Amtrak improvements sought for Ohio

Three bipartisan Congresspersons in Northern Ohio have joined forces to work with Amtrak and federal officials to expand and improve east-west passenger rail services. They are seeking federal funding to help make it happen. No state funding is being sought.

Reps. Marcy Kaptur (D-9, Toledo), Steve LaTourette (R-14, Bainbridge) and Tim Ryan (D-17, Niles) met on Feb. 10 with U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo and Amtrak President Joseph Boardman. Staffs for the three Congresspersons reported that the meeting was positive and all parties pledged to work together to improve the east-west Amtrak services affecting their districts, including the Lake Shore Limited, Capitol Limited and, as early as this Fall, through cars from the Pennsylvanian between Pittsburgh and Chicago.

Since that Feb. 10 meeting, staff from the three Congressperson have met with All Aboard Ohio and other supportive organizations, including All Aboard Erie, Ohio Higher Education Rail Network and the Northwest Ohio Passenger Rail Association. Although the details of what improvements would be sought have not yet been developed, All Aboard Ohio was happy to provide some suggestions.

In those meetings, All Aboard Ohio provided the Congressional offices with its 2008 “Fix-It First” report which showed how expanded train stations could reduce rail traffic congestion, delays and travel time while providing capacity for expanded Amtrak services in the near future. The projected one-time capital cost of the suggested station improvements was between $137 million per year. All Aboard Ohio estimated that, each time an Amtrak

schedule. This is based on the schedule changes to Amtrak trains when a station serving two tracks was scaled back to serve only one track.

Regardless of what interim improvements are sought by the Congresspersons and Amtrak, they would represent an important first step toward developing much faster passenger train services in perhaps the nation's most underserved rail travel market, considering the large population affected. All Aboard Ohio supports the Congresspersons’ efforts to bring attention to this neglect.

See centerspread on pages four and five for more.
reduce rail traffic congestion, delays and travel time while providing capacity for expanded Amtrak services in the near future. The projected one-time capital cost of the suggested station improvements was between $35 million and $53 million.

The reason for the improvements is that all Ohio train stations are designed to serve only one train at a time, and from only one track. Yet all Ohio Amtrak stations are located on busy two-track mainlines, requiring half that delays cost Amtrak $137 million per year. All Aboard Ohio estimated that, each time an Amtrak train had to cross over to serve a station on the other side of a two-track mainline, it added 10 minutes to the train's

Streetcar to continue despite setback

Construction of the Cincinnati streetcar will likely continue, albeit scaled back, despite a vote in April by the Ohio Department of Transportation's Transportation Review Advisory Council to deny the project $51.8 million in state-appropriated federal funds. The TRAC reversed from a 8-0 recommendation in December to support the project, which last year cited it as the highest-scoring transportation project in the state. The TRAC scores projects based on cost-effectiveness, economic development and environmental impacts.

TRAC was created in 1997 by the Ohio General Assembly at the urging of ODOT Director Jerry Wray, under then-Gov. George Voinovich, to reform a highly politicized transportation selection process into one based on cold, hard facts, costs and benefits. All Aboard Ohio condemned the TRAC vote as the antithesis to its legal purpose, and as anti-urban in its project selection.

“We recognize that the prior TRAC recommendations overcommitted the state to spend more federal funds for transportation projects than it had,” said Ken Prendergast, executive director of All Aboard Ohio. “But I fail to understand why, other than a political agenda dominated by oil, highway and exurban interests, the highest-ranking project in the state was completely eliminated, absorbing half of the $98 million in funding cuts approved by the TRAC vote. It’s clear this administration wants to keep Ohioans chained to the almighty gas pump.”

Two projects that separate railroad crossings from roadways via new bridges were approved. They include $13.2 million for McCord Road on the Norfolk Southern/Amtrak mainline in Holland west of Toledo and $16.6 million for State Route 58 on CSX (on the Cleveland-Columbus corridor) in the village of Wellington.

Another $15 million was approved for the Mahoning Road Transit Corridor, which will add new transit service along State Route 153 in Canton. This will add to a $2.7 million federal grant awarded last year to the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (SARTA) which has a quarter percent sales tax levy renewal on the ballot in May. All Aboard Ohio supports this renewal.

Unfortunately, SARTA's TRAC grant was the only one awarded to transit. The rest were for road widening projects that only induce more traffic and more urban sprawl. As former Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers President Howard Harding once said, “Widening roads to reduce traffic is like letting out your belt to control obesity.”

All Aboard Ohio, the Ohio Environmental Council and others thanked Cincinnati Mayor Mark Mallory and the many citizens who showed up at the TRAC hearing to speak out in support of the Cincinnati

— See “Streetcar” on page three
Our dear governor sure has lots of interesting things to say. For example, he said he wants Ohioans to get on his bus or he’ll run them over with it. Odd thing is, Gov. John Kasich doesn’t like buses; doesn’t like trains much either, as we all know. He doesn’t seem to like any alternatives to driving in Ohio, except one.

In the April 16, 2011 Dayton Daily News, reporter Laura Bischoff wrote that the governor used the state’s planes for 16 in-state jaunts and four out-of-state trips at a total cost of $31,400 in his first 81 days in office. By comparison, his predecessor, Gov. Ted Strickland, spent $31,849 on plane travel during his first 13 months.

For advocates of fast passenger trains and better public transit, that wasn’t the most telling part of that article. It was yet another memorable Kasich quote: “There is no doubt about it – I can’t get to all these places if I’m not able to fly.”

That begs a question: how do the rest of us travel between Ohio cities without private planes – or for that matter, without trains or buses? “Drive” is the officially sanctioned answer within the marbled halls of the State House where your government recently approved a two-year Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) budget in which 99 percent of tax dollars goes to roads and highways despite high gas prices.

But according to market data compiled by J.D. Power & Associates, the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) National Household Travel Survey and even the automakers themselves, states that rely on cars for all movement are driving away their young people and placing under house arrest their aging and disabled citizens. The implications for Ohio’s economy could be catastrophic because many competing states and nations do provide real choices to driving.

“By 2020, the combination of younger people driving less and (Baby) Boomers retiring will cut mileage driven in the U.S. by half,” reported Advertising Age, May 31, 2010. Yet Ohio continues to build a transportation system for a growing, car-hungry state. That state hasn’t existed in decades.

In 1978 no less than 92 percent of 19-year-olds had a driver’s license; by 2008 that number slipped to 77 percent, a FHWA survey reported in 2010. Both age groups are part of the two largest generations in America history: the Baby Boom has 75 million people; but Generation Y has 80 million.

“I don’t think the car symbolizes freedom to Gen Y to the extent it did Baby Boomers,” said Sheryl Connelly, manager of global trends and futuring for Ford Motor Company, as reported in Advertising Age. To many young people, driving represents pollution and wasted time by preventing full use of the smart-phone revolution.

“Almost everything about digital media and technology makes cars less desirable to the generation that is in its prime driving years,” Connelly concluded.
WANTED

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We reserve the right to edit all non-published submissions. Original photos should be sharp, bright prints—avoid negatives.

Always include your name and phone number!

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Cincinnati Amtrak station expansion being planned

CINCINNATI — City officials are seeking an expansion of Amtrak station facilities at Union Terminal after the completion of a feasibility study by URS Consultants. The expansion, estimated at $4.3 million, could include a widened passenger loading platform, a second station track, trackside signals and utility relocations below the existing Amtrak station waiting room and ticket office.

The City of Cincinnati is requesting up to $250,000 in Federal Railroad Administration funds for preliminary funding and environmental assessments in anticipation of applying for federal construction funding.

All Aboard Ohio was given an opportunity to review and comment on a draft of the study that was released in March. Nine alternatives with different station track lengths and configurations were considered in the feasibility study. Our input was to prefer two alternatives that allowed trains to enter/exit the new station track from either end and had the greatest track length next to the widened platform so more railcars could load/unload from the platform.

The city's Department of Transportation and Engineering favored the same two options as All Aboard Ohio because the alternatives offered track lengths of 725 feet and 900 feet to allow trains of eight and 10 cars, respectively, to board from the widened platform.

Amtrak's thrice-weekly Cardinal (Chicago — Washington DC - New York City) serves the train station. The Cardinal could be changed to

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Amtrak’s thrice-weekly Cardinal (Chicago – Washington DC – New York City) serves the train station. The Cardinal could be changed to a daily operation as early as this fall. Cincinnati Union Terminal (CUT) was chosen by city officials as the preferred station for expanded Amtrak services and for two federally designated high-speed rail corridors – to Indianapolis and Chicago, and to Columbus and Cleveland.

The second station track would be the first phase of improvements to accommodate existing and future Amtrak services, provide a layover/staging area for private railroad cars, and give freight railroad CSX capacity and operational flexibility for intermodal operations when the station track is not in use. CUT is next to busy freight operations – CSX’s Queensgate Yard and Norfolk Southern’s Gest Street Yard.

**Streetcar to continue despite setback**

“Streetcar” from page one

Streetcar. That included a representative of Christ Hospital in Cincinnati who said that if the streetcar is built, the hospital will undertake a planned $350 million expansion – more than double the cost of the entire streetcar project.

Dustin Clark, director of commuter services for the University of Cincinnati’s Undergraduate Student Government, said their poll showed 85 percent of students want rail transit in Cincinnati. David Dawson, executive sales vice president at Sibcy Cline Realtors, said the streetcar will boost real estate values and asked “if the TRAC’s scoring system doesn’t matter, then why is there a scoring system?”

“ODOT claims the streetcar wasn’t sustainable, but that’s not what HDR Consultants’ report found,” said Jack Shaner, deputy director of the Ohio Environmental Council and secretary of All Aboard Ohio. “The streetcar showed a return on investment of 2.7-to-1, with thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in economic development projects.”

Mr. Prendergast said ODOT is going out of its way to derail every possible advance in passenger rail service in favor of rubber-tired vehicles that burn more petroleum and use our crumbling asphalt roads. Meanwhile, states like Illinois, New Mexico, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma and others are expanding rail service. This makes it harder for Ohio to compete for young professionals who are driving less and looking for alternative transportation options as well as aging baby boomers who are growing weary of driving, he said.

Worse, when the Ohio General Assembly passed ODOT’s budget, State Senator Shannon Jones (R-District 7, Springboro) inserted text that prohibits the State of Ohio from spending state funds or state-appropriated federal funds on the Cincinnati Streetcar. But even ODOT Director Wray suggested that provision is probably illegal.

Meanwhile militant tea-party activists as well as Mayor Mallory opponents pledge to place anti-streetcar ballot issue before city voters this fall. Cincinnati voters already soundly defeated a previous attempt, in November 2009, to use the ballot to stop the streetcar project.
Essay: How to afford service

As noted in the lead story in this newsletter (see "Amtrak improvements sought for Ohio" on Page One), the presence of so many stations that serve just one track on double-tracked mainlines creates significant operating costs for Amtrak and the freight railroads that host Amtrak trains. Each time a passenger train must make a cross-over switching maneuver to run against the flow of freight and passenger traffic to reach a station platform, a rail corridor’s track capacity is reduced, traffic flow is slowed and service reliability is compromised.

Among all stations in Ohio, Indiana and New York on the Capitol Limited and Lake Shore Limited routes, these switching maneuvers added about 290 minutes to train schedules daily (60 in Indiana, 80 in Ohio and 150 in New York). This includes delays to Empire Corridor trains between Albany and Buffalo.

In 2006 and 2007, the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Inspector General (USDOT-IG) said Amtrak incurred an average of 1 minute of delay per train-mile over track-owning freight railroads. Amtrak operates 26 million train-miles over these host railroads. In other words, Amtrak incurred an average of 26 million minutes of delay per year in both 2006 and 2007.

The USDOT-IG reported in 2008 that improving Amtrak’s on-time performance on routes outside the Northeast Corridor to 85 percent in fiscal year 2006 would have reduced Amtrak’s operating loss (primarily by increasing ticket revenues and decreasing labor and fuel costs) by $137 million. That’s about $5.27 per minute. Eliminating all delays would save double that amount, or $10.54 per minute. That calculation is important to show the full value of saved time.

Based on the USDOT-IG’s estimate, station-related delays in Indiana, Ohio and New York could be amounting to more than $3056.60 in added expense to Amtrak each day, or more than $1.1 million per year. At an operating subsidy of $25 per train-mile, that could be equivalent to 122 daily train-miles of new Amtrak service.

If track and signal improvements were made to increase passenger train speeds from 79 mph to 90 mph west of Buffalo and west of Pittsburgh to Chicago, additional time and cost savings would result. All Aboard Ohio projects that another 45 minutes in each direction could be saved per day from the Capitol Limited’s schedule west of Pittsburgh by increasing top speeds to 90 mph. This savings would be on top of time saved resulting from the expansion of stations. Thus the Capitol Limited could be 1½ hours faster in each direction from all stations serving by the expanded track capacity.

Every Ohio station requires an Amtrak train to do the switching move shown above, called crossing over, between two main tracks. All stations, plus those in Indiana on the two-track mainline to Chicago as well as most stations in New York and Pennsylvania on the double-tracked mainlines to the East Coast, serve only one track. That means all trains must cross over to run against the flow of 60-90 freight trains per day, depending on the segment. Expanding stations will save Amtrak time and money to run more trains.

Shore and Capitol routes is estimated by All Aboard Ohio to be nearly $1.1 million per year. Add the operating cost savings from the station improvements and the total operating cost savings to Amtrak could be about $2.2 million annually. That’s equivalent to about 240 daily train-miles of new Amtrak service. For comparison’s sake, the savings could free up enough money to run a new daily round-trip train from Toledo-Cleveland, or Columbus-Dayton-Cincinnati or Akron-Youngstown-Pittsburgh.

But to come up with significant new operating funding to expand service and realize the goals of the three Congresspersons will require annual financial contributions from the affected states, or from funding freed up by other states assuming the operating subsidy of existing trains from the federal government.

All Aboard Ohio researched several options — adding tracks, acquiring properties, switching through track. Ultimately, for now, they are focusing on the need to expand stations, following the basic one-track on one-track model.

Bryan’s Amtrak station is on one side of the mainline and the historic New York Central depot is visible on the other. A center platform and ramp from a nearby underpass with a raised sidewalk could provide two-track station access.
Despite all the station tracks in place at Toledo's MLK Plaza, only one passenger train can serve the track-level Amtrak station facility at a time. This frequently causes delays to Amtrak and Norfolk Southern trains. The reason is that while one Amtrak train uses the track at left to serve the station, another Amtrak train must sit out on the NS mainline, blocking frequent freight train traffic, waiting its turn to use the lone station track. Relocating station facilities to the overhead concourse would fix this problem. This photo was taken during Toledo's National Train Day event on April 30, 2011 which attracted record crowd of more than 5,000 visitors.

At Sandusky, Ohio's largest tourism destination, shifting to the left the track on which the photographer is standing would create space for a 25-foot-wide platform and stairwell/ elevator from a new overhead walkway that would allow more passenger trains to serve any one of three tracks here.
ice improvements in Ohio

added daily train-miles (less 48 miles saved by one train not going to/from Niagara Falls).
- Extending Amtrak’s New York City-Philadelphia-Pittsburgh *Pennsylvanian* west to Chicago as a separate train would add 962 daily train-miles. Amtrak is already making plans to extend this train to Chicago but via through sleepers, coaches and a café tacked onto the back of the *Capitol Limited*, not as a separate train.
- Or Amtrak could link one daily round trip in the Chicago-Detroit Wolverine Corridor to the *Pennsylvanian* or to a round trip in the Empire Corridor. Even if it did both with separate trains, the added daily train-miles would amount to only 1,174. But all of these would add more badly needed train services to Ohioans.

Even more intriguing is the impact from the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) which calls for the federal government to transition its investment only to long-distance intercity passenger rail routes of more than 750 miles between endpoints and to Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor. That means that, unless the law is amended, the federal government will no longer be responsible for paying Amtrak to operate train services of less than 750 miles (including the Wolverine Corridor, Empire Corridor, *Pennsylvanian* or Hoosier State).

Furthermore, PRIIA Sec. 209 requires a standardization of “cost sharing of operating and capital costs for the provision of intercity rail passenger service ... (on) routes of not more than 750 miles” by Oct. 13, 2013. That means Amtrak cannot have differing cost-sharing policies in its agreements with different states or other sponsors anymore.

There are several impacts likely to occur as a result of this provision. First, a number of states will have to start paying for train services that Amtrak previously paid for (via its federal operating grant) or they will lose those train services. Either way, Amtrak’s operating cost responsibilities will likely diminish after 2013. That could mean Amtrak will have more money available to expand long-distance train services or its federal operating grant will be sharply reduced. Perhaps it will be some of both.

But it should be noted that Amtrak cannot simply lengthen short-distance routes to 750 miles or more in a blatant attempt to skirt the law. The exception may be if certain routes have had a history of being longer in distance than they are now. The *Pennsylvanian* falls into that category — it was added daily train-miles for serving its original history (in the case of the *Pennsylvanian* the law was amended to allow Amtrak to serve its original endpoints by Oct. 13, 2013).

*Only the farthest track from Cleveland's Amtrak station can be used (the closest two are for the light-rail Waterfront Line). Widening the platform up to the next track would get more passenger trains off the mainline and limit conflicts with freight trains. It will also create a foundation for expanded passenger rail services and a future overhead intermodal transportation center.*

This will be your last newsletter...if you have not renewed your membership for 2011!
To can renew your membership by going to www.allaboardohio.org or calling (216) 288-4883.
Please stay on board — we need you as a member.

*Amtrak's Ohio 'station slalom'*[Image: Toledo - Cleveland]

*UrbanOhio.com photo*
It has become apparent that All Aboard Ohio's finances will not be sufficient to support the association for the rest of the year. We'd like to raise about $5,000 by the time of our Summer Meeting, to be held July 16 at the Mad River & NKP Railroad Museum in Bellevue.

Please help us with a donation in whatever amount you can provide. Your support helps All Aboard Ohio work locally, statewide and even nationally for improved passenger rail and public transit service, including valuable research, reports, news and updates for decision-makers and members. Thank you for supporting your association!

At Elyria, construction of facilities intended to meet federal accessibility requirements were made for $160,000 in December (above). However, the depot has little paved parking and serves just one track on a busy double-tracked mainline. A more attractive facility nearby, the historic New York Central depot, below, was renovated last year as the Lorain County Transportation Center for $7.3 million. Amtrak is working with Lorain County to assess the feasibility of moving from its 36-year-old modular depot to the intermodal center that could serve trains on more than one track.
All Aboard Ohio’s President
Of rookie mistakes, timidity and skullduggery

By Bill Hutchison
President, All Aboard Ohio

Like many of you, I was thrilled when the Obama Administration announced $9 billion for high-speed rail, as well as an additional $1.3 billion for Amtrak in 2009. Here at last are people who get it, I thought. Time to pop the cork and raise a glass!

Well, maybe not so fast. There has been progress but the pace has been excruciatingly slow and has been stymied with setbacks at the hands of anti-rail critics. At the same time, mistakes by the Obama Administration gave these critics openings and slowed the process by relying on what I believe is a faulty strategy.

The administration also should have addressed the issue as if each day was its last in office but instead, there was a decided lack of urgency. Rather than striking while the iron was hot they became enmeshed in a lengthy planning process. Now things are going to be much more difficult with the election of a Republican majority in the U.S. House of Representatives.

And what of the need to create jobs? And again, where was the sense of urgency? Emphasis should have been on creating as many jobs in as short a time as possible by any means available. That should have dictated working closely with Amtrak but emphasis on state initiatives built in long lead times, while the existing system languished.

Aside from that, a key mistake was calling an incremental rail program “high-speed rail,” giving critics their first opening. It should have been called a “fix-it-first” jobs program as a down payment toward a national system that includes high-speed rail.

The administration and Amtrak acted as if each other didn’t exist. Amtrak could have provided the fastest and easiest way to put people to work quickly, simply by adding trains. This approach could have largely avoided long lead times mandated by a lengthy federal planning process for entirely new projects. Instead, emphasis on entirely new state-driven initiatives led to long lead times and allowed naysayers to create havoc. Many states had little or no experience with rail projects, and without a successful first increment was ordered, even though Amtrak has an ongoing equipment shortage. There was a clear need and it would have put people to work right away, such as for building Surfliners for Midwest use; these cars would be coming on line by this time.

The administration should have adopted a “fix-it-first” strategy which would have put people to work within months by running additional or extended trains, as well as building sorely needed equipment. The administration could have hedged its bets by devoting most funding to a federally driven process, with the remainder going to states which were sure bets, such as Illinois.

Because the Obama Administration did not foresee these problems, they have been forced to quickly reallocate funding to willing states after suffering embarrassing defeats in Ohio, Florida and Wisconsin. Critics have had a field day by saying the projects would not create jobs and the slow pace has artificially lent them credence. Only now are we seeing the first large-scale allocation of funds projects in Illinois and Washington.

Still, there are signs that the administration is learning and they deserve a big pat on the back for being the first administration to support rail on a large scale. There is additional federal operating funding proposed out of recognition of the states’ precarious financial condition. There is also $4 billion for Amtrak, a huge increase and a $53 billion high-speed rail program, which is really serious money.

Amtrak’s role

As noted above, the administration isn’t completely to blame. For its part, Amtrak has been needlessly timid over the past two years, when a proactive approach with a rail-friendly administration might have put them in a far better position than they are in now.

Amtrak is still timid. Current plans assume only a 2 percent annual growth rate and are calling for a minuscule equipment acquisition program, even though demand is rapidly increasing. This means they will only be able to meet the existing demand, and their current plan will enable Amtrak to achieve a single-digit growth rate at best.

Bill Hutchison is president of All Aboard Ohio, which promotes Amtrak. He was an aide to former Sen. George Voinovich (R-Ohio) and also was a senior policy advisor to the Ohio Senate Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC), which was chaired by Voinovich.
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The state-driven process, with its emphasis on corridors under 600 miles, has a tendency to create uncoordinated shards, which do not strengthen the national system as much as desired. On top of that, no equip-

Midwest HSR study released

A network of four 220-mph rail corridors fanning outward from Chicago could serve 13 cities, generate 43 million riders per year, produce $13.8 billion in new business sales yearly and create 104,000 permanent new jobs once in full operation.

That’s the findings of a study developed by Siemens and the Midwest High Speed Rail Association. The study, released on April 28, was prepared by the Economic Development Research Group and the international transportation engineering firm AECOM.

Up to 25 trains in each direction per day are proposed to operate on each of the four routes from Chicago — to Minneapolis/St. Paul, St. Louis, Cincinnati and Detroit/Cleveland. Travel between Chicago and Cincinnati or Detroit would be about 2 hours, while travel to Cleveland from Chicago would be about 2 hours, 20 minutes.

The Ohio routes would serve additional cities. For example, the Cincinnati route would travel via Indianapolis. The Cleveland route would travel via Fort Wayne and Toledo where the line would split with routes to Detroit and Cleveland. There would also be stations at the major city international airports.

Building the system would cost $83.6 billion and produce $2.2 billion in ticket revenues annually. Trains would operate at 220 mph on dedicated track with no grade crossings. Some bristled at the substantial cost of the rail system but did not compare it to the already substantial cost of expanding highway infrastructure to address congestion.

“So, you could rebuild the I-70/71 split in Columbus just about 56 times for the cost of an entire, regional transportation network. Now, let’s count the number of complex interchanges in the Midwest. Think there might be more than 56?” asked a friend of the Facebook page for Linking Ohio.

AECOM produced a similar study last year for Amtrak of building advanced high-speed rail in the Northeast Corridor. It proposed building new tracks for 220-mph trains that would carry eight million riders per year, up from the current 12 million intercity riders. Amtrak suggested investing $4.7 billion annually ($117.5 billion total) over the next 25 years to allow trains to travel between New York and Washington in 96 minutes and between New York and Boston in just 84 minutes.

Ironically, planning is underway for extending 110 mph trains west of the Northeast Corridor on the Empire Corridor to Buffalo and on the Keystone Corridor to Pittsburgh. It is ironic because it would leave gaps of only 130-180 miles between the planned Midwest and Northeast high-speed rail systems.

All Aboard Ohio is encouraging policymakers to fix the gaps in the map by pursuing the immediate development of 90-110 mph passenger rail between Cleveland and Buffalo, plus Cleveland and Pittsburgh, as well as plan for future 220 mph trains between Chicago and the East Coast.

A high-speed line linking the Midwest-Northeast (Chicago-New York with branches to Detroit and Washington DC) would serve 60.4 million people along 1,075 route miles (or 56,186 people per route-mile). By comparison, China’s new Jinghu (Beijing-Shanghai) High-Speed Railway opening this year will serve 51.5 million people along 818 route miles (or 62,958 people per route-mile). Jinghu trains will cover the 818 miles in just under four hours.
Directory of All Aboard Ohio

No trains or transit; so how do like $4 gas now, Ohio?
To Ohio leaders who cut funding for your gas-pain-relieving trains and transit, they must find some joy at seeing you pay more and more at the gasoline pump. Certainly many of the lobbyists and campaign contributors who influence anti-rail and anti-transit decisions by your elected leaders are enjoying their riches these days. But while they count their riches, you wince as the gas pump sucks $50, $70 or even $90 from your pocket at each visit, forcing you to cut other purchases and/or consider making lifestyle changes.

But those lobbying to keep you oil-addicted aren’t totally happy. They want more oil produced but can’t get it. They want to do what they’ve done for 150 years—drill America out of the supply crunch and return to the glorious days of the 20th century when America was the world’s largest oil producer.

That was before America hit its peak in domestic oil production. That was before Mexico, Alaska, North Sea and 60 other oil-producing nations starting depleting their oil resources faster than they could find new supplies to prevent passing their own peaks in production. That was before America gave away nearly $500 billion per year in its wealth to other nations to buy their oil and spare us from having to confront our oil addiction.

Oil is in higher demand globally but the supplies of conventional crude have been in decline since 2006. Meanwhile, gasoline inventories in the U.S. are on a steady slide this year to levels below the five-year average, according to the U.S. Energy Information Agency, a division of the U.S. Department of Energy.

Those factors make more relevant small disruptions in supply, such as the civil war in oil-exporter Libya. Or, they are affected by political unrest in other Middle Eastern nations, or by natural disasters, or by supply disruptions from aging refineries and pipelines.

The result is what you see on gas station signs at street corners in your town or neighborhood each day. But to report that latest shocking price in this article is difficult because there’s a new shocking price to report every few days or weeks. But as of May, the price was moving strongly into the range above $4.

Yet there are still cries of fraud and price manipulation, which may be the case in some places. U.S. President Barack Obama, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and others have called for investigations in their countries where high prices, fuel shortages and public anger are worsening.

But despite all the hand-wringing in America and overseas over the energy crisis, Ohioans have limited alternatives but to pay the higher prices. The prices, which were briefly held down during the recession, are again causing Ohioans to change their energy-intensive lifestyles so they can have more alternatives to driving. Urban and inner-suburban housing construction has started up again after the recession, while outer suburban and exurban housing markets remain stagnant at recessionary levels.

“With transportation more expensive, prospective homebuyers become less willing to buy in a community miles from a city,” wrote HuffPost Business columnist William Alden. “When demand for far-flung houses weakens, prices stay depressed and the broader housing recovery can be threatened.”

“It (high fuel price) really blunts the hope of rebound in a lot of those outlying areas,” said Joe Cortright, president and principal economist of the consulting group Impresa, in Portland, OR, as quoted in the March 8, 2011 HuffPost article. “Those housing units come with the added penalty of a higher commuting price. It’s really more of a reminder that there’s a lot of volatility in [energy] prices. People think, ‘Do I really want to expose myself to the risk? I may have to pay even higher prices in the future.’”

Ohioans are taking transit more (up 5 percent on Cincinnati buses, up 7 percent on Cleveland’s rail system and more than 8 percent on Columbus buses). The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) showed that public transit saves commuters an average of $10,116 annually and $843 per month based on the April 13 national average gas price of $3.81. APTA also studied the nation’s 20 most heavily used transit systems. The only Ohio transit system in the top 20 is Cleveland, where commuters saved $10,230 annually and $853 per month by taking buses and trains.

While Ohioans were hurting this spring, Gov. John Kasich and state lawmakers slashed Ohio’s already tiny transit funding by more than half to just $20 million in a state transportation budget of more than $2 billion. And, of course, there are no trains that most of Ohioans can use. Only seven Ohio cities have Amtrak train stations which are of little use to all but the most hardy travelers because the trains run in the middle of the night.

Megabus expanded service in Ohio in May, but it is a second-rate transportation service. Only a second-rate nation would accept such a no-frills bus service as an alternative to rail. Sadly, that is the only growing transportation alternative being enabled by current government policies in Ohio.
$7 million buys for CVSR a busy off-season

After setting a ridership record in 2010 (189,000 passengers), the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad also had a very busy off-season. They used the winter and early-spring to continue to improve using $7 million in National Park Service funds. Projects included replacing jointed rails with welded rails over nine miles of track ($2.4 million), upgrading grade crossing signals ($2.1 million), improving and expanding the Rockside Road station in Independence ($1.1 million), replacing a trestle over Sand Run in Northwest Akron ($994,000), and replacing aging crossties between Akron and Cleveland ($440,000).

Yet the railroad continued to operate on its normal weekend schedule of two daily round trips north of Akron, and regularly filling its nine-car trains. Its expanded Summer-Fall schedule, including service to Canton, starts in June. More improvements are coming, including an expanded station at Akron Northside that will include a gift shop and restrooms.

A smoother, quieter Akron-Cleveland ride is the result of replacing the last sections of jointed rails with welded ones. The CVSR track through Peninsula was being worked on in April.
Spring Meeting
Saturday, May 21st
The Spaghetti Warehouse
(Next to the historic T&O train station)
397 West Broad Street, Columbus

Registration fee includes meeting, continental breakfast and full lunch:
Entrée selection: Spaghetti Warehouse’s signature 15-Layer Lasagne, Spaghetti with meatballs, Four-Cheese Manicotti, Fettuccine Alfredo, Grilled Chicken Caesar Salad

Morning agenda: Updates on east-west Amtrak service improvements, Cincinnati Streetcar, Dayton commuter rail, Northeast Ohio rail developments.

An All Aboard Ohio board meeting will follow lunch; members are welcome to stay.

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

**May 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Akron Local Meeting</td>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
<td>Uncorked Wine Bar, 22 N. High St., Akron</td>
<td>Chris Niekamp 330-608-2503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Youngstown Local Meeting</td>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
<td>Cassese’s MVR, 410 North Walnut Street, Youngstown</td>
<td>John Fahnet 330-565-5699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Cleveland Local Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Franklin Circle Christian Church, 2nd Floor, 1688 Fulton Rd., Cleveland</td>
<td>Ken Prendergast 216-288-4883</td>
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<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Grandview Public Library 1685 W. First Ave., Grandview</td>
<td>Larry Robertson 614-459-0359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Toledo Local Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Toledo Amtrak Station, Dr. MLK Plaza, 415 Emerald Ave, Toledo</td>
<td>Bill Gill 419-536-1924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>All Aboard Ohio Spring Meeting</td>
<td><strong>NEW SITE!</strong></td>
<td>See meeting notice (above) for meeting and location details</td>
<td>Ken Prendergast 216-288-4883</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Cincinnati Local Meeting</td>
<td>6:30 pm</td>
<td>CUT, Tower “A”, 1301 Western Avenue, Cincinnati</td>
<td>Beau Tuke <a href="mailto:beautuke@yahoo.com">beautuke@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Summer Meeting &amp; Family Outing</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Mad River &amp; NKP RR Museum, 253 Southwest St., Bellevue</td>
<td>Ken Prendergast 216-288-4883</td>
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