Ohio: at a crossroads

By Ken Prendergast
Editor, Ohio Passenger Rail News

Cleveland resident Jemeyka Vance has three jobs. The single mother's first job is raising her two children. The second is working at a minimum-wage job at Taco Bell in suburban North Olmsted. And her third job is getting to and from Taco Bell.

Ms. Vance wakes up at 5 a.m. each day at her west-side residence. She walks her youngest child to day care and the other to school. She then begins her 15-mile trek to work on three buses. When the transfers work out, she can make the trip in 70 minutes and arrive at work by 10 a.m.

She's got it better than many others, according to a periodic series of articles begun in 2004 by the Cleveland Plain Dealer. Some Cleveland residents commute three hours a day round trip just to reach suburban jobs in the same county where they live.

One out of four Cleveland households has no car available, the most of any major Ohio city. Cincinnati and Dayton are a close second and third, respectively, where roughly 20 percent of all households have no car. In fact, the number of households without any car is at least 10 percent in the “mother cities” of all eight of Ohio's largest metro areas.

But even if she could afford a car, Vance doesn’t want one. She never learned to drive and no one in her family ever had a car.

“To be perfectly honest, I’m scared to learn,” she said in a Sept. 23, 2004 PD article. “Anyone who knows me will tell you I’m nervous in a car.”

Unskilled work is scarce in Cleveland, but plentiful in suburbs 15-30 miles from downtown Cleveland. Suburbs like Mentor, Medina and North Olmsted add 1,400 jobs every year. By contrast, affordable housing is plentiful in Cleveland but scarce in the suburbs. Cleveland has some of the highest poverty rates among America’s big cities.

The U.S. Census reported in 2000 that only 8-15 percent of available jobs in the Cleveland-Akron metropolitan area were within a 40-minute public transit trip.

Cleveland is not unique. National research by the Urban Institute, in a PD article, found that Ohio’s Great Lakes

Ohio may have a fine highway system, but Germany has one of the world’s best. Its Autobahn, the model for Ohio’s roads, is entirely maintained that it has no speed limit. That didn’t play well with residents.
Ohio may have a fine highway system, but Germany has one of the world's best. Its Autobahn, the model for America's interstate highway system, is so well built and maintained that it has no speed limit. That didn't slow Germany from augmenting the Autobahn with high-speed rail, including opening in 2002 an all-new, 205-mph route between downtown Frankfurt and Cologne. InterCity Express trains cover the 140-mile distance in one hour and serve the Frankfurt International Airport enroute. Ohio shouldn't be satisfied with its highway-dominated transportation system either.

New ODOT Director named
Sees need for more than just highways

Gov. Ted Strickland appears to be following through on campaign promises to reform the Ohio Department of Transportation into a true, multimodal organization that promotes economic development and smarter land-use policies in Ohio's metropolitan areas.

One of the biggest confirmations of his desire to reform ODOT came Feb. 12 when Gov. Strickland named James Beasley as the department's new director, effective March 5. Mr. Beasley, 57, is a 30-year friend of the new governor, was the Brown County engineer in southwest Ohio since 1980 and headed the governor's ODOT transition team.

In his transition team report to the governor, Mr. Beasley said ODOT needs to recognize its decades-long role in enabling urban sprawl, and thus its responsibility in turning the tide in favor of established communities. To accomplish that, his report said the state needs to increase funding for public transit, support development of the Ohio Hub passenger and freight rail system, improve secondary roads and bridges, as well as promote better linkages between transportation modes.

Specifically, All Aboard Ohio has learned Gov. Strickland's administration will seek to double the Ohio Rail Development Commission's annual budget and provide state funding to carry out environmental impact studies so that the Ohio Hub can become eligible to receive federal dollars. At the same time, ODOT will need to cut its budget to deal with a projected deficit starting next year and worsening to $1.5 billion by 2015.

"ODOT changed its name many years ago, but many believe it still thinks of itself as a highway department," Mr. Beasley's report noted. "ODOT needs to embrace a"

Ohio's hidden tax
Ohio cities are paying a high price for its auto-dependency and its kissing cousin, urban sprawl. More than a million Ohio's citizens face physical isolation from economic opportunities. As the Baby Boom generation ages, even more Ohioans are likely to become isolated from social activities, jobs, medical appointments, family, tourism and a higher quality of life in coming decades.

Ohio's high cost of transportation, caused by a lack of options to the car, is the driving factor.

Whenever a household devotes more of its budget to transportation than housing, it's a sign of trouble. In Greater Cleveland, for example, 30 percent of household

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- Walking is healthy for cities, too
Train of Thought

from Ohio Passenger Rail News

Editor

Kenneth Prendergast

As one of the state's oldest urban interstate highways, downtown Cleveland's Inner Belt harkens back to a dark era in the history of American cities. The 1950s was a time when men like New York's Robert Moses or his Cleveland counterpart Cuyahoga County Engineer Albert Porter unabashedly sought to shred the nation's urban fabric.

For more than a thousand years, cities worldwide thrived as places for people to meet — to conduct commerce, share ideas and make acquaintances. And as strange as it may seem today, much of that exchange happened in city streets where the pedestrian was king. There were street markets, endless storefronts, parades, rallies, speeches and ever-present conversations carried out between someone on the sidewalk and another in an upstairs window or balcony. The arrival of the streetcar only increased the pedestrian activity.

To people like Albert Porter, that urban fabric needed shredding. He and others bought into General Motors' vision of "The City of Tomorrow" unveiled in 1939 at the New York World's Fair. In that same year, Paul Hoffman, president of the Studebaker Corp., was among the corporate titans who explained the need for the new urban vision. "If we are to have the full use of automobiles, cities must be remade," he said.

Like his allies, Porter, the county's engineer from 1946 to 1977, went about the business of ripping up rail transit services, blocking construction of a voter-approved downtown subway, tearing down urban neighborhoods and replacing them with a patchwork of highways. Back then, it was reasoned that the best way to save a city neighborhood was to demolish it.

Nearly a decade ago, the Ohio Department of Transportation announced it needed to rebuild the Inner Belt and was prepared to spend handsomely to do it. Downtown Cleveland's portion of Interstate 90 was one of the oldest, most congested and dangerous sections of interstate in Ohio.

Planning for the project began with so much promise, but is ending as a symbol of all that is wrong with ODOT.

Then-Cleveland Planning Director Hunter Morrison said it was an opportunity to shift ODOT dollars back to the city from the suburbs and restore urban neighborhoods that were sliced up by the highway two generations earlier. ODOT said it was openly encouraging any and all ideas for redesigning the highway.

Some proposed adding lanes to the Inner Belt. Others suggested eliminating the highway's closely spaced ramps. Some wanted to shrink the land-gobbling Central Interchange to avail land for restoring neighborhoods lost to its spaghetti bowl of pavement. A few wanted I-90 relocated through University Circle, an idea that later morphed into a boulevard project called the Opportunity Corridor.
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Federal transport funding faces ‘perfect storm’

By Ken Prendergast
Editor, Ohio Passenger Rail News

As the Ohio Department of Transportation borrows against future federal funding to finance its ambitious highway construction agenda, there’s a serious risk that those funds may not be there. Unbeknownst to many, a commission was impaneled last year to gather ideas and study options for keeping the federal Highway Trust Fund from skidding into bankruptcy in 2008.

A likely result is that we could all be paying much more for using surface transportation modes — highways, transit, railroads and ports. In the absence of additional revenue, the alternative is to cut federal funding for surface transportation projects by as much as half.

The reason for these draconian changes is that the federal gas tax, which pays for 90 percent of federal surface transportation funding, is not keeping up with “alarming” increases in the cost of maintaining and improving highways, said the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). New U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Mary Peters noted the emerging crisis when she was sworn in Oct. 17, 2006.

“When DOT was formed (in 1967), America was in the process of building major portions of the transportation network we know today,” Mrs. Peters said. “Now much of this vital network is showing its age, just like some of us, in fact. And at the very same time, our growing economy is placing increasing demands on every one of our systems, even while the funding sources we’ve relied on are less and less able to keep pace with that demand.”

In the short-term, we may see streamlined environmental reviews of proposed projects, or gas taxes indexed to inflation as federal gas taxes haven’t been increased by Congress since 1993. As a result, the gas tax has lost one-third of its purchasing power, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Yet, the gas tax remains the cheapest way to collect funding for highways and transit.

In the long-term, we may be paying for surface transportation in new ways, including tolls, state and local

“Either Congress will find the political will to increase revenues supporting the (Highway) Trust Fund, or it will cut back on the federal share of highway and transit investment,” said John Horsley, AASHTO executive director.

“The results of this study and report could be very interesting,” added Joshua Schank, a government transportation policy analyst with ICF Consulting, as quoted in Land Development Today. “I wouldn’t be surprised to see some major surprises and suggested changes that could be considered radical.”

“The commission intends to review policy as well as revenue,” said commission member Paul Weyrich, who also served on the Amtrak board of directors several years ago. “Both will have nearly equal weight although the tilt may be toward policy. The work of this commission well may be profound.”

Chart courtesy of AASHTO

A nearly $22 billion deficit five years from now is a real possibility for the federal Highway Trust Fund. Preventing that from happening may require some significant reforms by Congress.
A nearly $22 billion deficit five years from now is a real possibility for the federal Highway Trust Fund. Proving that from happening may require some significant reforms by Congress.

Transportation infrastructure, of course, is expensive to build, maintain and improve. The cost is going up, dramatically in most cases. The blame rests with the nation’s aging highway system, the daily beating it takes from heavy usage and the rising price of oil. The latter is a recent strain on transportation agency budgets, as petroleum is used in the manufacture of numerous construction materials, such as asphalt and steel. And, of course, petroleum is burned by construction equipment.

Barring any changes to this witches’ brew, 2007 is likely to be the last year that the Highway Trust Fund will have a positive account balance. The HTF, which pays maintenance and improvement costs of both transit and highways, is projected to be in the red by $1.6 billion in 2008. It will only get worse from there, as the account is expected to have a deficit of nearly $22 billion by 2012. That takes into only those projects which have federal funding committed to them.

“If we’re going to escape the forces of the perfect storm that are gathering before us, we must find fresh angles and ways to improve the performance of our transportation systems,” Mrs. Peters added. “I am committed to making

Travel demand in the U.S. has been skyrocketing for decades, but continuing that rate of growth may be problematic. In 1955, the year before Congress approved construction of the Interstate Highway System, the nation’s population was 165 million and vehicle-miles traveled were 600 billion. In 2005, the population had increased by 78 percent, but VMTs rose 358 percent to 2.75 trillion. By 2055, the nation’s population could reach 435 million, an increase of 47 percent, while VMTs may rise 45-82 percent above current traffic volumes, AASHTO predicts.

That data casually refers to another cause of the projected deficit in the Highway Trust Fund, and one that is often overlooked. Increasingly, gas tax revenues are used more for rebuilding the massive, aging highway network and less for new highway capacity. When the Interstate Highway System was built, large volumes of traffic were suddenly generated by it, as were more gas taxes. They helped to pay for the future expansion of the highway system. But as the decades rolled on, the system got older, became more expensive to maintain and new spending yielded proportionately smaller increases in productivity, said economists Chad Shirley of the RAND Corporation and Clifford Winston of the Brookings Institution in a 2004 article in *The Journal of Economics*.

Those returns were quantified in another paper by Winston and a Brookings colleague, Ashley Langer. They wrote that, on average, “one dollar of annual highway spending reduces the annual congestion costs to road users only 8 cents.” They say this is not a return on a one-time investment but an ongoing expense. The nation has to keep spending that dollar to get the 8 cents.

While some members of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Policy Commission will surely advocate for our nation to remain dependent on highways at the near-exclusion of all other modes, a few members see an opportunity for real change. That means diversifying our transportation system, including boosting investments in mass transit, freight railroads and, of course, passenger trains.

For more information about the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Policy Commission, visit www.surfacecommission.gov on the Internet.
Ohio: at a crossroads

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expenses are for transportation while 24 percent goes to housing, according to a 2006 study by the Center for Neighborhood Technology and the Center for Transit-Oriented Development. Similar ratios are likely for Ohio’s other large cities.

Lower-income Ohioans pay an even greater percentage of their household budgets on transportation than their wealthier counterparts. By renting their housing (an appreciable asset) and owning their cars (a depreciable asset), low-income and working-class Ohioans face an uphill battle in building equity and wealth.

But Ohio’s costly, car-dependent transportation system is a hidden tax on everyone. Consider that the sum total of available federal, state and local transportation funding is just 10 percent of the total expended in Ohio for all forms of transportation. The other 90 percent is carried by Ohio’s households and businesses, the Ohio Association of Regional Councils disclosed.

Compared to other major metro areas nationally, Ohio’s cities rate poorly in terms of average transportation costs per household. Those costs per household are actually less in metro areas like New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington DC, Philadelphia, Baltimore, San Diego, Miami, Denver and Seattle than they are in Ohio’s largest cities.

For example, while Greater Cleveland’s average transportation costs per household are $10,023 per year, they are just $7,880 in New York City. The Big Apple’s low transportation costs are due to it being the one of the most transit-oriented, walkable cities in the nation.

On a personal level and according to the AAA, the annual cost of owning one car and driving it 15,000 miles per year is more than $8,000. By comparison, the annual cost to a person who uses a mix of transit, intercity rail, aviation, taxis, bicycles, “flex cars” (cars rented by the hour) and walking is less than $3,000, the Surface Transportation Policy Project says. That savings will put more money into local economies, not politically unstable oil-rich nations.

The absence of these affordable choices for many households burdens our shrinking middle class and diminishes their ability to save for retirement, finance a college education or enjoy a decent standard of living. The result is that some 20 percent of Cleveland’s households have no car — some by circumstance and others by preference. Unknown are how many households which own just one car, or whether the car is unreliable. Both of these conditions can immobilize family members in the absence of other transportation alternatives.

As noted earlier, this will be a serious national problem if left unchecked. In Ohio, it will be worse. Census data shows the median age of an Ohioan was 37.6 years, an increase from 36.2 years in 2000. That rate of increase was greater than the national experience, where the median age was 36.4 years in 2005 and 2003. 35.3 years in 2000. About 1.5 million Ohioans are 65 years or older — greater than the total populations in 12 states. Those numbers will grow even larger as the Baby Boom generation ages and younger people continue to leave Ohio. The elderly tend to need public transportation more than younger people to access medical care, supplant fixed

In the car capital of America, California is not only building rail transit faster than most other regions of the nation, but ridership is booming as is the pace of Transit-Oriented Development. TOD is an urban planning philosophy that places dense, walkable, mixed-use development around transit, typically at rail stations. That’s already happening in Pasadena, CA (above), where mid-rise housing, retail and office structures are rising rapidly along the Los Angeles County Metro Transit Authority’s Gold Line. The light-rail line opened in 2003.

Photo courtesy of the New York Times
The absence of these affordable choices for many households burdens our shrinking middle class and reduces the standard of living for too many Ohioans. If left unchecked, a simple calculation shows this hidden tax will cost the state's economy hundreds of billion dollars over the next half-century, the Ohio Association of Regional Councils reports.

From the book 'The Geography of Urban Transportation', Guilford Press

**Inaccessible Ohio**

Mark Schwinn is reminded why he left Ohio 15 years ago every time he tries to visit it. The Chicagoan has been car-free since graduating from Kent State University in 1992. He didn't have much money when he moved to an apartment within walking distance of the Berwyn Metra station, surrounded by a vibrant blend of housing, shops, grocers and restaurants. But, after building a nice lifestyle there, a car proved to be a luxury.

"I don't like to be forced to drive everywhere, whether it makes sense or not," said Mr. Schwinn. He spends his travel time reading a book, working on his laptop computer or getting a quick nap. "It (driving) is too one-

yet, services are either infrequent, poorly scheduled or lack poor local public transportation connections at the Ohio end. In much of Ohio, be it in suburban or rural areas, or between urban areas, there are few options, and often no way to get around without a car.

**The risks of isolation**

For a 36-year-old, educated, able-bodied man like Mr. Schwinn, he was able to choose to jumpstart his path toward a higher standard of living by moving to Chicago and not owning a car. For many Ohioans, they don't have that choice.

Census data shows that at least a half-million Ohio
Ohio Passenger Rail News, Spring 2007

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convenient and enjoyable.

Officially, ODOT says “Our mission is to provide a world-class transportation system that links Ohio to a global economy while preserving the state’s unique character and enhancing its quality of life.”

ODOT was formed in 1972 from the Ohio Department of Highways. The new agency was charged with the responsibility of more than just building and maintaining roads. Other modes of surface transportation – chiefly mass transit and railroads – were now part of the departmental picture. But, in reality, little has changed over the past 35 years.

Approximately 95 percent of transportation services in Ohio are provided by highways. In addition to the serious mobility and urban sprawl issues noted earlier, the near-total domination of highways in Ohio’s travel market share contributes to serious “big picture” problems of global warming, oil dependency and premature oil supply depletion (called peak oil).

The market share of highways is directly correlated to ODOT spending practices, not the free market. Of the Ohio Department of Transportation’s 2007 budget of $2.9 billion, 95 percent to 98 percent goes to highways. Just $53 million goes to transit (only $16.3 million of that is state funding). Rail’s share is $8.7 million (just $2.7 million of that is from the state). Aviation (for general aviation airports) gets $3 million, even though the state collects more than $6 million annually in sales tax on aviation fuels. Worse, water transport received $0 – despite that Ohio is the nation’s fourth-largest port of entry. The State Infrastructure Bank, totaling $153 million in 2007, can also be used for non-highway transportation programs. But most funding goes to roads.

Recently, Ohio put more funding into non-highway funding than it does now. ODOT’s Public Transit Division budget was cut by the General Assembly and Gov. Bob Taft from $40 million in 2000 to $16.3 million in 2006. Numerous Ohio transit agencies have had to cut services, worsening the economic isolation of low-income, elderly and disabled citizens. By contrast, ODOT’s Transportation Policy Project and the Federal Highway Administration. Fully 77 percent of federal transportation program funds used by ODOT are flexible, they said.

In dollar terms, about $800 million per year could be directed to light-rail/streetcar systems, commuter rail, bus purchases, traffic signalization systems that give priority to transit and emergency vehicles, demolishing old highways, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, bike paths, car/van pooling programs and more.

While ODOT officials declare their hands are tied by the Ohio Constitution, other states with similar constitutional restrictions use gas taxes and vehicle registration fee revenues for non-highway transportation.

In Oregon, officials discovered that millions of dollars per year in state gas taxes are collected from people filling up the tanks of their lawnmowers, farm equipment, generators, off-road vehicles and other non-highway gas-powered equipment. Those funds have been used for funding intercity rail passenger service and other non-highway activities. In that same state, Oregon Department of Transportation officials are requesting legislative approval to dedicate revenues from vanity license plate fees to passenger rail service. Those revenues are collected on top of the basic license registration fee (as it is in Ohio). It is argued that vanity plate revenues are from motorists wanting to decorate their car, and are not required for the legal operation of a motor vehicle. If these two ideas were adopted in Ohio, more than $30 million per year in state funds could be generated for building transit, rail and biking/hiking facilities.

way construction. Deftly called the “Jobs and Progress” program, it will pump $5 billion over 10 years into wider highways and other facilities to boost the throughput capacity of highways.

However, some of the spending choices under Mr. Proctor’s watch raised eyebrows. For example, ODOT “is spending $70 million to replace every one of its 500,000 road signs – even though no federal regulations require it and ODOT’s own studies show that fewer than 6,000 signs – barely 1 percent of the total – are missing, damaged or otherwise deficient,” the PD article reported. The article also noted that the department spent $36 million in the past three years to improve rest areas along interstates in five counties.

Critics have called Ohio’s interstate highway system “gold plated” and “a bottomless pit” while connecting roads, intermodal projects, transit and rail system improvements are ignored.
have had to cut services, worsening the economic isolation of low-income, elderly and disabled citizens. By comparison, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation spends more for transit in Pittsburgh than ODOT does for all of Ohio. The Ohio Rail Development Commission saw its state support cut from $5.8 million in 2000 to $2.7 million in 2007.

Restrictions and options

ODOT officials are quick to respond that the Ohio Constitution restricts spending state gasoline taxes collected at the pump and vehicle registration fees on highways only. Specifically, Article XII Section 5a (passed in 1947) says:

“No moneys derived from fees, excises, or license taxes relating to registration, operation, or use of vehicles on public highways, or to fuels used for propelling such vehicles, shall be expended for other than costs of administering such laws, statutory refunds and adjustments provided therein, payment of highway obligations, costs for construction, reconstruction, maintenance and repair of public highways and bridges and other statutory highway purposes, expense of state enforcement of traffic laws, and expenditures authorized for hospitalization of indigent persons injured in motor vehicle accidents on the public highways.”

But, ODOT spends state gas taxes on highways that aren’t collected from highway users. It also collects registration fees (ie: for vanity plates) that aren’t required for the legal operation of vehicles on Ohio’s highways. Those fees are spent by ODOT exclusively on roads. Furthermore, roughly half of ODOT’s budget comes from federal sources, and much of that is from the Highway Trust Fund, fueled by federal gas taxes. There is no constitutional restriction on the spending of federal gas tax revenues.

So when ODOT officials say it can’t spend more than 5 percent of its budget on non-highway transportation, that’s simply not accurate, says a report by the Surface

They could leverage an additional $120 million in federal funds.

Even when it comes to federal funds, Ohio Department of Transportation officials are reluctant to acknowledge that some are flexible, even though other states use the same federal sources for adding more bike paths, improving transit and even operating intercity passenger trains.

But every dollar that goes to non-traditional projects replaces a vital highway project desired by a constituency. This is especially true when the highway project addresses a visible trend, like worsening traffic experienced by motorists now. The non-traditional project is something that often promises some economic advantage in the future.

Too much is not enough

A scathing Dec. 31, 2006 article by two Cleveland Plain Dealer reporters showed the constituency influencing the Ohio Department of Transportation is comprised of more than Ohio’s frustrated motorists and isolated, would-be travelers.

Without a vote of the people, Ohio’s per-gallon gasoline tax was raised six cents in 2003 by the Ohio legislature to a new high of 28 cents per gallon (federal gas taxes add another 18.4 cents per gallon, for a total of 46.4 cents). The gas-tax hike was pushed through the Ohio General Assembly by an association of heavy highway construction firms and then-ODOT Director Gordon Proctor, the PD article noted.

The tax increase wasn’t the only change. The Ohio Highway Patrol’s entire $190 million in gas tax funding was reallocated to enable a massive increase in new high-

connecting roads, intermodal projects, transit and rail system improvements are almost totally neglected. Worse, the Jobs and Progress list of projects was not developed using any long-range planning methodology, or input from department staff, according to ODOT insiders. In short, it was developed in a complete vacuum, and not based on any statewide analysis of need.

Mr. Proctor said he wanted to make sure the new gas tax revenues kept pouring in to the new interstate highway construction projects, and defended the construction contractors’ ability to benefit from them.

“My sense is that the contractors are much more adamant than the other groups,” Mr. Proctor wrote in a November 2004 memo to Gov. Bob Taft that was quoted in the PD article. “Protecting the fuel tax is a bright line issue for the contractors, especially so recently after their fuel tax victory.”

Prior to his resignation just days before incoming Gov. Ted Strickland took office, Mr. Proctor’s spokesman told the PD that “there was nothing unseemly about his decision to co-host an invitation-only ‘transportation summit’ in August (2006) with Republican gubernatorial candidate Ken Blackwell and about 60 ODOT contractors. Before turning the dais over to Blackwell, Proctor told the group that he hoped the next governor would keep transportation at the top of his political agenda, saying, ‘I urge all of you to participate in the debate this fall.’”

Gov. Strickland’s spokesman, Keith Dailey, called the event “a shakedown” and, in the PD interview, pledged that the new ODOT director will be ordered “to identify any activity that feeds that perception and stop it immediately.”

If campaign contributions are any indication, Gov. Strickland has little loyalty to highway contractors. While Ohio Republican party candidates received millions from the contractors, Democratic candidates got virtually nothing. During his campaign, Gov. Strickland called for ODOT reform including a “fix-it first” policy to repair existing transportation infrastructure before adding new capacity.

— Continued on page six
Ohio: at a crossroads

Outspending its promises

Like most state transportation departments, ODOT is experiencing significant increases in prices for basic commodities like aggregate, steel, cement and asphalt. Leading these increases is a 130 percent increase in diesel prices since April 2004. Diesel fuel is a prime input to nearly all highway construction activities. Rising global demand for oil, flattening growth in global supplies and political turmoil in the oil-rich Middle East are fueling the price increase.

As a result, ODOT is assuming a nearly 30 percent reduction in purchasing power for 2007-2011. The department will be required to defer, or re-evaluate the need for some large, high-profile construction projects currently scheduled to receive funding in the next five years. Ohio may not have the funding to complete major highway projects promised by the Taft administration, Gov. Strickland said.

Privately, officials in Gov. Strickland's administration expressed anger because they will be the ones who will have to deliver the bad news to communities that were counting on highway projects that might not happen. While it isn't yet known which projects will be affected, those having the largest price tag are likely targets.

Among the most expensive construction projects coming down the pike in the next few years are the $1.5 billion Inner Belt (I-90) reconstruction in downtown Cleveland, the $900 million I-71/I-70 split rebuilding in downtown Columbus and two projects on I-75 in Cincinnati costing at least $500 million.

But Gov. Strickland and his staff may not be able to balance ODOT's budget due to actions by ODOT's senior leadership. To continue to fund the "Jobs and Progress" program, ODOT is borrowing against future allocations of federal funds by spending those dollars today. Not only might those future federal dollars not be available (see article "Federal transport funding faces 'perfect storm'" on Page Three), this action will severely hamper the new administration's efforts to fund its own "fix-it first" priorities with an ODOT saddled by debt.

Building smaller, smarter

Ohio is at a crossroads. While its focus on highway development may have served it well in years past, changing demographic and other trends suggest such will not be the case in the near future. An aging population, ever-increasing vehicular congestion, energy and environmental concerns, land use, urban and economic development issues are not being adequately addressed.

Road traffic congestion in Ohio is increasing at rates faster than population growth, with urban sprawl a major culprit. The situation has become a feedback loop with no end in sight. ODOT is playing a perpetual game of catch-up by adding more road capacity that often ends up worsening the traffic problem exponentially by inducing more sprawl.

At the same time, the development of surface transportation choices, including intercity passenger and freight rail, commuter rail, bus, pedestrian, bicycle, light rail or trolleys continues to languish. These could form the basis for the redevelopment of a 21st century Ohio which will be well adapted to face the challenges of coming decades.

Effective action will take leadership by those who are aware of these issues, especially those of us who support All Aboard Ohio. Also essential will be an analysis of the potential economic and environmental benefits of a broader transportation policy for the state. Groups with similar or common interests need to work together to pursue a shared vision of an Ohio that moves its citizens and visitors on a diverse, interconnected transportation system which spurs smarter urban development patterns.

Ohio can and should be a place that attracts jobs, young people and immigrants and allows low-income citizens to reach jobs without bearing the huge financial burden of car ownership. Seniors wanting to remain mobile, businesspeople wishing to stay productive while they travel in Ohio and tourism providers desiring year-round activity also have much to gain from better rail/transit services.
New ODOT Director named

“Director” from page one—multi-modal economically driven project selection process that serves all of Ohio. This process needs to realize that land-use patterns are a direct result of the transportation system serving them. Planning and decision making should be weighted toward containing urban sprawl.

“State government aggravates the situation by facilitating and promoting the development of new communities (by, for example, widening highways and building interchanges, which are powerful boosters of development) and then disregarding the deleterious effects on old communities.

“Thought should be given to creating an integrated network of multi-modal facilities that seamlessly links Ohio’s citizens, businesses, railways, highways, and port facilities into the most efficient transportation system possible. Ohio can be a premier gateway to international commerce and a hub for the nation’s freight,” Mr. Beasley’s report said.

“Jim understands that an efficient and reliable transportation network contributes to and enhances economic growth,” said Gov. Strickland in a written statement. “I am confident that he will not only be a tremendous leader in developing and maintaining safe roads for Ohioans, but will guide the department in a way that helps create jobs.”

Prior to appointing Mr. Beasley, Gov. Strickland named Steve Campbell as ODOT’s chief of staff. Campbell, 43, was Columbus Mayor Michael Coleman’s senior adviser on regional affairs and deputy chief of staff from 2000-05. Mr. Campbell left that post to be director of Mayor Coleman’s brief run for governor in 2005.

Naming Mr. Campbell before choosing ODOT’s director apparently was a message by Gov. Strickland that ODOT staff answers to the governor first.

Despite a six-cent per gallon increase in the state gas tax and the redirecting of $190 million in gas-tax funding from the Ohio Highway Patrol to more highway construction, the Ohio Department of Transportation faces a $1.5 billion budget shortfall. ODOT’s steadily rising budget is graphically depicted here, as is the near total lack of funding for non-highway transportation.

All Aboard Ohio fill Board vacancies

At its regular meeting Feb. 10, the All Aboard Ohio Board of Directors selected two very capable people to fill vacancies within its ranks. Appointed to the board were former Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers President Ed D’Amato and Central Ohio entrepreneur and Depot Conference Center owner Barry Fromm.

Mr. Fromm, 56, of Columbus, was appointed to an at-large board seat. He is founder, president and chief executive officer of Value Recovery Group which specializes in resolving disputes between debtors and creditors on behalf of agencies such as the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. and the Export-Import Bank. A real estate attorney, he served in management, marketing and general counsel positions at several leading financial institutions.

In 2004, Mr. Fromm purchased the Brice, OH depot of the Toledo & Ohio Central Railroad, moved it next to his offices on Henderson Road in northwest Columbus and renovated the station into the Depot Conference Center. Mr. Fromm said he believes better transit and rail transportation is vital to the economic competitiveness of Ohio.

Mr. D’Amato, 39, of Berea, was appointed as immediate past president of All Aboard Ohio. He is no stranger to railroads and transit, either. Prior to serving as president of the association from 2002-04, he was its secretary from 2000-02. He devoted the last couple of years to take care of family matters.

But his desire to continue advocating for transportation and sustainability issues brought him back to All Aboard Ohio. In his professional life, Mr. D’Amato is an investigator for the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency’s Division of Hazardous Waste Management in its North East District Office located in Twinsburg.
**Directory of All Aboard Ohio**

**Officers**

- **PRESIDENT**
  Bill Hutchison
  Westerville, OH

- **PAST-PRESIDENT**
  Edward D'Amato
  Berea, OH

- **VICE-PRESIDENT**
  Kimberly Gibson
  Columbus, OH

- **SECRETARY**
  Tony Lococo
  Grandview, OH

- **TREASURER**
  Kenneth Clifford
  Medway, OH

- **NORTHEAST REGION**
  Bill O'Brien
  Bay Village, OH

- **NORTHWEST REGION**
  vacant

- **SOUTHWEST REGION**
  David Burns
  West Milton, OH

- **CENTRAL/S.E. REGION**
  Frank O'Hare
  Gahanna, OH

- **AT-LARGE**
  Kenneth Sislak
  Cleveland, OH

- **AT-LARGE**
  Jolene Moltoris
  Dublin, OH

- **AT-LARGE**
  Mark Carlson
  Bay Village, OH

- **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**
  Andrew Bremer
  309 S Fourth Street
  Columbus 43215-5428

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

- **EDITOR, OHIO PASSENGER RAIL NEWS**
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- **clanobrien@comcast.net**
- **daromatt@earthlink.net**
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- **mdcarlson@core.com**

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**Local Meeting Contacts**

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  Cleveland
  Ken Prendergast
  216 / 288-4883

- **NORTHWEST**
  Toledo
  Bill Gill
  419 / 536-1924

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

- **CENTRAL/S.E.**
  Columbus
  John Manning
  614 / 443-8742

**National Association of Railroad Passengers**

**NARP National Office**

Executive Director
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David Johnson
fax:202 / 408-8287

900 Second Street, NE #308
Washington DC 20002-3557

e-mail: narp@narprail.org
Web: www.narprail.org

**NARP Directors from Ohio**

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  mdcarlston@core.com

- **Phil Copeland**
  Elyria, OH
  plcop@eriecoast.com

- **Kenneth Clifford**
  Medway, OH
  ken_clifford_cpa@earthlink.net

- **J. Howard Harding**
  Akron, OH
  hardio@earthlink.net

Updated: August 2006

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**Thank-you, All Aboard Ohio supporters!**

Below are some of the foundations, corporations, non-profit organizations, and labor unions that support All Aboard Ohio activities. The support of our corporate sponsors and of our dues-paying members allows us to work "for improved passenger rail service for all Ohioans and for Ohio.
Below are some of the foundations, corporations, non-profit organizations, and labor unions that support All Aboard Ohio activities. The support of our corporate sponsors, and of our dues-paying members, allows us to work “for improved passenger train and transit services in Ohio.”

**Foundations**

- THE DAYTON FOUNDATION
  - We're here for good.
- THE GEORGE GUND FOUNDATION
- Stocker Foundation
  - Over 25 Years of Giving

**Corporate Sponsors**

- Gannett Fleming
- PARSONS BRINCKERHOFF
- CityWheels
  - The smarter way to drive
- APTA
- ACB

**Non-profit Organizations**

- American Public Transit Association
- Ohio VANES
- Paper Retriever
- Environmental Support Center

**Labor Unions**

- Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employee Division
- Transport Workers Union of America

**Give Smart!**

Let us help you plan your charitable giving to assist All Aboard Ohio in bringing improved passenger rail service to Ohio while maximizing your tax benefits.

- Gifts of Cash, stocks and bonds and other property
- Charitable gift annuities
- Trusts
- Bequests

For more information about “Give Smart” please contact the All Aboard Ohio office at (614) 228-6005.
Walking is healthy for cities, too

Reducing our dependence on cars isn’t just about more trains and buses. In fact, one of the best ways to tackle traffic congestion, limit urban sprawl, reduce oil use, promote physical fitness while fostering economic health is to redesign existing communities to make them more pedestrian friendly.

New Urbanist architect Peter Calethorpe is known for his planning exercises that show how to transform communities into something more walkable, including these images of the Colfax district of Denver, just a couple of blocks from the downtown transit mall.

The historic but faded neighborhood above is revived in the scene below with wider sidewalks, more shade trees and narrower streets to calm traffic.

Building design also can make pedestrians feel welcome and secure. A healthy mix of shops, services and cafes are placed on the ground floors of residential and office buildings. Lots of windows shed light on the sidewalk, put “more eyes on the street” and allow the neighborhood to police itself. The end result is an intimate, secure and vibrant setting for pedestrians. And, since light-rail and bus transit depend on walking communities for all-day ridership, the setting shown below also is more transit-friendly.
# Calendar of Events/Meetings

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

## March 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3rd Annual Rail/Transit Legislative Summit</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>YWCA (Huntington Hall), 65 S. Fourth St., Columbus</td>
<td>All Aboard Ohio 614 / 228-6005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ohio Rail Development Comm.</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Riffe Center; 77 S. High Street, Room 1948, Columbus</td>
<td>ORDC 614 / 644-0306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Columbus Local Meeting</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>Red Door Tavern, 1736 West 5th Avenue, Columbus</td>
<td>John Manning 614 / 443-8742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Toledo Local Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Toledo Amtrak Station, MLK (Central Union) Plaza, Toledo</td>
<td>Bill Gill 419 / 536-1924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>NARP Region 6 Membership Mtg</td>
<td>9:00 am</td>
<td>Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson, Chicago, IL</td>
<td><a href="http://www.midwesthsr.org">www.midwesthsr.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## April 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<th>Contact information</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Columbus Local Meeting</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>Red Door Tavern, 1736 West 5th Avenue, Columbus</td>
<td>John Manning 614 / 443-8742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Toledo Local Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Toledo Amtrak Station, MLK (Central Union) Plaza, Toledo</td>
<td>Bill Gill 419 / 536-1924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>West Shore Corridor Stakeholder mtg</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>Ken Prendergast 216 / 288-4883</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## May 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>All Aboard Ohio Board Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>All Aboard Ohio 614 / 228-6005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Columbus Local Meeting</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
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<td>Toledo Local Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Ohio Rail Development Comm.</td>
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<td>Riffe Center; 77 S. High Street, Room 1948, Columbus</td>
<td>ORDC 614 / 644-0306</td>
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## June 2007

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Location</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Columbus Local Meeting</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>Red Door Tavern, 1736 West 5th Avenue</td>
<td>John Manning 614 / 443-8742</td>
</tr>
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<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Toledo Amtrak Station, MLK (Central Union) Plaza, Toledo</td>
<td>Bill Gill 419 / 536-1924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>All Aboard Ohio Annual Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>Athens, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All Aboard Ohio 614 / 228-6005</td>
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</tbody>
</table>