits.

An exclusive membership dues structure, identical to both campaigns, has been instituted (seen at right).

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Transportation Assoc.
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E-mail: narp@narprail.org
Web: www.narprail.org

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Mike Whims
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Wixom MI 48393
moitranzit@aol.com

3-C Corridor Campaign

Circle the campaign or campaigns and check the membership level(s) you are joining:

3-C Corridor Campaign

CTC Corridor Campaign

$50-99

$50-99

$100-249

$100-249

$250-499

$250-499

$500-999

$500-999

$1,000-4,999

$1,000-4,999

$5,000+

$5,000+

CORRIDOR CAMPAIGN MEMBERSHIP FORM (please photocopy and mail)

Name.................................

Title....................................

Organization............................

Address................................

City..........................State......ZIP....

Telephone (..........)

Make checks payable to either the “3-C Corridor Campaign” or the “CTC Corridor Campaign” and mailed with this coupon to:

David Shreiner, OARP Treasurer
9705 Township Road 301
Millersburg, OH 44654
Cincinnati study IDs rail station site

CINCINNATI — A city-funded review of potential stations sites near downtown suggests Longworth Hall is the best location for a new facility serving proposed, fast passenger trains to Chicago and Cleveland. However, rail access is problematic for service into Kentucky, such as to Louisville or Lexington, or for Amtrak's existing Cardinal route, requiring these trains to make back-up moves.

Amtrak's existing station at Cincinnati Union Terminal was considered by the study, but was deemed to be too far from downtown. Also, passenger train access is complicated by freight congestion associated with the adjacent Queensgate Yard. While a third site, the Crossett property, is closer to downtown than Longworth Hall, it is next to Paul Brown Stadium and would suffer vehicular access problems on days when football games are held there.

Longworth Hall is a former Baltimore & Ohio Railroad warehouse, which continues to have rail access, an oversized parking area, plus additional land for more tracks, a station building and a facility for light maintenance and inspection of passenger train equipment. The site could also be served by planned commuter rail services to the northern and western suburbs. On the downside, Longworth Hall is separated from downtown by major highways and the city doesn’t own the land. OARP advocates that the city purchase the property to preserve it for use as a station option.

The study was conducted by the city's department of transportation and engineering, at the request of Cincinnati City Council. Nine locations throughout the city were considered, but only three made the final cut — Longworth Hall, Cincinnati Union Terminal and the Crossett site. The study's findings were presented to city council in July.

OARP is back online!

OARP needs your help in getting more members of the Ohio Congressional Delegation to sign on to a bipartisan letter generated by Ohio Congressman Steve LaTourette (R-Plainville) and Dennis Kucinich (D-Cleveland). We need to contact your representatives and ask that they sign on. A copy of the letter appears below.

The letter, asking Amtrak to serve Ohio better, began circulating among the Ohio Congressional Delegation earlier this week. Already, several delegation members have agreed to sign on. If you find that your representative has already agreed to sign on, be sure to thank them.

When contacting your representatives, phone calls, faxes and email are best (in that order). Letters to district offices are OK, but will take time. Do not send letters to their Capital Hill offices, as envelopes are security screened and could take months to reach them. A quick way to get Ohio Congressional contact information is to dial the 800 number for a list of members. Then, call on the name of your Congressman to get their web site. Each site has a link for contact information.

OARP Fall Membership Meeting

9:30am–1pm, Saturday, Nov. 6 ~ Toledo Amtrak Station
Grand Lobby (3rd floor) – M. L. King Jr. Plaza

Be there for the first public release of
The Ohio Hub rail plan
by James Seney, Exec. Director
Ohio Rail Development Commission

Also, discussion of OARP's response to
Three Rivers loss/new services?
Plus transit/transportation issues

From I-75 South bound:
I-75 South to Collingwood Blvd.
(Exit 202B).
Turn right onto Collingwood Blvd.
Follow Bend onto Newton St.

From I-75 North bound:
I-75 North to Collingwood Blvd.
(Exit 201A). Turn right on Erie St.
and follow bend onto Newton St.

After the meeting, have lunch at the famous Tony Packo's restaurant, visit the Toledo Art Museum, the Center of Glass and Glass House restaurant.
OARP has a new, professional Web site, thanks to the design efforts of Andrea Beight of 2TechChicks. The site can be found using several addresses: www.oarp.com, www.oarprail.org and www.OhioansForPassengerRail.com.

Not only does the site describe the association, its two programs (Ohio Mobility Partners and Ohio Corridors Campaign) and our organizational mission, it is also interactive. Visitors can join the association via a secure PayPal link on the Web site, renew their membership, make a donation, or register for meetings and activities. All new action alerts, press releases and news items are posted on the home page and can also be found in the site's archives.

There is an “advocacy tools” section, featuring sample letters, plus links to Congressional and State House Web sites where members can find out who their legislators are and how to contact them. Speaking of links, OARP’s new site has lots of other links that are worth exploring. Just as important, many other organizations and agencies have agreed to link their Web pages to OARP’s. Lastly, OARP is pursuing an arrangement with Google for free advertising that will direct more visitors to our site.

Calendar of Events/Meetings

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

October 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<th>Address</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Columbus Local Meeting</td>
<td>9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Grandview Hts Public Library</td>
<td>1685 West First Avenue</td>
<td>Bob Boyce</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Toledo Local Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Toledo Amtrak Station</td>
<td>Central Union Plaza, Toledo</td>
<td>Bill Gill</td>
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November 2004

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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>OARP Fall Membership Mtg.</td>
<td>9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Toledo Amtrak Station</td>
<td>Central Union Plaza, Toledo</td>
<td>Beth McCray</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Columbus Local Meeting</td>
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<td>Red Door Tavern</td>
<td>1736 West 5th Avenue</td>
<td>Bob Boyce</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Toledo Local Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Toledo Amtrak Station</td>
<td>Central Union Plaza, Toledo</td>
<td>Bill Gill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Ohio Rail Development Comm.</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Riffe Center, 77 S. High Street,</td>
<td>31st Floor; Columbus</td>
<td>ORDC</td>
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December 2004

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