Two visions for getting Ohioans moving again

Envision it. Over the next few years, bits and pieces of the planned Ohio Hub system begin appearing on the landscape. By themselves, they don’t appear to be much.

In this “Bits and Pieces” approach, the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) could grab the low-hanging fruit along 1,244 miles of rail corridors identified for development by its Ohio Hub Plan. The ORDC could prioritize projects, then coordinate and target existing and eligible local, state and federal funding at needed improvements to grade crossings, stations, rights of way, train equipment and operating costs, such as tourism marketing and liability insurance.

They could include expanding train stations on existing Amtrak routes by tapping federal enhancement funds to add second platforms to increase the capacity of busy double-tracked railroads. Single-platform stations at Sandusky and Elyria come to mind. Instigating the development of multi-modal transportation centers in places like Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati in conjunction with port authorities and/or private developers may take longer, but could begin in the short-term.

Other pieces could involve enhancing road-rail crossing safety equipment on a section of railroad, such as a portion of the cab-signaled Norfolk Southern mainline between Cleveland and Pittsburgh, to safely raise passenger train speeds to 90 mph. If a federal high speed designation is secured for that corridor, Federal Railroad Administration grade crossing program funds can be had.

Right of way improvements could include using federal Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ) funding to build passing sidings that alleviate rail traffic bottlenecks and reduce diesel exhaust emissions from idling trains in communities like Berea, Macedonia, the north sides of Columbus and Cincinnati and many other places.

Travel/tourism marketing efforts can initially be focused on existing services. Such as, relevant state agencies could urge creation of and promote a rail-air travel package to Chicago business travelers to take the overnight Amtrak train to Cleveland one way and fly home. That would spare them the cost of a hotel or waking up at 4 a.m. to catch an early flight. But can a single rail line and other means of passenger transportation be sufficient to attract the number of people expected to travel to and from Ohio through a central terminal?
Cincinnati streetcars may roll again in 2010

CINCINNATI — A financing plan to build a downtown streetcar was announced by City Manager Milton Dohoney and favorably received by City Council’s Economic Development Committee Oct. 16. If the full council approves the plan by the end of the year, construction could begin by the end of 2008 with electrically-powered streetcars operating in 2010.

The initial route would link The Banks on the city’s riverfront to Findlay Market via the central business district and the historic Over-The-Rhine neighborhood. Every 10 minutes during peak travel times and 20 minutes off-peak, modern streetcars (as opposed to using restored historic trolleys or replica heritage streetcars) would circulate around the 3.9-mile, 18-stop route on Walnut, Main, Race and Elm streets. An average daily ridership of 4,600 passengers in 2010, and 6,400 riders in 2015 would pay fares of 50 cents per trip.

What has city officials and many others excited about the streetcar is its potential to spur new economic development by fostering a low-mileage lifestyle. The economic benefits are estimated at more than $1.9 billion in the streetcar’s first decade, according to the international transportation planning firm HDR Engineering Inc. The cost of building the initial streetcar route, including buying streetcars and constructing a maintenance facility, is $102 million.

That’s a benefit-to-cost ratio of 15.2 to 1. Such a low-mileage lifestyle is an attractive

— See “Streetcar” on page six

Photo courtesy of the National Corridors Initiative
North Carolina Department of Transportation’s two state-supported trains, the Piedmont and the Carolinian, meet at the High Point, NC station. Not only was the station recently improved using state funds, but so were the trains, tracks and the railroad’s traffic control system. None of these investments were made by the state all at once, but as part of a multi-year program ranging in size from a few million dollars per year from the outset in the early 1990s to more than $40 million in recent years. It’s a passenger rail development model that Ohio should follow.

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Train of Thought
from Ohio Passenger Rail News Editor
Kenneth Prendergast

In Ohio, history seems to have a way of repeating itself when it comes to developing modern passenger train services. Once again, Ohio has a terrific plan. The Ohio Hub is the latest incarnation of a planning process which has reached the zenith of past passenger rail development endeavors. Prior efforts haven’t gone beyond the planning stage – nor will the Ohio Hub in the absence of a federal capital program for passenger trains, says the Ohio Rail Development Commission.

ORDC’s board and staff contend that, in order to run passenger trains properly (on-time service, low fares, trains that run when people want them, time-competitive schedules with driving, good customer service, etc.), you can’t do it on the cheap.

ORDC says you can’t start out with one or two trains a day. You can’t run trains without stations, which are absent in cities like Columbus, Dayton and Springfield or need major investment or relocation in Cincinnati, Cleveland and other places to handle multiple daily trains. And, you can’t run passenger trains on busy freight tracks without big investments in added tracks and signal systems or the trains will run too slowly to compete with driving. Nor will the trains operate on time.

That’s all very true. We all want four to eight daily round-trip trains linking quality stations on-time via capacity-enhanced freight railroads. This will not come cheap – even if train speeds are limited to 79 mph. The question is: how do we get there?

The cost for starting up that level of service could easily exceed $500 million for the Cleveland - Cincinnati and Detroit - Pittsburgh corridors, or $1 billion total. ORDC wants federal funds to pay 80 percent of that cost because, in their words, “that’s where the money is at.”

Not yet it isn’t. Congress’ dustbin is littered with 20 years of failed efforts at getting a federal capital program for rail. Remember the Ampenny, passenger rail eligibility in the landmark 1991 surface transportation law, ARRIVE-21, or RIDES-21? Each time another rail bill fails to pass, the nationwide backlog of unfunded rail projects rises. At last count, the backlog is $60 billion, according to the American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials. When a bill passes, Ohio will have to get in line, just like every other state.

I have no doubts that someday we’ll have a breakthrough. It also took Congress decades to create the Interstate Highway System and the Airport & Airways Trust Fund that unified pre-existing local and state programs for roads and airports. While Congress talked about having better trains, a number of states acted. They
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While Congress talked about having better trains, a number of states acted. They created passenger rail programs to start the very same kinds of basic train services which ORDc believes would not succeed. One of those states is North Carolina, whose efforts are detailed in this newsletter. It began its passenger rail development program modestly in 1990 with the inauguration of Amtrak’s New York City - Charlotte Carolinian and, in 1995, added Amtrak’s Charlotte - Raleigh Piedmont. Neither train was very fast, averaging just 46 mph across North Carolina. They often didn’t run on time as they had to wait in scarce sidings for freight traffic to pass. Many stations were peeling-paint relics of a bygone age.

Yet North Carolina’s Department of Transportation took control of marketing the trains to the public and implemented a network of volunteer train hosts to give passengers information and other assistance. Despite the trains’ shortcomings, people showed up to ride them – and in greater numbers than state officials originally predicted.

That turnout and the resultant public constituency bolstered state officials to make major investments in its twice-daily passenger train service. In 1996, North Carolina began investing in more and better tracks, grade crossings, signal systems and stations. It used revenues from a state-owned railway, the North Carolina Railroad, to leverage the same federal funding resources available to Ohio. Those included grade crossing improvement funds, station enhancement grants, congestion mitigation funds and even National Highway System dollars.

More than $200 million has been invested thus far, accelerating trains to highway-competitive speeds, improving on-time performance, increasing track capacity for more passenger and freight trains and providing quality station facilities as focal points for community transportation. And, if a federal rail program should come along, then the state will be able to speed up its timetable for getting the same kinds of train services Ohio wants for its initial offering. But North Carolina isn’t holding its breath.

Neither should Ohio.
Getting the Ohio Hub up to speed

“Speed” from page one —

rail and create demand for service expansions.

Lastly, quality second-hand train cars and locomotives can be had and refurbished for pennies on the dollar for introductory services, once the infrastructure impediments mentioned earlier are addressed. State operating funding for a purchase of service contract from Amtrak or some unidentified operator would be needed.

Existing funds from a mix of sources can be tapped to achieve many of these steps in this bits and pieces approach. More features of the plan can be steadily added in subsequent years as rail-supportive constituencies grow and funding allows. They could include building important track connections, like at Ravenna, to get passenger trains on more populous routes. They could involve developing or renovating stations as transportation hubs for their communities. And, they could also include building passing sidings on busy freight railroads to provide a more fluid path for new passenger trains.

Each round of new investments would stitch together previous ones to begin creating a true system that starts to resemble not only the full build-out of the envisioned Ohio Hub System, but the kinds of train services offered in other states. It would erode a long-entrenched skepticism and replace it with a buzz of excitement among community leaders, state legislators and federal officials about passenger rail in Ohio.

In the first couple of years, the ORDC could cobble together several million dollars from a variety of public sources (state and federal grade crossing program, federal enhancements, federal transit, CMAQ, ORDC, Ohio Department of Development and its Division of Travel and Tourism, plus local and private funding). As state legislators see a track record of success emerging, they might feel confident enough to grow the annual investment in passenger rail in subsequent years.

Like the old saying goes, a few million dollars here, a few million there, and soon you’re talking real money. passenger train services on its own dime. That is the approach favored by the All Aboard Ohio Board of Directors.

Another alternative is to seek, from the outset, four to eight round-trip trains a day traveling at 79 mph on at least one or two routes of the Ohio Hub System. Studies done on behalf of the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) show that such a “Big Bang” approach could cost up to a half-billion dollars for each of two possible initial routes. One would link Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, and Cincinnati and the other would link Detroit, Toledo, Cleveland, Youngstown and Pittsburgh.

Although the start-up costs from the Big Bang approach would be large, greater economic impacts would be achieved earlier. The aforementioned two routes would generate a bulk of the economic benefits from the overall Ohio Hub System, according to Transportation Economics & Management Systems Inc. which performed the Ohio Hub Passenger Rail Economic Impact Study, issued in May 2007. In the first 30 years after the Ohio Hub System is built-out, the system is projected to:

- create 16,700 permanent jobs, mostly in Ohio;
- generate more than $3 billion in development activity near stations;
- benefit freight rail operations by $3 billion to $6 billion;
- save approximately 9.4 million gallons of fuel.

Those are just a few of the predicted impacts. The net result is development of the $4.9 billion Ohio Hub System will reap $9 billion in benefits, for a 180 percent return on investment. Those numbers don’t include three new Columbus-based routes (to Chicago, Pittsburgh and Toledo) added to the Ohio Hub plan in 2007. To get a copy of the Ohio Hub Passenger Rail Economic Impact Study, visit www.ohiohub.org or call the ORDC at (614) 644-0306.

Given that federal funding covering 80 percent of the capital investment would be required for such a large investment, the environmental impact analysis (costing $5 million to $6 million) would need to be done first. Studies are perishable — they have a shelf life of maybe five years before they become outdated. Consider the 3-C Corridor revenue-cost study from 2001. ORDC staff is considering a tentative source has been identified and may be useful — leveraging federal funds from recent investments in Ohio Hub rail corridors, including more than $100 million from the state’s grade-crossing separation program.

Under federal guidelines, the environmental impact analysis would be followed by preliminary engineering, or PE. Typically costing about 10 percent of total construction costs, PE for one route (if six more round trip trains are sought at once) could cost $50 million up front. Then, after preliminary engineering, comes final engineering and construction that will require several more years. ORDC estimates that service could begin in as early as seven years. That’s if enough federal funds become available now and other states don’t soak them all up for their backlog of unfunded projects measuring in the tens of billions of dollars.

In each of the last two years, ORDC has requested but not received federal funding for the Ohio Hub environmental impact analysis. The requests were made through supportive members of the Ohio Congressional Delegation. And, while there has been a flurry of activity in Congress in the last decade to pass a multi-year, federal-state matching program for passenger rail development, only a small, one-year program of between $50 million and $100 million is certain for next year.

ORDC is rightly energized by the Ohio Hub Plan. It’s a terrific, big vision. Ultimately, it is a template to guide public investments in achievable steps. ORDC could match investments in infrastructure to eligible funding sources, and present those in a timeline for implementation to begin filling out that template. If, someday, a large and long-term federal passenger rail development program is created by Congress, then the ORDC’s timetable might be accelerated.
The Executive Director Report

Educating others, expanding the association continues

By Andrew Bremer
Executive Director, All Aboard Ohio

This is my first report as All Aboard Ohio’s executive director. I’m thankful to the board of directors for naming me to that post this past summer. It’s been a busy time at All Aboard Ohio since then.

At the annual meeting in Athens, three new board members were elected by the membership — Jack Shaner, who is public affairs director at the Ohio Environmental Council; Northwest Region Director Richard Straub of Marion; and Phil Russo of Toledo. Reelected to the board are Northeast Region Director Ken Sislik, associate vice president of DMJM Harris; Southwest Region Director David Burns, senior project specialist at Motoman Inc.; Central/Southeast Region Director Barry Fromm, president and CEO of Value Recovery Group; and At-Large Director Jolene M. Molitoris, president and CEO of The Molitoris Group. Mrs. Molitoris has since had to resign upon becoming chairperson of the Ohio Rail Development Commission.

On behalf of All Aboard Ohio, I’d like to thank outgoing board members Kimberly Gibson of Columbus, Bill O’Brien of Bay Village and Frank O’Hare of Gahanna for their valuable contributions to the association. While Mr. O’Brien and Mr. O’Hare faced term limits, Mrs. Gibson was named special assistant for energy, transportation & regional collaboration at the Ohio Department of Development. All have pledged to continue their support of All Aboard Ohio and its goals.

While dues renewals are an annual activity, there is a change most members won’t notice. While the majority of our membership renews around Dec. 1 (the beginning of our fiscal year), this past year we have implemented new technology that will allow us to keep track of membership dues and donations on a rolling basis. I encourage all members to continue their vote of confidence in All Aboard Ohio and renew at a higher membership rate.

Our membership drive continues. Every two weeks our Columbus office mails 200 membership packets to prospective members in the state of Ohio. These membership packets contain information about passenger rail, All Aboard Ohio and how to join. Our positive response rate from these mailings is holding steady around 4 percent. This means that on a rolling basis, this membership drive is paying for itself. I am sure our response rate to this drive will improve if more phone calls are made to prospective members. I am always looking for volunteers that will help me with this aspect of the membership drive. The best way to help the cause of passenger rail is to literally get on the phones and spread the good news.

I have been engaged in several meetings that enhance All Aboard Ohio’s presence and standing among other professional and non-profit organizations. All Aboard Ohio was a sponsor at this year’s Ohio Planning Conference where many municipal planners, engineers and private firms had an opportunity to see our recently updated display materials. Besides the Ohio Planning Conference, I have been involved with the Ohio Transportation Working Group, made possible through the Cleveland Foundation. The Ohio Transportation Working Group was formulated to identify and address Ohio’s transportation needs and policy recommendations for the next 30 years.

All Aboard Ohio and the Midwest High Speed Rail Association held a joint fall meeting Oct. 23 in Cleveland to develop ideas for an emerging proposal to increase Amtrak service between Chicago and the East Coast. Our gracious host, the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority opened its headquarters for us and the meeting was attended by 45 people. All Aboard Ohio’s Director of Research and Communications Ken Prendergast gave a presentation on North Carolina’s support for passenger rail services. Momentum from this meeting looks promising.

In the coming months, I will be working on implementing All Aboard Ohio’s strategic plan which could be approved by our board of directors in December. As the plan now stands, I will be working on promoting garnering sponsorships for our Fourth Annual Rail/Transit Legislative Summit. I will also be taking the opportunity to spread the good news of passenger rail to every locality in Ohio.

We have organized, credible evidence that passenger rail is supported by a vast majority of Ohioans, will be a valued asset to many communities and can be part of a solution to our energy, congestion and economic issues. It is my firm intention that, through our efforts and the efforts of our members and volunteers, we will make 2008 a year to remember.
Tar Heels have a lot to teach an

By Ken Prendergast
Director, Research & Communications
All Aboard Ohio

When looking for a state to use as an example for Ohio to follow in developing passenger rail service, Amtrak’s new Senior Officer for Government Affairs-Midwest Derrick James pointed southward to North Carolina. The reason?

Until 1990, North Carolina was merely a pass-through state for Amtrak trains between the Northeast and Florida or New Orleans. Six of its 10 Amtrak trains passed through state in the middle of the night, including the nonstop Auto Train. The Tar Heel State also lacked a metropolitan area the size of New York, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles to serve as an anchor city for an Amtrak route.

And, like Ohio, North Carolina had a state-supported train that failed to survive a full year. Ohio and New York sponsored Amtrak’s Lake Shore in 1971 but the train was withdrawn when Ohio didn’t make a payment. The train returned in 1975 as an experimental Basic System train, the Lake Shore Limited, that’s been running ever since. Unlike Ohio, our friends down south let only five years go by before it tried again. Ohio’s absence of state support for passenger train service is at 36 years and still counting.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) was directed in 1977 by the General Assembly and new Gov. James Hunt (1977-1985, 1993-2001) to undertake a railroad revitalization campaign, the forerunner of today’s NCDOT Rail Division, to promote economic development by:

- Expanding, improving and marketing intercity passenger train service.
- Partnering with the Federal Railroad Administration to inspect the state’s railroads.
- Providing rail industrial access for businesses employing more workers.
- Improving safety at railway-highway intersections.
- Preserving railway corridors and modernizing railroad tracks.

The legislative directive was made two years before only the nocturnal Amtrak Crescent.

Gov. Hunt and NCDOT changed that in 1984 by sponsoring a new Amtrak train traveling Charlotte to New York City, yet on a route different than that of the Crescent via Charlottesville VA. Instead, the new Carolinian turned off the Crescent route at Greensboro and traveled via the state capital of Raleigh, NC before heading north to join the Northeast Corridor to the Big Apple.

The Charlotte-Raleigh portion is actually the state-owned North Carolina Railroad (NCRR), but leased to Norfolk Southern (Southern Railway’s 1982 successor). The NCRR has its own board of directors (appointed by the governor and legislature). But the NCDOT Rail Division oversees planning, inspection and construction for the state’s railroads.

In Greensboro, NC, the J. Douglas Galyon Transportation Center sparkles in 2005 after a $32.6 million renovation. The 1927-built Southern Railway station was donated to the city in 1978, but fell into disrepair with disuse. It now bustles with activity from local and intercity bus travelers, as well as from 72,000 rail passengers per year getting on and off six daily Amtrak trains.

The key to the Carolinian’s success was the involvement of the Carolina Railfan Club (CARF). CARF was founded in 1969 by a group of rail enthusiasts who were concerned about the state’s rail infrastructure. The club’s mission is to promote and preserve railroading in North Carolina.

Operating the Carolinian was a joint effort between NCDOT and the Carolina Railfan Club. CARF volunteers worked on a variety of projects, from cleaning up the station to helping with ticket sales. The club also provided funding for station improvements.

The Carolinian is a unique and valuable asset to the state of North Carolina. It connects the city of Greensboro to the Northeast Corridor, providing a much-needed service to the people of the state.

In conclusion, North Carolina is an excellent example for Ohio to follow in developing passenger rail service. By leveraging the state’s existing infrastructure and community support, Ohio can successfully launch its own intercity rail service.
NCDOT also launched the North Carolina Train Host Association which today numbers more than 100 volunteers serving as North Carolina’s “goodwill ambassadors” on state-sponsored trains and at stations. The train hosts help to orient passengers, answer questions, point out sights of interest along the way and offer a helping hand.

“Those volunteer hosts have been a tremendous asset for our passengers and train crews,” said then-NCDOT Secretary David McCoy. “This program has served as a role model for several other states who are interested in implementing similar services.”

Despite the train taking three hours and 45 minutes, averaging just 46 mph on the 174-mile Charlotte-Raleigh segment (which motorists could drive in three hours), the Carolinian in its first year carried 124,000 passengers—exceeding expectations by 30 percent. The ridership data didn’t include travel within the Northeast Corridor. The popular Carolinian has more than 183,000 patrons each year and, in its first decade, the train’s annual operating surpluses rose from $200,000 to $1.6 million.

The Carolinian’s passenger load factor is a strong 67.5 percent, which means that at some point along its non-Northeast Corridor route, every seat gets occupied by entraining and detraining passengers at intermediate station stops. Today, the Carolinian is one of the most financially successful state-sponsored intercity passenger trains in the nation—despite the fact that the train often runs more than an hour late.

NCDOT, again under Gov. Hunt’s leadership, used that success to seek $1.8 million in additional operating support from the General Assembly for a second state-sponsored train. But since Amtrak had no train equipment available for it, NCDOT acquired five used railcars and two remanufactured locomotives for $2.2 million— or one-fourth the cost of newly purchased rolling stock.

In 1995, the Charlotte-Raleigh Piedmont began service under an operating contract with Amtrak. It attracted 25,000 passengers during its first year and has consistently been rated first or second nationwide in customer satisfaction. The Piedmont now carries more than 55,000 passengers each year and has a load factor of 49.5 percent—higher than many state-sponsored trains nationwide.

When added to the ridership on Amtrak’s Basic System trains (Crescent, Silver Star, Silver Meteor, Palmetto)

—Continued on page five
that traveled through the state, passenger trains carried 567,472 passengers to, from and within North Carolina in 2006 – a 125-percent jump since 1990.

Simply providing more train service was just a part of the story.

In 1992, the United States Department of Transportation designated the Washington, D.C. - Raleigh - Charlotte (Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor) as a future high-speed rail corridor, making it eligible to receive federal planning and development funding. The corridor has since been extended to Atlanta and Macon GA, Columbia SC and Jacksonville FL.

Gov. Hunt argued that improving passenger service will help spur economic development, as an efficient transportation network encourages companies to expand or relocate to North Carolina. He argued that the rail travel time between Raleigh and Charlotte needed to be reduced from three hours, 45 minutes to two hours flat. To that end, NCDOT and Amtrak commissioned JBM Engineers & Planners, Inc. to conduct an engineering analysis of two prospective rail routes – the Northern Route and the Southern Route – between Raleigh and Charlotte.

The Northern Route was favored for immediate development as it followed the existing NCRR/Amtrak route via Durham and Greensboro (the Southern Route was a CSX line with less enroute population). The evaluation, completed in 1996, determined that $371 million worth of track, signalization and infrastructure improvements would be necessary to upgrade the Northern Route to 100 mph to meet Gov. Hunt’s goal of a two-hour schedule. The improvements were projected to boost ridership and revenue by 300 percent.

Rather than seek the improvements all at once, the report recommended staged construction within 64 individual track segments and identified their corresponding costs. Projects would be implemented using the same funding sources available to virtually every other state, including Ohio.

An agreement was executed between NCDOT, NCRR, Norfolk Southern and CSX Transportation to begin the North Carolina Railroad Improvement Project (NCRRIP) to undertake improvements between Raleigh and Charlotte:

- $4.3 million for upgrading and lengthening sidings.
- $2.7 million installation of new crossties between Raleigh and Selma; and
- $19 million in construction of new passing sidings at Auburn, Powhatan and Selma and restoration of the Selma rail yard.

Higher speeds for passenger trains were enabled by adding new switches with more gradual turnouts in 2005 at the Elm Interlocking in Greensboro, NC. A second track was also built at the Greensboro station so more than one train could serve the station at a time. This $1.27 million project, funded by the North Carolina Department of Transportation, is just one of many like it across the state.

To date, the state has also invested heavily in its Sealed Services, projected to cost $3.5 billion, are similar to Amtrak's Acela Express. The state's investment in Amtrak, including significant improvements in service quality, amount to a multi-billion dollar commitment.
An agreement was executed between NCDOT, NCRR, Norfolk Southern and CSX Transportation to begin the North Carolina Railroad Improvement Project (NCRIP) to undertake improvements between Raleigh and Charlotte: 
- $4.3 million for upgrading and lengthening sidings in McLeanville, Mebane and West Durham to increase siding speed and capacity;
- $5 million for an interlockings upgrade at East Durham and downtown Greensboro to provide for higher speeds and improved capacity;
- $5 million for curve super-elevation (banking) increase and realignment, including modifications on some bridge decks and culverts, to accommodate higher speeds; and
- Installation of a $12.1 million Centralized Traffic Control signal system between Cary and Greensboro to allow passenger trains to operate at up to 79 mph (previous maximum authorized passenger train speed was 59 mph) and to reduce delays associated with meeting and passing trains.
- $6.5 million for construction of a 10,400-foot passing siding in East Durham;
- $3 million for replacements of switch turnouts in Kannapolis and Salisbury to accommodate faster speeds;
- $12 million for construction of a 10,000-foot passing siding in Haw River;
- $12 million for construction of a second main track to improve railroad capacity and passenger train reliability between Thomasville and Lexington (planning work underway); and
- $20 million for double-tracking an 8.75-mile single-track segment between Greensboro and High Point.

Construction is due to be finished in late 2008.

The NCRIP funding used in these projects came from a variety of federal and state sources, including an earmarked portion of federal National Highway System funds for the Centralized Traffic Control signal system. Federal Congestion Mitigation Air Quality funds were also used for those projects in metropolitan counties that did not meet federal standards for air quality.

In addition to the NCRIP projects, the NCRR has invested in improvement projects along its corridor, including these which enhance existing passenger rail services:
- $5.5 million bridge replacement at NC Route 54 in Research Triangle Park (near Durham) to a double-track configuration; and
- $3.5 million bridge replacement east of NC Route 54 in Research Triangle Park (near Durham) to allow a double-track configuration between Durham and Raleigh.

To date, the state has also invested heavily in its Sealed Corridor Initiative to eliminate highway/rail at-grade crossing hazards along the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor, enabling pursuit of higher speeds for passenger trains. NCDOT received these federal funds to implement its Sealed Corridor:
- $2.8 million in federal Section 1010 funding;
- $1.9 million in federal Section 1105(c) funding; and
- $8 million in Next Generation High Speed Rail program funding from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

The improvements resulted in Raleigh-Charlotte travel-time reductions of 21 to 36 minutes, depending on the train. The Piedmont now travels the 174-mile corridor in three hours, 10 minutes – nearly the three-hour driving time.

And, of course, you can’t have attractive passenger train service without attractive stations. NCDOT has undertaken an initiative to rebuild and improve many of the state’s historic train stations by approaching affected communities, leveraging federal enhancement funds and finding office, retail and other tenants to provide private funding.

This has included such projects as:
- A new $300,000 station platform to allow Amtrak’s Silver Star to stop in Cary;
- $3.26 million for the renovation and reopening of the Southern Railway Station in downtown Greensboro for passenger rail, plus local and intercity bus services;
- $6.8 million High Point station renovation;
- $1.6 million Marion station rehabilitation;
- $1 million Morganton station renovation;
- $1.4 million Old Fort depot improvements;
- $9.3 million Rocky Mount station enhancements;
- $4 million Salisbury station renovations;
- $3.6 million Selma station upgrade;
- $800,000 Southern Pines depot improvements;
- $2.5 million Wilson station rehabilitation;
- $11.7 million Hamlet Seaboard Station relocation and restoration; and
- $2.7 million new station in downtown Kannapolis.

Additional right of way improvements are planned. They include the installation of an advanced signal system to allow passenger train speeds of up to 95 mph and the construction of railroad bypasses around towns

Higher speeds for passenger trains were enabled by adding new switches with more gradual turnouts in 2005 at the Elm Interlocking in Greensboro, NC. A second track was also built at the Greensboro station so more than one train could serve the station at a time. This $1.27 million project, funded by the North Carolina Department of Transportation, is just one of many like it across the state.

services, projected to cost $3.5 billion, are similar to those envisioned in the Ohio Hub Plan.

Development of passenger train services at conventional speeds (79 mph) on existing, active rights of way typically do not require federal environmental impact studies. However, to be eligible for federal funds to increase train frequencies and speeds above 79 mph and acquire right of way, environmental impact studies are often needed. Thus, in 1998, NCDOT signed a memorandum of understanding with the Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration and the FRA to jointly develop environmental documentation for the SEHSR in Virginia and North Carolina.

Environmental impact studies of the Washington DC - Charlotte route began in 1999, with $300,000 combined from North Carolina and Virginia and $200,000 from the FRA. The Tier I study identified a preferred corridor in 2002 and the FRA approved the project, allowing the second round of environmental studies to begin. North Carolina and Virginia contributed a combined $521,528, matched by $496,750 from the FRA. The Tier II study started in 2003, but will look at only the Raleigh - Richmond VA segment. It is scheduled to be completed in 2009, allowing for right-of-way and permit acquisition.

Implementation of 110-mph train service from Washington DC to Charlotte as a result of this planning will likely happen only if Congress creates a significant, nationwide passenger rail development program. However, the desire of NCDOT and Virginia Department of Rail & Public Transportation is to further develop passenger rail service starting as early as 2013.

In the meantime, travel time will continue to be reduced, the number of trains expanded, ridership increased and economic growth enhanced on the existing Charlotte-Raleigh Amtrak corridor. In 2006, Amtrak direct procurement and employee spending in the North Carolina’s economy was $16.1 million, not including economic multipliers, environmental and energy savings, or the more than $200 million invested in railroad construction projects in recent years. All told, these could exceed $1.8 billion in benefits to North Carolina’s economy.

On that score alone, it’s easy to see why Mr. James suggested North Carolina as a model for Ohio’s rail development.
Cincinnati streetcars may roll again in 2010

"Streetcar" from page one

option in a city whose economy lost $459 million worth of productivity in 2005 because of roadway congestion, according to a Texas Transportation Institute report issued Sept. 18.

"We need to wake up and smell the exhaust fumes," opined the Cincinnati Enquirer on Sept. 19 regarding the need to provide better transit.

City officials said the streetcar’s projected value-added benefits will drive the construction and operation funding sources for the streetcar. That includes $34 million in tax revenues from increased property values and $17 million in increased spending from new residents living in up to 3,400 housing units built along the streetcar route in the first 10 years.

To that end, the proposed funding sources for building the initial streetcar route are:

- $25 million from the city via tax-increment financing (dedicating the extra tax revenues from increased economic activity resulting from the streetcar);
- $25 million from the city’s capital budget;
- $11 million from the sale of the city-owned Blue Ash Airport;
- $20 million from public-private partnerships;
- $11 million from private contributions;
- $10 million from the state’s biennial capital budget. Funding sources proposed to pay the $2.3 million annual costs of operating the streetcar are:
  - $1.1 million from passenger fares;
  - $1.3 million from sponsorships and advertising revenues, plus surcharges on parking and property owners in a special-improvement district to be designated along the planned streetcar route.

Streetcar champions are Mayor Mark Mallory, Vice Mayor Jim Tarbell and Councilmen Chris Bortz and Jeff Berding.

“I don’t know how we can afford not to do it,” said Councilman Bortz in an Oct. 16 article in the Cincinnati Business Courier. He chairs council’s Economic Development Committee. “This is a great investment opportunity for the city. There is a pretty broad base of support for this idea.”

City officials have visited Portland’s modern streetcar system which offers perhaps the closest comparison to what Cincinnati is seeking. Since Portland’s 7-mile system was built in 2001, more than $2.8 billion worth of economic development has resulted, HDR planners said.

“None of these cities (that have new streetcar systems) have anything like Over-the-Rhine,” said Charles A. Hales, senior vice president for HDR Engineering Inc., as quoted in a June article in the Cincinnati Business Courier. Over-the-Rhine is an historic, mixed-use neighborhood just north of downtown Cincinnati. “You have a treasure here that can really make this project come alive.”

“Streetcars could provide the same kind of catalyst here and is just the type of investment needed that will make developers feel more comfortable about coming in and doing projects,” Mr. Tarbell said in the same article.

“It shows a commitment by the city.”

Cincinnati’s last streetcar line stopped running in 1951. Among those supporting the modern downtown streetcar is Cincinnati’s Downtown Residents Council, which unanimously passed a resolution in support of the project in September.

“Our members would greatly appreciate the ability to travel short distances from home and work on our lunch breaks, nights out, while running errands, shopping and entertaining friends,” said Conrad F. Thiede, president of the council, in a Sept. 12 letter to Mayor Mallory and city council members. “More transportation options will make it easier for modern families to live in the urban core by possibly removing the necessity of having multiple automobiles for personal mobility. This transportation option would also make the city more visitor-friendly by linking the many diverse shopping, dining, entertainment, cultural and historic locations scattered throughout the valley.”

A low-mileage lifestyle would also save a significant amount of money that can be spent on the local economy. The Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority has a commuter savings calculator on the Internet that can be used by anyone regardless of where they live. Visit www.go-metro.com/costofdriving.html to see how much your high-mileage lifestyle is costing you.
CINCINNATI STREETCAR
GREEN LINES = INITIAL ROUTING
RED LINES = FUTURE EXTENSIONS

Map courtesy of HDR Engineering Inc.

Calling all All Aboard Ohio candidates!

It's that time of the year again... Time for all interested and qualified members of the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers (dba All Aboard Ohio) to step forward and be a candidate for a seat on the association's Board of Directors.

In 2008, the four officers (President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer) and one At-Large board seat are up for a vote. All positions are two-year terms, with a two-term limit. Qualifications, duties and the election procedure is outlined below.

QUALIFICATIONS: Candidates seeking officer positions must be an OARP/All Aboard Ohio member whose dues are current. Candidates for president and vice president must also have served at least one full term on the Board of Directors prior to the 2008 annual meeting. At-large directors must either be a resident of Ohio or an out-of-state county that borders an Ohio metropolitan area. Candidates for the at-large board seat must also become an member in good standing within 30 days of being named to the board of directors.

DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT: The President presides at all regular membership meetings and those of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee, as well as signs all contracts or other legal or financial documents with a cosigning by the treasurer or other officer.

DUTIES OF THE VICE PRESIDENT: In the absence of the President, the Vice President has the powers, duties, and restrictions of the President; otherwise, the Vice President performs other duties assigned by the Board of Directors or the President.

DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY: The Secretary keeps meeting minutes, is custodian of the association’s records, and provides notice of meetings.

DUTIES OF THE TREASURER: The Treasurer has custody of the association's financial books, handles all financial transactions, be responsible for distributing dues renewal notices to all members, prepare regular financial reports for the Board of Directors, and prepare a budget prior to each fiscal year.

DUTIES OF AT-LARGE BOARD MEMBERS: Board members are charged with the management of the affairs of the association.

Each member must attend at least 50 percent of the regular board meetings called each year during their term in office. Typically, there are four regular board meetings each year (held on the second Saturday of February, May, August and November), and often held in Central Ohio or via a conference telephone call. Some exceptions occur. Special meetings may be called by the president, as needed.

ADDITIONAL OFFICER DUTIES: The officers comprise the Executive Committee. In addition to the regular board meetings (outlined above) the Executive Committee also meets throughout the year. Typically the Executive Committee meets ten times per year on the first Saturday of the month (excluding January and July), often in Columbus.

DECLARING YOUR CANDIDACY: To be considered a candidate, you must send a notice of candidacy along with a statement not to exceed 75 words as to why the candidate desires to be elected, to the Election Committee, prior to February 20, 2008. In addition, also prior to February 20, the candidate must submit to the Election Committee written endorsements signed by five (5) other members in good standing. Written endorsements can be in the form of a letter or signed petition (or both).

The election committee will verify that the candidate meets the requirements of office. If qualified, the candidate’s name will be added to the ballot. If found unqualified, the candidate will be notified. All appeals will be made to the Board of Directors.

Mail your statement and endorsements to (do not fax or e-mail):

All Aboard Ohio Election Committee
309 South 4th St., Suite 304
Columbus OH 43215-5428
(614) 228-6005
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 train and transit services in Ohio.”
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**Foundations**

- THE GEORGE GUND FOUNDATION
- Stocker Foundation

**Corporate Sponsors**

- Gannett Fleming
- PARSONS BRINCKERHOFF
- CityWheels
- HNTB
- LTK Engineering Services
- Delta Railroad Construction
- Wabtec Corporation

**Non-profit Organizations**

- AMERICAN COUNCIL OF THE BLIND
- Environmental Support Center
- Paper Retriever

**Labor Unions**

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

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**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.
All Aboard Ohio’s President

Big Changes Coming?

By Bill Hutchison
President, All Aboard Ohio

As 2007 winds down, there are some developments in the offing that could portend big changes for our fair state, the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC), All Aboard Ohio and the nation as a whole. Most could be good and offer an interesting view of what might be coming.

First off, we are very pleased that Gov. Ted Strickland has chosen All Aboard Ohio’s own board member Jolene Molitoris as the next chairperson for the ORDC, replacing the long-serving Jim Betts. He has been ORDC’s only chair of the 14-member board of commissioners. All Aboard Ohio appreciates his public service and I personally want to thank him for being a friend of passenger trains.

Mrs. Molitoris’ appointment, I believe, signals a favorable attitude by the Strickland Administration toward the development of rail passenger service for Ohio. She has a long history of rail advocacy and a breadth of experience on rail issues, having served in various capacities at the state level and as administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration under President Bill Clinton. Speaking personally, Jolene is one of the most dynamic persons I know and I’d be willing to bet she’ll take a very personal interest in the future course of ORDC.

Another positive development was the passage by the U.S. Senate of S. 294, a bill which, according to a Wall Street Journal article, “May signal a reversal of fortune for the nation’s intercity passenger-rail network.” The Senate passed the six-year, $11.4 billion bill that would authorize nearly $2 billion a year in Amtrak funding, up from roughly $1.3 billion now. The measure passed by a 70-22 vote.

The article goes on to state that the bill “is seen as part of the solution for global warming, traffic congestion and high oil prices.” And that it “changes the Amtrak debate by setting a goal for the passenger railroad to improve train service rather than to achieve financial self-sufficiency.”

“The bulk of the bill’s funding would go toward operating expenses and capital projects, but $1.8 billion would be devoted to paying off debt, and $1.4 billion would fund a new grant program that would enable states to start rail projects. Amtrak currently has a debt of about $3.4 billion, much of which is in the form of equipment leases,” the WSJ reported.

“Now, with oil prices at record highs, environmental concerns surging and congestion worsening on highways and in the air, passenger rail is looking to many lawmakers like a viable alternative that deserves federal support,” according to the WSJ.

Next up: The U.S. House of Representatives is expected to consider a similar bill early next year and we have to be ready to do what it takes to make sure the Ohio Congressional delegation is properly informed on the crucially important issue. Look for more from us in the coming weeks as we gear up to mount a campaign to make this happen. Meantime, you can help by asking your representative for a House counterpart to S. 294.

Aside from S. 294, we have this from Gene Skoropowski, managing director of Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority in California:

“Another Senate bill (no number yet), would authorize $900 million per year ($2.7 billion total) for each of three years for states to issue federal ‘tax credit bonds’ for intercity passenger rail service. States would be authorized to issue these federal tax credit bonds, and depending upon the length of the term of the bond (15 years, 20 years, 25 years), the program would be equivalent to a 50-50 match, a 2/3 – 1/3 match, or a 75-25 match.”

Mr. Skoropowski goes on to say: “The beauty of this program is the bond proceeds are immediately available upon sale to build intercity rail services/buy rolling stock/make track capacity improvements/buy right-of-way, etc.” The bill would “follow state-established rules for spending and accounting for the funds, much the way California has funded its intercity rail program to date with only state monies. No federal bureaucracy.”

This bill could have a far-reaching impact and will be introduced by Sens. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) and Trent Lott (R-MS). The rub is what the Bush Administration will do. They have threatened vetoes of any measure that does not adhere to their budget requests and that means we must do what we can to gain enough support for a veto-proof margin. Still, the bill would be huge boost for states which currently support rail or have plans in the works. Stay tuned.

Finally, what has All Aboard Ohio been up to? We are in the middle of developing an action plan that asks what we want, how we want to achieve our goals and how we will build the organization to make them a reality. Your executive committee as spent the past couple of meetings working on this (along with many hours on our own) – we have a draft nearly ready to submit to the board of directors.

This is the first time we have put such a plan together and it has been a long, difficult process. However, once it is in place we will have a roadmap that will give us a sense of direction as we pursue our goals.

And what are our goals? Initially, they might include items such as funding for an initial round of passenger train service, possible train service extensions into Ohio from neighboring states and funding for the Ohio Hub plan Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). Aside from that, we will aggressively work to expand our membership and funding levels. Look for more on this early next year.

All Aboard Ohio’s paid staff has been busy promoting passenger rail in and through Ohio. Executive Director Andrew Bremer is planning next spring’s Legislative Summit, continuing our membership development efforts and the ever-present fundraising activities, and much, much more. All the while he continues to be our presence in Columbus. Andrew details much of his recent activities in The Executive Director Report found on page three.

Ken Prendergast, our director of research and communications, has also been busy. Besides the outstanding work researching, writing and editing the Ohio Passenger Rail News, Ken continues to spearhead the West Shore Corridor Campaign. He organized broad support to achieve All Aboard Ohio’s goal for commuter rail service linking Cleveland and western lakeshore communities in Cuyahoga, Lorain and Erie counties.
Don't be caught in the cold this season.
Visit our online merchandise store and support our efforts!

www.cafepress.com/allaboardohio

Calendar of Events/Meetings

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

December 2007

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>All Aboard Ohio Board Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>All Aboard Ohio</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Columbus Local Meeting</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>Red Door Tavern 1736 West 5th Avenue, Columbus</td>
<td>John Manning</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Toledo Local Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Toledo Amtrak Station MLK (Central Union) Plaza, Toledo</td>
<td>Bill Gill</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>West Shore Corridor Stakeholders</td>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td>Rocky River Public Library 1600 Hampton Road, Rocky River</td>
<td>Ken Prendergast</td>
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January 2008

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<td>Ohio Rail Development Comm.</td>
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<td>Riffe Center; 77 S. High Street, 31st Floor, South B&amp;C, Columbus</td>
<td>ORDC</td>
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<td>12</td>
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