Major railroads support Ohio Hub Plan

"Best New Year's present Ohio could get" says rail commission director

COLUMBUS — If a passenger rail plan can get a Hollywood movie-style review, the Ohio Rail Development Commission's (ORDC) Ohio Hub Plan just got "Two thumbs way up" from two major partners in the plan.

"ORDC is to be commended for its work and vision in undertaking this ambitious initiative," said John M. Gibson, vice president of Operations Research & Planning, CSX Transportation Inc.

"A good start. It outlines a bold approach to implementing regional passenger service." said Bill Schafer, director of Corporate Affairs, Norfolk Southern Corp.

"This news is the best New Year's present Ohio could get," says ORDC Executive Director Jim Seney. "To have two of the nation's premier freight railroads make these statements is a powerful answer to those who ask 'do the railroads support the Ohio Hub Plan?' But this support didn't come without laying a solid foundation in the planning process. The railroads have been a part of planning the Ohio Hub from the very start and they have helped make it one the strongest, most innovative regional rail plans in the nation."

Mr. Seney says the two letters of support from NS and CSX doesn't mean there aren't still details to be worked out.

"After all," says Mr. Seney, "this is a little like building a swimming pool in your next-door neighbor's back yard and inviting the rest of the neighbors to swim in it. You'd better talk to your neighbor in advance and make sure not only if they're okay with your plan for their property, but that there is a significant and positive benefit in it for them."

— See "Support" on page four

Using existing railroad rights of way for fast, frequent passenger trains will require less public investment than building all-new rail infrastructure. Plus, investments coordinated with freight railroads will reduce transportation costs not only for travelers but for shippers as well, thereby making the state more attractive to new businesses. Above, on July 31, 2005 a passenger train arrives Dearborn, MI from Chicago via Norfolk Southern-owned freight tracks.
Amtrak likely to survive another year

But Ohio’s trains are threatened

By Ken Prendergast
Editor, Ohio Passenger Rail News

Unlike last year’s brutal budget battle over Amtrak, the Bush Administration is actually proposing to fund the passenger rail system for another year. But the administration’s budget request, approved as is by Congress, would still reduce funding for Amtrak operations by 30 percent. And, the fiscal year 2007 funding request comes with some strings attached.

Of the $900 million requested, $500 million is for capital funding. The administration proposes no funding for operating costs or debt service, instead requesting $400 million for “Efficiency Incentive Grants to encourage reform.” Those funds might be withheld if Amtrak fails to enact certain administration requirements and fails to “better manage all its resources, including federal and state contributions, ticket revenue, and other sources.”

Worse for Ohio, the Bush Administration wants Amtrak to phase out all of its overnight trains and restructure routes, overhaul food and beverage service, consider contracting out to private operators, and weigh labor costs against ticket revenues. Phasing out overnight runs would be bad news for Ohio since its three remaining Amtrak routes are served only by overnight trains.

For some reason, critics of overnight trains fail to understand their contribution in a time-conscious travel market. No other mode of transportation can offer the comfort, convenience and affordability of a passenger train boarding in Ohio in the late evening and arriving the next morning in a downtown area on the East Coast, for example. The alternative is to fly in the night before and pay for an expensive hotel or, worse, wake up at 4 a.m. the day of the trip to make a mid-morning meeting.

According to Railway Age magazine, Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta said the administration wants “to help Amtrak make the transition to a new and better model of intercity passenger rail.” He said that for fiscal year 2006, “we demanded reform, and over the past year, both Amtrak and the Congress have responded.” He added that the $900 million was proposed “in recognition of this progress, and with the expectation that we will see much more by the end of the fiscal year,” Railway Age reported.

For 2006, Amtrak received $1.3 billion — $490.05 million for operations, $772.2 million for capital and debt service, and $31.38 million for efficiency incentive grants. All Aboard Ohio expresses its thanks in particular to Congressmen Steve LaTourette (R-OH) for helping to change the framework of debate over Amtrak last summer on Capitol Hill.

It was a difficult battle for rail advocates to win those funds in Congress, where the annual funding battle for passenger rail services is unique in the transportation industry. All other modes have dedicated trust funds — intercity passenger trains do not. That prevents Amtrak, as it would any other private contractor the administration wishes to supplant it, from being able to plan for growth and improvement over the long term. Instead, Amtrak must devote a significant amount of resources merely to ensure its annual survival.

Last year, Mr. Mineta stumped for the administration’s reform-Amtrak agenda, which many critics countered was a smokescreen to simply eliminate it. However, there was no smokescreen in last year’s Bush Administration budget request, which clearly stated on page 243 that it hoped “Amtrak would quickly enter bankruptcy, which would likely lead to the elimination of inefficient operations and the reorganization of the railroad through bankruptcy procedures.”

— See “Amtrak” on page three
Train of Thought

from Ohio Passenger Rail News Editor
Kenneth Prendergast

It’s getting increasingly harder to get around Ohio without a car. That sentence should scare the living daylights out of the state’s political and economic power-brokers. Why? Because it’s happening at the worst possible time in light of events happening in Ohio, nationwide and around the world.

Consider the recent and ongoing retreat of Greyhound bus service from many cities nationwide. Some have lost all service, including Ohio cities as large as Canton (city population of 80,806 with 381,229 people in Stark County) and Warren (city population of 46,832 with 220,486 people in Trumbull County).

Fortunately, Canton is served by two daily Lakefront Lines bus in each direction, but Warren has just one, and operates less than daily. It does have transit bus service to Youngstown, but is very slow and threatened by cuts in state and federal funds. Steubenville, Defiance and Maumee were also kicked to the curb by Greyhound in 2005, and have no intercity public transportation left to fill the void.

Even Ohio’s college towns aren’t immune. As recently as the late 1980s, Bowling Green was served by 12 buses per day, while Kent had six. Now, Greyhound is gone from those towns. It’s part of a nationwide restructuring that left 900 cities behind, most of which have no other intercity public transportation. Kent has transit bus service to downtown Cleveland, but not as often, owing to rising fuels costs and diminishing state funds for transit.

Even where Greyhound bus service still exists, it doesn’t run as often. In the 1960s, Cleveland’s Greyhound station on Chester Avenue hosted more than 300 daily bus arrivals and departures. That’s down to about 60 today.

“Why is it all of us constantly are in motion yet mass transportation makes no money?” asked staff writer Jim Hillibish of the Canton Repository, in a Oct. 8, 2005 article. “Airlines are bankrupt. Buses and trains wouldn’t last a day without heavy infusions of our tax dollars. You cannot make a dime investing in car companies. Until recently, oil companies made more money selling chips and pop than gasoline. It’s one of the conundrums of our times.”

Ah, yes, the airlines. They’re in the fight of their lives as oil prices keep trending upward. For each dollar added to the price of a barrel of oil, $1 billion in costs is added to the airline industry, according to the International Air Transport Association. And the first victim is travel choice.

Airports in Mansfield and Youngstown no longer have commercial airline service. Other cities like Cincinnati have seen more than 150 flights, or 25 percent of the total...
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fact, all airports serving Ohio have seen their frequency of flights take a nosedive, save one. Akron-Canton Regional Airport benefits from being a cozy airport with urban sprawl pushing more population to its front door.

Indeed, the urban sprawl, built along the ever-more extensive spider web of pavement throughout Ohio, makes it difficult for bus and rail transportation to sustain their ridership and revenues, despite being more fuel efficient. Ohio’s rising taxpayer investment in more highway capacity continues those sprawling ways, spreading ever-thinner the state’s stagnant population, purchasing power and tax base to support that infrastructure.

But a wiser man than I recently asked "If the oil industry isn’t investing in adding more refinery capacity anywhere in the world, then why is the Ohio Department of Transportation investing in more highway capacity?" What the oil industry is investing in is technology to draw more oil out of existing reserves, like sticking a straw into the corners of a glass to suck out the last drops. While oil is plentiful in some parts of the world, most of it is in politically unstable countries. We’ve already grabbed much of the low-hanging fruit.

Consider the ramifications for Ohio’s economy and residents, as the Baby Boom generation ages and becomes less physically mobile. Or, low-income people in cities and rural areas who cannot afford to own reliable cars — or none at all. Or, the middle class that cannot afford to drive as often. All of that comes as Ohio ranks near the bottom in new job creation.

History tells us that if we further isolate people from participating in the economy, it increases the likelihood that unfortunate things will happen — job losses, business closures, desperation and even political instability.

It’s time for Ohio’s political and economic power-brokers to change the course of the state’s transportation policy by refocusing its investment in core cities, in urban and rural mass transit, as well as in high-speed rail. It will take courage and foresight. Unlike our diminishing travel choices, I hope those characteristics are still in abundance. They’d better be.
Economy rolls on, on rails
But railroads need infrastructure investment

By Stu Nicholson

Want to see a sign our national economy is alive and making a comeback? Come look out my office window. I did so just a few moments ago from my 15th-floor perch to see what was moving along the three railroads that crisscross just west of downtown Columbus, Ohio, at what is known as Scioto Junction.

What I saw by in the late-afternoon gloom was not at all a gloomy sight: a freight train with no less than six locomotives trailed by over 120 freight cars. They included boxcars, tank cars, gondolas carrying coils of steel, “spine” cars with loads of finished lumber, dual-level auto-racks of new cars and trucks, and hopper cars full of coal, grain or chemicals.

What’s the big deal? That train is not only typical of what we are seeing more of and more often in Ohio. But the fact we are more frequently seeing trains of this length is also a sign that our railroads are moving more and more freight. That includes everything from that new wide-screen HDTV set you just bought, to your breakfast cereal, and the components of that new car you don’t even know you’re going to buy in a couple of months. All of this is a sign of an economy that is healthy and growing.

Overall, we are seeing an increase in freight traffic across the nation and Ohio on all modes of transportation. That too is good news. And the growth in freight traffic is predicted to continue on a 20-year pace of from 50 percent to 75 percent, according to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

But the bad news is this boom in freight traffic is putting a strain on our entire transportation system, especially rail. That’s because while we as a nation have invested huge amounts of federal dollars into building world-class interstate highways and airports, compar-
Amtrak likely to survive another year

“Amtrak” from page one

Since Amtrak has no profit centers, the only logical outcome of a bankrupt Amtrak would be its dismantling, argued Senator Patricia Murray, a Washington state Democrat. Yet Mr. Mineta claimed Amtrak’s trains in the Northeast Corridor were profitable. Others have disputed this, citing Amtrak’s accounting methods assign system overhead costs at disproportionately higher levels to some routes, and lower levels to others, including the Northeast Corridor. Furthermore, Northeast Corridor trains fail to cover the costs of funding their infrastructure.

Outside of the Northeast, Amtrak relies on privately owned freight railroad tracks, especially for long-distance trains which Mr. Mineta derided as grossly expensive, using an illogical per-passenger methodology. Yet, using the travel industry’s standard measurement — per passenger-mile — long-distance trains perform better financially than many of their short-haul corridor counterparts.

Some bittersweet news came from Congress. By a 93-6 margin, the Senate last fall passed a landmark Amtrak reform bill, S.1516, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act. It would authorize giving Amtrak $11.6 billion over six years to rebuild its infrastructure and improve trains, provide for some expansion, restructure Amtrak debt, reduce its operating subsidy by 40 percent and introduce competition for certain train services. While rail advocates hailed it, Mr. Mineta said it didn’t go nearly far enough. The reform language was removed from a budget package prior to its approval by a conference committee of both houses. Efforts are underway to pass the legislation as a stand-alone bill.

All of the fighting between Amtrak management, its board and the Bush administration came to a head on Nov. 9. Amtrak’s widely regarded President David Gunn was fired by the company’s board of directors. Amtrak Chief Engineer David Hughes was named acting president and chief executive officer. After only a few years on the job, Mr. Gunn earned praises for reducing Amtrak’s expenses, trimming its workforce, reducing debt, increasing revenues, elevating productivity and pushing ridership to record levels. That record of accomplishment caused Amtrak Board Chairman David Laney, only a few months earlier, to label Mr. Gunn as “brilliant.” Why was Mr. Gunn fired? Quite simply, it was his outspoken nature.

“The board is just a puppet for the (Bush) administration,” Mr. Gunn said. “I was standing in the way of their plans to dismantle a company.”

Why is the administration continuing its all-out assault on Amtrak? And why do some of their recommendations run counter to the advice of the best rail-industry experts. Consider what happened at the 12th Annual Passenger Trains on Freight Railroads Conference, sponsored by Railway Age magazine, in October in Washington D.C.

There, a representative of the U.S. Department of Transportation spoke about the administration’s plan to reform Amtrak, and mentioned the input it had received from the rail industry about its plans. He was followed on the dais by Eugene Skoropowski, managing director of the Capitol Corridor Service in California, who asked the room packed with key railroad officials for a show of hands if the administration had sought their input on Amtrak. No hands were raised.

The lack of understanding didn’t stop there. Mr. Mineta traveled last fall to New York City to reiterate that the administration is not out to destroy Amtrak. He chose Manhattan to make that reassurance because, in his words, New York is the nation’s “most passenger train-oriented city.” And, he noted the Northeast Corridor’s popularity with travelers.

So, how did Mr. Mineta get from Washington D.C. to New York City and back? He flew. Why? “Because he did not have four or five hours on either end of his schedule to travel by train,” said Robert Johnson, Mr. Mineta’s spokesman. A quick check of Amtrak’s Web site would have shown them that the Acela Express takes less than three hours each way — faster than the door-to-door travel time of flying and driving into Manhattan.

Clearly, rail advocates have a big task ahead in 2006. We have the benefit of information, and can beat passenger train skeptics at that game. But, we shouldn’t keep that information to ourselves. We must use the tools at our disposal. Write letters to the editor or “Op-Ed” columns in your local newspaper to frame the debate. Start an Internet blog. Look for Internet urban and transportation issues forums and get the discussion going. Get resolutions passed by your city council. Frame the debate. Don’t wait for the opposition to frame it for you. This is your cause.

“Quote”

“David Gunn was the best President Amtrak had in a long time. His firing, which was engineered by the White House, was a travesty. It suggests that the current Administration is out not to reform Amtrak but to destroy passenger trains in this country.”

— Paul M. Wayrich
Chairman, Free Congress Foundation
December 3, 2005
Major Railroads Support Ohio Hub Plan

"Support" from page one

In both letters, the two railroads, which are also the dominant freight railroads that serve Ohio, say details need to be worked out as to route alignments, infrastructure needs (bridge, tunnel, track and signal improvements) and the potential impact of having six to eight high-speed passenger trains a day operating in the freight railroad-owned corridors.

"The potential benefit for the freight railroads is a major reason we were able to bring them to the planning table in the first place," says Mr. Seney. "They have basically told us that running passenger trains on their corridors can be done, as long as there is no interference with their freight trains."

In fact, he said the Ohio Hub Plan calls for reducing or eliminating many of Ohio's railroad "bottlenecks" in or near the large urban areas and upgrading tracks, bridges and signals so both passenger and freight rail traffic can move faster and in greater numbers than they are now able to do.

"This is absolutely necessary if we are to grow Ohio's economy," Mr. Seney added. "The end result of the Ohio Hub Plan must be positive for all parties involved, because increasing the ability to move more people and freight makes our state a stronger competitor for new business and jobs, and brings prosperity with it."

From Norfolk Southern Corp.

Dear Jim,

We have reviewed the Ohio and Lake Erie Regional Rail Ohio Hub Study Draft Technical Report and the Ohio and Lake Erie Regional Rail Hub Study Draft Technical Report for Regional Transportation Planning Organizations.

We have reviewed the Ohio Regional Rail Hub Study Draft Technical Report and the Lake Erie Regional Rail Hub Study Draft Technical Report for Regional Transportation Planning Organizations.

We are pleased to see that the study recognizes the importance of rail transportation in Ohio and the potential benefits of a regional rail hub. We support the goals of the Ohio Hub and the Lake Erie Hub and believe that these hubs can serve as a catalyst for economic development and improved connectivity in the regions.

However, we also recognize the challenges associated with the development of such a hub and the need for careful planning and coordination. We believe that the study's proposals are well thought out and offer a promising framework for further discussion and action. We are committed to working with our partners to ensure that the Ohio Hub and the Lake Erie Hub are developed in a way that maximizes their benefits for the region.

Sincerely,

Mr. Seney

From CSX Transportation Inc.

Dear Jim,

It was a pleasure to meet with you and your staff here in Jacksonville on September 13 to review the Ohio Hub Study and the next steps to advance the investigation of this effort to create high-speed rail corridors in Ohio that eventually would be linked to other regional transit systems in the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic regions.

We appreciate the opportunity to discuss the potential benefits of developing such a system and the need for further study and planning. We believe that a high-speed rail system in Ohio could provide significant benefits for the state, including improved connectivity, reduced travel times, and increased economic development.

However, we also recognize that there are many challenges associated with the development of such a system, including the need for coordination among various stakeholders and the potential cost of construction and operation.

We are committed to working with our partners to advance the investigation of this effort and to identify potential solutions to these challenges. We believe that a strong partnership among all parties involved is essential to the success of this initiative.

Sincerely,

Mr. Seney
Regional Rail Ohio Hub Study Draft Technical Memorandum and Business Plan (Draft Plan). As we understand it, the Draft Plan is the first stage of more detailed analysis of intercity passenger service serving Ohio and neighboring states.

The Draft Plan appears to be a good start. It outlines a bold approach to implementing regional passenger service that will require much negotiation and many resources. But as a concept, Norfolk Southern can support the Draft Plan, as long as its conclusions are confirmed by detailed capacity studies of NS corridors. As we have previously discussed, Norfolk Southern will perform the capacity studies (with ORDC's financial support) at a mutually agreeable time.

At this point, we should stress that a number of uncertainties remain:

Not all NS corridors will be suitable for the addition of high-frequency intercity passenger service because of heavy freight traffic, or unavailability of sufficient track or right of way.

The effect of potential commuter service and high-frequency truck shuttle freight service (similar to Canadian Pacific's "Expressway") in NS corridors will need to be considered.

Indemnity issues should be addressed sooner rather than later so that their costs can be considered in future versions of the Draft Plan.

As a result of reviewing the Draft Plan, we developed a brief list of corrections and comments, which are attached to this letter (see "NS summary of comments" box at right).

We look forward to continued development of the Draft Plan. Please contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,
/s/
Bill Schafer
Director of Corporate Affairs
Norfolk Southern Corp.

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**NS summary of comments**

The following are Norfolk Southern Corp.'s questions/comments after reviewing the Ohio Rail Development Commission's Draft Ohio Hub Plan:

- The Draft Plan should identify corridors likely to be developed for commuter service. These corridors should be evaluated for their ability to accommodate intercity and commuter trains;
- A 28-foot separation of high-speed trains from freight operations is a good start. The exact placement of high-speed tracks will be decided on a case-by-case basis;
- With projected frequencies of 12 to 16 intercity passenger trains per day, NS will insist that corridors be "sealed" similar to the practice in North Carolina, regardless of the top speed of trains. (All Aboard Ohio note: "Sealed" means every road-rail crossing is completely protected, either by flashers and gates at at-grade crossings, or by grade-separating the crossings);
- ORDC should give more thought to the costs of access to rights of way. Such costs may depend on the frequency of freight usage and projected freight traffic growth in some corridors;
- NS is willing to consider financial participation in infrastructure improvements, though the proportion may be small in comparison to the overall cost of the passenger project;
- ORDC must work closely with other Ohio agencies to make sure that new structures (e.g., highway overpasses or underpasses) are constructed with sufficient allowance for future rail facilities.
Ohio Hub Plan advances

Tandem studies examine economic impact, more passenger rail routes

COLUMBUS — The light at the end of the tunnel just might be a train. In fact, it could very well be one many Ohioans haven’t seen or been able to ride for a long time: a passenger train.

That possibility will be two big steps closer to reality as two studies got underway this winter that could greatly advance the Ohio Rail Development Commission’s Ohio Hub Plan to redevelop and expand passenger rail and increased capacity for freight rail.

“We can build this system,” says ORDC Executive Director Jim Seney. He announced the kickoff of the tandem studies that will:

- Conduct a detailed analysis of the potential statewide economic impact of the Ohio Hub Plan;
- Determine the feasibility of adding two new routes to the master plan: a Pittsburgh-Columbus-Chicago route (via Lima and Fort Wayne or Indianapolis) and a Columbus-Toledo-Detroit route;
- The results of these two studies can move the Ohio Hub Plan into its next and most important stage: the environmental impact study,” Mr. Seney said. “Once we complete that phase, the Ohio Hub can become an official transportation project in the eyes of the federal government. We can start building this system and running the kind of fast, frequent passenger trains and faster, more timely freight rail service that will boost Ohio’s economy and create new and better jobs.”

Initial meetings have already been held on both studies to set up the framework for field work, information gathering and how to analyze what the study teams discover. It is thought both studies should be complete by fall, but some preliminary information may be available by early this year.

The Detailed Economic Impact Study (DEIS) is being conducted by two teams of economic experts who will examine what were positive preliminary numbers in the initial Ohio Hub Report. Those numbers include an estimated economic impact of:

- 6,000-plus construction jobs;
- 1,500 permanent railroad jobs;
- 6,000-plus permanent jobs tied to development around rail stations and throughout the communities served by the Ohio Hub;
- $1 billion dollar increase in property values;
- Annual tax revenue increased by $28 million.

The DEIS will attempt to quantify and refine these numbers down to the local level to see which communities and segments of Ohio’s economy will benefit and by how much.

The additional route study will take a detailed look at the infrastructure (rails, bridges, right of way, station facilities, etc.) along the projected routes. This analysis will investigate and measure these issues:

- Condition of rights-of-way (both existing and abandoned), bridges, signal systems, tracks;
- Ridership projections from each community along the routes;
- Existing or potential connections with other modes — airports, mass transit, bikeways, hotels and local business districts;
- What needs to be done to bring route conditions up to grade to handle higher-speed trains and greater traffic volume.

“The goal is to bring these additional routes up to the same level of feasibility as the rest of the route system outlined in the Ohio Hub Report,” Mr. Seney added. “In doing so, when federal funding becomes available to match with state dollars, we can proceed with building the entire system and not just phasing in one rail line at a time.”

Economy rolls on on rails
“Economy” from page three ——

railroads. At least 24 other states are working on or implementing similar rail plans either individually or in partnership with each other.

S.B. 1516 probably isn’t the perfect bill. But as they say, “you’ve got to start someplace.” And this bill, I believe, is a good start; much the same as the legislation that helped our nation break ground and create the Interstate Highway System and our great airports and air traffic control systems. While the bill wasn’t signed into law before the end of the congressional session, it or something like it will surely come around again this year.

Ohio is already a key player and location in the national and global economy. Establishing a federal rail infrastructure development program, such as outlined in S.B. 1516, can only serve to strengthen Ohio’s economy. And a strong economy means more jobs, increased household incomes and household spending that creates even more business and jobs. A strong rail system also strengthens our economy by increasing our ability to move people and freight. It also allows us to better manage traffic congestion on our highways and in our skies.

The next time your member of Congress is home in their district, tell them what’s important to you. If you value your own mobility for yourself or your business, please tell your member of Congress to support legislation that improves our rail systems and brings balance to our overall transportation system.

Stu Nicholson is the public information officer for the Ohio Rail Development Commission and former broadcast journalist.

“Quote”

“Conservatives need to understand how passenger trains, subways and streetcars can serve important conservative goals, such as increasing property values and reducing our country’s dependence on vulnerable Middle East oil supplies.”

— Paul M. Weyrich
Chairman, Free Congress Foundation
December 5, 2005

Lorain County progress

“Lorain County” from page three ——

$250,000 for the building and acquired adjacent land for another $400,000. Nearly $5 million in federal funds has been secured since.

On Nov. 5, 2005, All Aboard Ohio held its dinner meeting in Lorain, seven miles away, at the Black River Landing Transportation Center. The event, with live music, wine and food, hosted Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, D-Toledo (whose district now extends east into Lorain County); Beth Thames, an aide to Congressman Sherrod Brown, D-Avon; Lorain County Commissioner Betty Blair, as well as representatives from local engineering firms, community officials and All Aboard Ohio members.

The event got good press coverage from two local dailies, the Lorain Morning Journal and the Elyria Chronicle Telegram. Kaptur was quoted in the Elyria Chronicle Telegram that the nation’s trend has never been to support railroads. She noted that highways are funded through tax dollars, and airlines receive federal subsidies that have kept them aloft through lean times.

“It isn’t that a passenger railroad couldn’t be successful, but it has been a stepchild for 100 years,” she said. “Rather than waiting for the rest of the country to get on board, let’s get Ohio and Pennsylvania on board.”

“What an incredible evening in Lorain!” said Mark Carlson, vice president of All Aboard Ohio. “There was good wine, great food and invaluable networking. My hat goes off to (Executive Director) Dominic Liberatore and his fellow planners for putting together one outstanding evening of entertainment and outreach like OARP has never experienced in its 30-plus years. I am convinced we need to explore other avenues for outreach and this was an exceptional event for such purposes.”
All Aboard Ohio President's Column

Save a train, ride a bus?

By Bill Hutchison
President, All Aboard Ohio

By now I am sure most you are aware we have beaten back the Bush Administration's attempt to kill Amtrak. This was a critical win, since we faced an ideologically rigid bunch who didn't want to be confused with the facts. Amtrak "loses" money, so it has to be "reformed" — a reform that implies dismantling.

Never mind that they never really did spell out what that reform should be, aside from some vague, general statements that ignored the reality that all forms of transportation are subsidized, the least of which is...you guessed it, Amtrak!

Fortunately, saner heads prevailed and Amtrak ended up with about $1.3 billion for the next year. So breathe a sigh of relief: Amtrak survives. The next question is: now what? Is it enough that Amtrak gets by but real passenger service is still a dream? Of course not. I don't think any one of us are satisfied with that.

At the same time, we have to remain vigilant. Just because we staved off the administration's kill-Amtrak moves, it doesn't mean they won't try again. Indications are that they might propose a level of funding that will still end the passenger train. Congress, which rescued Amtrak, has a penchant for micro-management (example: sleeper and dining-car service requirements) or funding earmarks that do the carrier no good (Expresstrak).

At the same time, the Ohio Rail development Commission is making some positive things happen with the dual environmental impact/economic development studies. We helped fight for this when it became stalled and now we are off and running. We still need to push our state legislators, though.

Because of this situation, the goal for us remains unchanged: get passenger rail on a sound footing so it can become a real choice for all Americans. That means making noise and keeping an unblinking eye on those with bad intentions. That also means getting involved by maintaining a positive relationship with elected officials and their staffs.

We at All Aboard Ohio are moving in the right direction. We are now one of the biggest and best rail advocacy organizations in the country, but that does not mean we will rest on our laurels. We will continually look at ways to maximize our impact. You, our members, should do the same.

How? Aside from the usual e-mailing, letter-writing and phone calls, set aside Wednesday April 26, 2006 and come to our second annual Rail/Transit Legislative Summit in Columbus. Get to know your legislators face-to-face. Show them you are so committed to your cause that you are willing to take the time to travel to them, just to tell them what you believe in. (For Summit details and mail-in registration form see "You're Invited!" on page eight.)

We plan to have charter buses available so you all can ride to Columbus from Cleveland, Dayton and Cincinnati. Look for details on the Rally. Tell us you are coming. And then...get on the bus and make a difference!

All Aboard Ohio keeps growing

In recent months, aggressive organizational development, including outreach and fundraising, has allowed All Aboard Ohio to become one of the largest, state-based passenger rail advocacy organizations in the nation.

Adding to a stable membership, the association has a full-time executive director and now, a part-time assistant director. They and a staff of volunteers work out of All Aboard Ohio's office in downtown Columbus to manage and expand the organization while educating the public about the benefits of passenger rail service. Few other statewide passenger advocacy organizations do this, though.

All Aboard Ohio election update

An election notice insert was included with the dues renewal which was mailed to all All Aboard Ohio members last December.

The election notice highlighted the Feb. 20, 2006 deadline for all members interested in holding a seat on the Board of Directors of the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers (OARP). All Aboard Ohio is a tradename of OARP.

The following board positions are elected for a two-year term in the even-numbered years:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Student Representative

-The Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers (OARP) is a member association of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP). OARP represents Ohio's passenger rail advocates and its members support all passenger rail services in the state, including buses.

All Aboard Ohio is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) educational association formed in 1974 to promote passenger rail service in Ohio. As an all-volunteer organization, it educates and organizes constituencies to support passenger rail service in Ohio. Its largest single activity is its annual legislative conference.
state rail advocacy associations in the country have developed these resources.

Late in 2005, the Cleveland Foundation awarded to All Aboard Ohio a one-year grant of $20,000 to allow the association to hire Andrew Bremer of Columbus as its new assistant director. He supports Executive Director Dominic Liberatore of Cleveland who divides his time between activities at the Columbus office and those statewide. At its December meeting, the All Aboard Ohio board of directors gave its blessing to Mr. Liberatore in hiring Mr. Bremer.

"I have been extremely pleased with the board’s decision to allow the executive director to hire me,” said Mr. Bremer. “I look forward to working with Dominic in accomplishing the challenging tasks set before us.”

Mr. Bremer started his masters studies in the city and regional planning program at the Ohio State University in the fall of 2005. He holds undergraduate degrees in history and international geography from the Ohio State University, and originally is from Green, Ohio (near the Akron-Canton Regional Airport).

Also at the board’s December meeting, Frank O’Hare of Gahanna in suburban Columbus was appointed to fill the Society of Highway Engineers. Mr. O’Hare’s 30 years of experience in business development and marketing, plus highway and rail engineering projects, will help guide All Aboard Ohio through its continued growth.

That continued growth and development will require additional sources of funding, but depends on a stable and growing membership to demonstrate to outside funders that All Aboard Ohio is a sound investment. With that additional outside support, the association can expand its advocacy efforts to approach the scale of those in Ohio supporting other modes of transportation.

Being sought are unconventional sources of funding, including staffing a concession stand at Jacobs Field this summer at a minimum of eight Cleveland Indians home games. Volunteers are needed, including a group leader and at least a half-dozen people to operate the stand. For 7:05 p.m. games, the group leader must arrive at 3:30 p.m. with half of the volunteers showing up at 3:30 p.m. and the other half by 5 p.m. For a 1:05 p.m. game, the group leader arrives at 9:30 a.m.; the first half of volunteers at 10 a.m. and the rest at 11 a.m. All Aboard Ohio could raise thousands of dollars from this opportunity.

To lend your name to this fundraising effort at Jacobs Field or to request more information, please call All Aboard Ohio’s Columbus office at (614) 228-6005.

The Executive Director Report

Focused strategy keeps us on track

By Dominic J. Liberatore, executive director and Andrew Bremer, assistant director

All Aboard Ohio

There is nothing like an immediate crisis that brings people out of the woodwork. Whenever something bad happens in Washington D.C. or Columbus, the emails and phone calls with questions start flying into the office. “What are you going to do about this; somebody has to do something about that,” these messages urge. Those comments represent a weakness which we as passenger rail advocates have had for years.

We have been reactionary in nature, moving from crisis to crisis and not being able to focus on building the capacity of our organizations. Few passenger rail advocacy groups throughout our nation have the capacity which they need in order to move our issues forward. Yes, the pun is intended, it is really all about capacity.

We also have infighting amongst like-minded advocacy groups. Within the U.S., we have three states that have a total of six passenger rail advocacy groups. Each of these organizations is struggling to stay afloat. They send conflicting messages to their elected officials. And, when an issue of national importance comes up, with whom are we supposed to coordinate our activities?

So if you ever wonder why we don’t have quality passenger rail service in our country, we believe it is due to the unorganized groups that exist among our fellow advocacy groups. While we fight amongst ourselves, our opponents educate our legislators where they stand on the issues and that is the position which our legislators will take. This is simply unacceptable.

We propose that we take a cue from organized labor which, in limited cases, is still very good at what they have been known to do. We need to educate legislators where we stand. Then we must educate a growing block of voters where our legislators stand. And, finally, we need to encourage our supporters to get to the polls. Or, this is more simply known as: “organize, educate and mobilize.” If you would like to help us get these things done, come on down to our Columbus office and volunteer some time with the organization.
## Directory of All Aboard Ohio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>President</strong></td>
<td>Bill Hutchison</td>
<td><a href="mailto:buckeyeb2001@yahoo.com">buckeyeb2001@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Past-President</strong></td>
<td>Mark Carlson</td>
<td>474 Delaware Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vice-President</strong></td>
<td>Mark Carlson</td>
<td>479 Humiston Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secretary</strong></td>
<td>Larry Robertson</td>
<td>2022 Langham Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Treasurer</strong></td>
<td>Donna Shreiner</td>
<td>9705 Township Road 301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northeast Region</strong></td>
<td>J. Howard Harding</td>
<td>489 Overwood Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northwest Region</strong></td>
<td>vacant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southwest Region</strong></td>
<td>David Burns</td>
<td>4680 W St Rte 571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central/Southeast Region</strong></td>
<td>Frank O'Hare</td>
<td>1009 Zodiac Ave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AT-Large</strong></td>
<td>Kenneth Sisulak</td>
<td>1300 East 9th St; Suite 1215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kim Gibson</td>
<td>285 East Main Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tom Allen</td>
<td>610 Executive Blvd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Executive Director</strong></td>
<td>Dominic Liberatore</td>
<td>309 S Fourth Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Director</strong></td>
<td>Andrew Bremer</td>
<td>309 S Fourth Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDITOR, OHIO RAIL NEWS</strong></td>
<td>Ken Prendergast</td>
<td>12029 Clifton Blvd #505</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### National Association of Railroad Passengers

| NARP National Office | Executive Director | Ross Capon | 202 / 408-8362 |
| Assistant Director | David Johnson |  | fax-202 / 408-8287 |

| NARP Region 6 Directors | |  |  |
| Kenneth Clifford | 937 / 879-4750 | 11817 Chocow Dr. | 45341 |
| Phil Copeland | 440 / 365-7970 | Medway OH | 44508 |
| John DeLora | 313 / 882-8132 | 10676 Dupre | 48224-4228 |
| J. Howard Harding | 330 / 867-5507 | 489 Overwood Rd. | 44313-5427 |
| Nick Noe | 317 / 698-8573 | 1195 Priority Place | 46227 |
| Mike Whims | 248 / 892-4545 | 30900 Stone Ridge Dr #7315 | 48393 |

### All Aboard Ohio Office

| 309 South 4th St, Suite 304 | Columbus, OH 43215-5428 | (614) 228-6005 |
| www.allaboardohio.org |  |  |

### Regional Co-Ordinators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>James Stone</td>
<td>216 / 438-5711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Elyria</td>
<td>Phil Copeland</td>
<td>440 / 365-7970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>G. Douglas Hudson</td>
<td>330 / 544-3203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Toledo</td>
<td>Bill Gill</td>
<td>419 / 536-1924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Sandusky</td>
<td>Steve La Conte</td>
<td>419 / 688-6225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
<td>W. Mike Weber</td>
<td>513 / 891-9251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Dayton</td>
<td>Linda Leas</td>
<td>937 / 253-9448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Clermont</td>
<td>Ronald D. Garner</td>
<td>513 / 444-3098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>John Manning</td>
<td>614 / 443-8742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>Tom Allen</td>
<td>740 / 369-5804</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Updated: March 2006*
Two Ohio cities gain, one loses Amtrak service

A year after losing one of its four daily Amtrak trains, Elyria and Sandusky have been returned as stops on the westbound train of the Capitol Limited route. At the same time, however, Hamilton lost all service starting last October. Its only train was the thrice-weekly Cardinal service. Both routes operate via Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Charleston WV and 28 other intermediate station stops.

Only six of those stations had less ridership than Hamilton’s 1,400 per year — the lowest station total in Ohio. Yet, the combined population of those six cities is less than 40,000 — Hamilton’s population is 60,000. So what went wrong?

Both the eastbound and westbound trains were scheduled to serve Hamilton a few minutes on either side of 4 a.m. Plus, the trains stopped there only three days a week — Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Another factor in the low ridership was the poor condition of the CSX-owned station, located at the corner of Martin Luther King Boulevard and Henry Street. But the nail in the coffin was Amtrak’s decision to make Hamilton a “flag stop” in November 2004.

All Aboard Ohio and city officials expressed that very concern in a Fall 2004 article “Hamilton flag stop becomes a red flag” in the Ohio Passenger Rail News. A flag stop means a train will make stops at a station only when a passenger has made a reservation to get on or off there. Or, the train will stop if a waiting passenger stands track-side and waves at the locomotive engineer with a flashlight — as if in some Third World country. City officials are seeking to renovate the CSX-owned station, so perhaps a restoration of service may be possible in the near future.

In the northern part of Ohio, Amtrak restored full service to Elyria and Sandusky on its Capitol Limited route in October. The Capitol Limited travels between Chicago and Washington D.C. via South Bend, Toledo, Cleveland and Pittsburgh on a 764-mile route.

Heavy freight traffic congestion on the Norfolk Southern Corp.-owned line forced Amtrak to discontinue stopping its westbound train #29 at those two cities. Also, those stations have a platform on only one track of NS’s two-track mainline, requiring Amtrak trains to switch back and forth between tracks, threatening delays to NS freight trains.

However, All Aboard Ohio was able to demonstrate to Amtrak and U.S. Representatives Marcy Kaptur, D-Toledo, and Sherrod Brown, D-Avon, that more often than not, train #29 remained on the station-adjacent track and that a cessation of service should not continue. NS conceded and allowed service to be restored, without any concessions from Amtrak.

Amtrak’s Craig retires

After more than 30 years of service to Amtrak, District Manager Ted Craig retired on Dec. 16, 2005. Mr. Craig spent his last three years working out of the Toledo station and was in charge of all Michigan, Ohio and Indiana Amtrak stations. All Aboard Ohio members in Toledo noted that Mr. Craig was helpful in carrying out advocacy projects and promotions involving the association.

A retirement Christmas Tree-decorating party was held Dec. 2 to honor Mr. Craig’s service to the company. His supervisor, Brian Rosenwald, drove in from Chicago for the occasion. A potluck dinner and a cake was on the menu along with a memory book given to Mr. Craig to remember all of his many clerks.

Toledo ticket agent Diana McCray coordinated the pictures and artwork for the memory book of all the ticket clerks and their stations. Some Christmas music was played on the violin by Lyndsay McCray.

Until a new district manager is chosen, Dave Kuhn, formerly lead clerk in Toledo, will be temporarily filling the position with a possibility of a permanent position.

Coming to a train near you?

In 2007, Amtrak plans to modify its Superliner diner and lounge cars into integrated diner-lounges, providing full meals, snacks and bar service from the same car, from 6:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m., says employee newsletter Amtrak Ink. Below is a concept of the new diner-lounge.

Amtrak will introduce these cars on the Texas Eagle, City of New Orleans, Sunset Limited and Capitol Limited — the latter train serves Ohio daily. Amtrak says these cars will save $3.5 million in fuel and maintenance, not including labor costs. And, by staying open longer, revenues are projected to increase.
“Congratulations to Dom [Liberatore] and Bill [Hutchison] for pulling off the most astounding, influential, first-class event ever run by OARP.”
— David Sfreiner
2005 Summit attendee

“I was also present for most of the event and thought it was first class in every respect. Great venue, great speakers, good attendance for a first-time event, great press coverage. Excellent.”
— Kenneth Sislak
2005 Summit attendee

Mail-in Registration
Membership type (check one)
___ $50.00: All Aboard Ohio Member
___ $75.00: Non-member (includes a one-year All Aboard Ohio membership)

Registrant Information (please print)
Name: ____________________________
Company: _________________________
Address: __________________________
City: __________________ State: _____ Zip: ____
Telephone: _________________________
E-mail: ____________________________

Cut or copy and mail this application with a check or money order to:
Summit Registration
All Aboard Ohio
309 South 4th Street; Suite 304
Columbus, OH 43215

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

March 2006
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Columbus Local Meeting</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>Red Door Tavern</td>
<td>John Manning 614 / 443-8742</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Toledo Local Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Toledo Amtrak Station</td>
<td>Bill Gill 419 / 536-1924</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>All Aboard Ohio/NARP Region 6 mtg</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Cadillac Place</td>
<td>Bill Gill at <a href="mailto:john.delora@detroit12.org">john.delora@detroit12.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Ohio Rail Development Comm.</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Riffe Center</td>
<td>All Aboard Ohio 614 / 228-6005</td>
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**April 2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Columbus Local Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Toledo Local Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Toledo Amtrak Station</td>
<td>Bill Gill 419 / 536-1924</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Rail / Transit Legislative Summit</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>Columbus YWCA</td>
<td>All Aboard Ohio 614 / 228-6005</td>
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**May 2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ohio Rail Development Comm.</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Riffe Center</td>
<td>ORDC 614 / 644-0306</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>Bill Gill 419 / 536-1924</td>
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**June 2006**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Columbus Local Meeting</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
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<td>John Manning 614 / 443-8742</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Toledo Local Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Toledo Amtrak Station</td>
<td>Bill Gill 419 / 536-1924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>All Aboard Ohio Annual Meeting</td>
<td>4:00 pm</td>
<td>Gwinn Estate</td>
<td>All Aboard Ohio 614 / 228-6005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Joint All Aboard Ohio/NARP Region VI Meeting**

*Hosted by the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers*

**Saturday, March 18 • 10:00 am**

**Cadillac Place**

(former General Motors headquarters)

3044 W. Grand Blvd

Detroit, MI

Keynote speaker: NARP President George Chilson

Michigan high-speed rail project update

Election of NARP Regional Directors

**Driving Directions from Ohio:**

I-75 North to I-96 west (Jeffries Fwy) at exit 48

I-96 West to I-94 east at exit 190

I-94 East to route M-10 (Lodge Fwy) at exit 215B

Take the Milwaukee Ave exit and keep left at the fork in the ramp

Turn right at W. Grand Blvd and drive two blocks