

# Ohio Passenger Rail News

Intercity Rail

Public Transit

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## National Train Day in Ohio was a gas

Thanks to the active work of All Aboard Ohio volunteers and others, the celebration of National Train Day in two Ohio cities on May 10 was a great success. Next year, All Aboard Ohio will bring national train day to more cities across the state so more Ohioans can enjoy this family-friendly event, said All Aboard Ohio Executive Director Andrew Bremer.

"National Train Day coincides with the completion of the first transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869 at Promontory Point, Utah," Mr. Bremer said. "That makes next year's event even more special as it will celebrate the 140th anniversary."

Thousands of people showed up for National Train Day festivities in Cincinnati and Toledo to not only look back at the remarkable history of America's railroads -- but also to their exciting future. As fuel prices skyrocket, environmental concerns mount and traffic congestion worsens on our roads and at our airports, railroads are seeing a surge in popularity. Freight rail traffic, Amtrak travel and commuter train use are all at record highs.

At Toledo's MLK Plaza Station, All Aboard Ohio President Bill Hutchison announced new bipartisan legislation was introduced May 8 in the U.S. House of Representatives. If approved, House Resolution 6003 and its companion bill H.R. 6004 will provide \$1.9 billion in federal funds per year to accommodate the surging demand for fast, comfortable and affordable passenger rail service.

"Three rail corridors in Ohio are eligible to receive federal funding under this proposal which has already passed the U.S. Senate by a veto-proof 70-22 vote," Mr. Hutchison said. "The



Ken Prendergast photo

**National Train Day arrived May 10** with two Ohio cities, Cincinnati and Toledo, participating. In Toledo, Mayor Carty Finkbeiner, right, used the occasion to ask Congress for more Amtrak funding to quadruple Toledo's passenger train services. He was joined at MLK Plaza station, from left, by All Aboard Ohio President Bill Hutchison, Amtrak Senior Officer for Government Relations Derrick James and Ohio Rail Development Commission Public Information Officer Stu Nicholson.

corridors are Cleveland - Columbus - Dayton - Cincinnati, Chicago - Toledo - Cleveland and Chicago - Indianapolis - Cincinnati. We ask Ohio's Congressional Delegation to support this legislation to ensure Ohio's continued economic growth with \$4 per gallon gas staring us in the face."

— See "Train Day" on Page Two

## All Aboard Ohio secures important new funding

Several generous grants were awarded to All Aboard Ohio thus far in 2008 which will allow the organization to continue its organizational development, outreach and public education activities statewide.

Recent grants include \$20,000 from the George Gund Foundation in Cleveland, a \$10,000 grant from the Dayton Foundation and a \$12,500 challenge grant from the Stocker Foundation in Lorain. The latter was leveraged by a \$12,500 match from an anonymous donor to benefit All Aboard

Ohio's West Shore Corridor campaign.

Additional funding support is being sought by All Aboard Ohio's new Development Director Catherine Nelson. Executive Director Andrew Bremer said her hiring resulted in securing the Dayton and Gund Foundation grants. Ken Prendergast, director of research and communications, secured the Stocker grant and the matching donation. Mr. Prendergast heads the West Shore Corridor campaign.

All Aboard Ohio is effectively utilizing

the new funding to develop, expand and coordinate local advocacy efforts statewide. It is also involved in the state's new 21st Century Transportation Priorities Task Force. All Aboard Ohio Board Members Ken Sislak and Jack Shaner serve on the task force, although Mr. Shaner represents the Ohio Environmental Council.

"This generous financial support is greatly appreciated," said Mr. Bremer. "It is already being used effectively and will allow us to grow in a sustainable way."

## Rail/transit summit gets bigger, better each year

A powerful roster of guest speakers and an increasingly favorable environment for growth in rail and transit drew 92 attendees to All Aboard Ohio's Fourth Annual Rail/Transit Legislative Summit. It was the largest turnout so far for the event and saw 18 people more than in the last two years.

"Many of the participants said that this year's event had a much more positive feel and a sense of renewed optimism," said All Aboard Ohio Executive Director Andrew Bremer. "Advanced marketing should yield an even greater turnout next year."

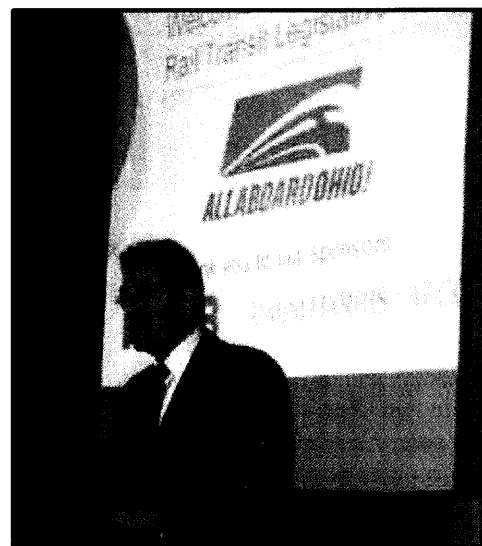
Contributing sponsors were HNTB Corp. and DMJM Harris/AECO. Participating sponsors were Burges & Niple, HDR Inc., MS Consultants and URS Corp. All Aboard Ohio thanks our sponsors.

Speakers at the event were Frank Busalacchi, secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and chairman of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition; Ohio Lieutenant Governor Lee

Fisher; Don Phillips, transportation reporter at the Paris-based *International Herald Tribune*; Ohio Rail Development Commission Executive Director Matt Dietrich; and Frank Polivka of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority and former general manager of Laketran.

The summit emcee was All Aboard Ohio's Northeast Region Board Member Ken Sislak. All of the speakers provided helpful updates, insights and information on passenger rail and transit policy news and developments. At the end of the event, Mr. Bremer gave attendees some final tips before visiting with their state legislators and/or staff and to followup with legislators via a friendly "thank-you" letters.

Attendees were asked to support Ohio Senate Bill 300 to create a Public Transit Funding Task Force, and to oppose Ohio House 480 which would allow a community to withdraw from a transit authority. Neither bill has been voted upon as yet.



Andrew Bremer photo  
**Frank Busalacchi**, Wisconsin's transportation secretary and chairman of the States For Passenger Rail Coalition, addresses All Aboard Ohio's Legislative Summit April 30 in Columbus.

### "Train Day" continued from Page One

"I want Congress to be more vigorous about rail," said Toledo Mayor Carty Finkbeiner, who welcomed thousands of people to National Train Day festivities in his city. "I want ridership at Toledo to quadruple with more trains. It's one of the answers to growing the economy of Northwest Ohio."

"More people are riding trains now since the 1960s when we had three times as many trains," said Derrick James, Amtrak's senior officer for government relations. "People are tired of gas prices and airlines cutting back on service."

In Toledo and Cincinnati, All Aboard Ohio volunteers Bill Gill, Beth McCray and Mike Weber organized first-class National Train Events. Visitors enjoyed informational displays, videos, slide shows and picked up rail travel information. At Toledo, there were large model train layouts and railroadiana for purchase. At Cincinnati Union Terminal the Turtle Creek Railroad gave away scenic train trips from Lebanon, OH while Tower A, overlooking Queensgate freight yard, was opened for public tours.

## Change Ohio in your town

A number of Ohio cities are already home to local All Aboard Ohio groups that meet regularly to work on rail issues in their communities. More are needed. The newest is a stakeholders group in Galion that's building local support for planned passenger trains in the 3-C (Cleveland - Columbus - Dayton - Cincinnati) Corridor. Mike Hocker, a member and owner of Package Power Inc., is leading the group. Contact him at (419) 468-6773.

A similar effort is under way in Cincinnati in conjunction with the chamber of commerce. Call Mike Weber at (513) 891-9251. There are longstanding and active local All Aboard Ohio groups in Columbus, Elyria and Toledo. Contact All Aboard Ohio's Columbus office at (614) 228-6005 for more information on these existing local groups or for assistance in starting one in your community to build grassroots support for trains and transit.

Ohio's elected officials do pay attention to grassroots efforts, so don't hesitate in contacting us today to get your town on board!

## Cincinnati

On April 23, Cincinnati City Council voted 6-2 for a \$137 million plan to build a streetcar line linking downtown, Over-the-Rhine and the Clifton/Uptown area where the University of Cincinnati is located.

Funding was identified for the shorter route, not including Uptown. Analysis is under way for the Uptown route in hopes of getting federal funds. Help support the streetcar! Contact John Schneider at (513) 579-1300 or see [www.cincinnati-streetcar.com](http://www.cincinnati-streetcar.com).

## Columbus

A public hearing was held April 28 prior to Columbus City Council considering spending \$2 million for engineering and design of a 2.8-mile line linking downtown and Ohio State University on High Street.

Public feedback ranged from outright support, to opposition; others questioned if the initial route should be longer. Council will likely vote on the issue later this year.

For more information about Columbus' project, visit [columbus-streetcars.com](http://columbus-streetcars.com).

## West Shore

U.S. Rep. Betty Sutton has secured \$344,000 in federal funds to analyze proposed West Shore Corridor rail and bus options. Lorain County Commissioners applied in June for the money, supported by the Lorain Port Authority and Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority.

The West Shore Corridor would link shoreline communities in Erie, Lorain and Cuyahoga counties with downtown Cleveland. See [www.allaboardohio.com](http://www.allaboardohio.com).