Amtrak punts at chance to improve ‘Lake Shore’

By Ken Prendergast
Executive Director, All Aboard Ohio

Over a period of three years, Amtrak is issuing Congressionally mandated Performance Improvement Plans (PIP) for the railroad’s 15 long-distance train services. This year, Amtrak analyzed the five routes that performed in the middle of the pack in terms of cost-effectiveness. One of those services was Amtrak’s Lake Shore Limited which links Chicago to New York City and Boston via Ohio station stops at Bryan, Toledo, Sandusky, Elyria and Cleveland. Amtrak’s PIPs are required by Sec. 210 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA).

Last year, Amtrak analyzed the five routes that performed the poorest, including the Cardinal (Chicago-New York City via Cincinnati) and the Capitol Limited (Chicago-Washington DC via Toledo, Sandusky, Elyria, Cleveland and Alliance). Worthwhile recommendations came out of those PIPs, including operating the Cardinal daily and the Capitol Limited with through cars via Pittsburgh to/from the Pennsylvania from/to New York City. Both improvements could take effect in early 2013 after Amtrak receives new Viewliner II sleepers, diner and baggage cars, and after track capacity enhancements are made to sidings in Virginia and at the Pittsburgh station.

All Aboard Ohio applauds Amtrak’s efforts involving club service and proposing an eastbound schedule about three-and-a-half hours earlier than at present so it would leave Chicago at about 6 p.m. All Aboard Ohio applauds this change, but wonders why this could not be even earlier to give it more than 90 minutes separation from the Capitol Limited’s proposed 7:30 p.m. Chicago departure which will also add a Chicago-New York service? Unfortunately the westbound schedules of both trains aren’t proposed to change. With the Lake Shore and Capitol will continue to arrive Chicago just 60 minutes apart.

All Aboard Ohio copied the letter to key members of Ohio’s Congressional delegation. Why? Although the State of Ohio has yet to take the lead in promoting the development of passenger rail for its citizens, Ohio’s Congressional delegation has. The Lake Shore Limited is a result of that. Northern Ohio Congresspersons and

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From officers to offices, changes arrive

Several changes were made this fall that will help the
Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers (OARP, dba
All Aboard Ohio) grow and increase its voice for rail
improvements. The changes will help the association
attract more people with influence to serve as board
members and officers, improve its finances and
promote improvements to rail infrastructure even where
passenger services don't yet run.

At the Fall Meeting held Oct. 29 in conjunction with
the Midwest High Speed Rail Association in Cleveland,
All Aboard Ohio board members voted unanimously
for amendments to the constitution (also called bylaws)
of OARP. All Aboard Ohio is a registered trade name of
OARP, the incorporated nonprofit organization.

The board of directors considered several governance
problems that have affected the association for much of
its 38-year history. Foremost among them was finding
people willing to serve as officers, especially the presi-
dent. Few are willing to take on the presumed demanding
role of president. However, today, many duties of presi-
dent are absorbed by the executive director and other
board members. The title and the term of office are part of
the problem, too. Getting rid of the name "President"
might be half the battle. The other half is that presidents
tend to feel locked into the position with no escape.

The board also wanted to attract to its ranks more
people having political or business influence without
having to ask them to take on as much of a commitment
that running in a membership election and serving for at
least two years would require. With the pending depa-
ture of Bill Hutchison as president and the looming
2012 board elections, the board took action.

The amendments were developed, submitted to
members and approved in compliance with the associa-
tion's bylaws. First, notification to members that a vote
on bylaw amendments would be held at the Fall
Meeting was advertised in the previous newsletter.
Proposed amendments were developed by a temporary,
board-appointed committee of three persons – Vice
President Mark Carlson who served as committee chair,
At-Large Director Ron Sheck and former board
member Ken Sislik. All proposed amendments were
reviewed and revised by our General Counsel Ben
Farah, then submitted to the board by the committee for
consideration. The board then recommended the
proposed amendments to the membership.

At start of the Fall Meeting, copies of the bylaws with
— See "Changes" on page six

What’s Inside...

• Transit opportunities/
news across Ohio.

• Call for All Aboard Ohio
Board Candidates, Pg. 6

• Don’t forget to renew
your membership – use
the form on Page 2.
Betty Sharkey made the discovery on a recent train trip from Tampa, FL to New York City which he described in a Dec. 12, 2011 piece titled “On a Long Train Trip, Rare Pleasures Return.” On his train he encountered Amtrak Product Development Officer Dennis Lyons who stated “We’re seeing more business travelers, usually on trips of about 500 miles but sometimes even all the way to New York.”

High fuel prices have killed off many flights or forced airlines to turn to uncomfortable turboprops. Other flights have grown obscenely expensive. There are countless business travel markets of 500 miles or more in the populous area east of the Mississippi River. This is where the overnight train can excel. Consider a business traveler who lives in Syracuse, NY and wants to travel to Toledo, OH.

The only flying option is on bankrupt American Airlines, which has no flights arriving Toledo before 11 a.m. So that means flying the night before and staying in a hotel. The nearly five-hour trip (with a change of planes at Chicago O’Hare) costs $513 round trip with a two-week advanced booking. A one-night stay in a Toledo hotel, according to Orbitz.com, costs between $39 and $109 (or $74 for the median price). Renting a standard-sized car from Enterprise for one day costs $75 with tax, bringing the total to $662.

Driving 435 miles each way would take about seven hours, assuming no extended stops along the way and no weather delays. At the current IRS deduction rate of 55.5 cents per mile for business travel, the cost of driving round trip is $483. Adding $74 for the hotel, it brings the total travel cost to $557.

Amtrak’s Lake Shore Limited leaves Syracuse at 9:41 p.m. and arrives Toledo at 5:55 a.m. Unfortunately the return train leaves Toledo after 3 a.m. but may move to 11:30 p.m. by year’s end. With a two-week advanced purchase, the round trip coach seat is $61. If you want a bed and a private toilet, book a Viewliner roomette for $255 total. Add a rental car at Toledo and the total cost of the trip is just $330.

The tremendous time saver of multi-tasking (in this case, sleeping while traveling) lets the train compete speed-wise with flying and driving in the westbound direction. And it’s less tiring than dealing with O’Hare Airport or seven hours of I-90 through Ohio.”
WANTED

Photos and Articles

Clippings from newspapers and magazines must include the publication's name and date. Your articles and news briefs should be typed and double-spaced, though very short items may be legibly written. Preferably, send hard copy with IBM-compatible text files on CDs, or send e-mail submissions to:

kjprendergast@cox.net

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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A one-year membership in All Aboard Ohio includes a subscription to the Ohio Passenger Rail News, plus action alerts, notice of rail-oriented events, and local meetings. (Dues and contributions to All Aboard Ohio may be tax deductible.)

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Cut here

Sign me up! I WANT BETTER RAIL PASSENGER SERVICES!
Amtrak punts at chance to improve ‘Lake Shore’

“Lake Shore” from page one

Ohio’s two Senators successfully urged that the Lake Shore Limited be Amtrak’s experimental route of 1975 to restore passenger rail service to Cleveland and Toledo. Congress’ action came as the result of advocacy by the Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers, All Aboard Ohio’s parent organization. Back then, Cleveland was the largest city in the nation without intercity passenger trains (now Columbus is the largest metro area without regularly scheduled passenger rail service).

For the next two decades, this Chicago-New York/Boston route provided Northern Ohio — the most populous area between the route’s endpoints — with conveniently scheduled arrivals and departures. Unfortunately, on-time performance problems with the Lake Shore and those of western connections at Chicago forced Amtrak to abandon serving Northern Ohio at convenient times about 20 years ago.

Not so coincidentally, the greatest one-year ridership Amtrak ever carried on the Lake Shore was in 1986 when the train served Ohio cities at much more convenient times than it does now (see below). Amtrak came close to equaling the 1986 record for the Lake Shore in 2011 when Amtrak broke its national ridership record. Perhaps if Amtrak served populous Ohio at better times, its trains through our state might have enjoyed more of Amtrak’s nationwide success. Some of the charts shown in the Lake Shore PIP bear this out (see Station Ridership chart, below-right).

In February 2011, Mr. Boardman met with several members of Ohio’s Congressional delegation, along with U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and Federal Rail Administrator Joe Szabo. Congressional leaders urged the creation of a Lake Erie Corridor that included improved passenger rail services. While All Aboard Ohio recognizes that the Lake Shore PIP and the Lake Erie Corridor are two separate matters, one can lead to the other if designed as such.

Therefore, All Aboard Ohio had hoped that the Lake Shore Limited PIP along with several emerging developments would provide Amtrak with the opportunity to consider a wider variety of improvement options to Northern Ohio’s population centers. Emerging developments include:

- projects in Illinois, Indiana and New York state;
- the proposed new Chicago-New York through-car service by linking the Capitol Limited-Pennsylvanian trains at Pittsburgh.

Instead, these issues appeared to be considered in isolation to each other, if they were considered at all. In fact, Amtrak’s 2011 PIP devoted only 11 pages to the Lake Shore analysis, compared to 20 pages for the Crescent route and 23 pages for the Silver Service that were the other middle-of-the-pack routes considered in this round of PIPs.

The very short Lake Shore PIP left All Aboard Ohio with more questions than it answered. Such as:

I. What impact will the upcoming $357 million in federal funding (from ARRA and PRIA) major capital improvements — Englewood Flyover, Indiana Gateway and Empire Corridor/Albany-area track projects — have on the Lake Shore Limited’s ability to provide a faster, more reliable and more cost-effective service between Chicago, Northern Ohio, and the East Coast? And what flexibility might these improvements provide to Amtrak in considering changes to the train’s schedule, such as arriving New York even earlier? The reduction of dwell times at enroute stations is noted in the PIP as a time-saver, but not the infrastructure improvements. If the cost-effectiveness impact from these federally funded improvements was considered, why was it not accounted for in the report?

II. All Aboard Ohio understands that stations in New York state, as part of the Empire Corridor project now being planned with federal funds by the New York Department of Transportation (NYDOD), could include expanded stations that allow passenger trains to serve them from more than one track. In 2008 we conducted an analysis called “Fix It First” that showed if all stations along the Lake Shore route had these two-track capabilities, it could reduce travel times, increase track capacity and save Amtrak up to $1.12 million per year in operating costs. It further showed that if 90 mph operations could be provided pursuant to the installation of Congressionally mandated Positive Train Control (PTC) systems by 2015, another $1.08 million in time savings could be realized.

III. How does this proposal, combined with their already inconvenient schedules, not weaken both train services? We are concerned that this is happening already based on the “Station Pair Ridership” pie chart shown on Page 41 of the 2011 PIP (reproduced below). The fact that only one city west of Buffalo (Toledo) appeared in the top 10 station pairs is suggestive of this. Amazingly, Greater Cleveland and its nearly 3 million residents within 30 miles of Lakefront Station was nowhere to be seen in the top 10. Since the Capitol could soon add New York City as an eastern endpoint with its link with the Pennsylvanian at Pittsburgh, why propose to run these trains even closer together to take ridership away from each other at some of their most populous travel markets including Chicago?

IV. The other trains covered by the PIP report included analyses of providing connecting bus services from population centers that are 50-150 miles from the rail corridors. There are numerous such cities in that range of distance from the Lake Shore’s route. Why was there no consideration given to connecting bus services between the Lake Shore and nearby cities such as Toronto, Akron/Canton, Youngstown, Pittsburgh, Columbus, Cincinnati, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, or major tourist destinations like Niagara Falls?

V. At the Feb. 10, 2011 meeting with leaders of Ohio’s Congressional Delegation, Mr. Boardman, Secretary LaHood and Administrator Szabo, there was discussion of working together for improved east-west Amtrak services and developing high-speed rail in a “Lake Erie Corridor.” Indeed, more substantial improvements to existing Amtrak services are seen as achievable first steps to provide needed travel options today, develop the region’s rail travel market, and ignite station-area developments that could provide public-private resources to sustain expanded passenger rail operations. At the same time, planning should move forward on developing high-speed rail in affordable stages in our Lake Erie Corridor that Amtrak can feed into. We encourage and will gladly assist in continued dialogue with the goal of starting project planning on these initiatives.

All Aboard Ohio recognizes that the Chicago-Frankfort line has long been an Amtrak priority as it is one of the nation’s most-used rail corridors. That’s no surprise as Chicago is the nation’s most populous city. It’s a line that should be increased in frequency and new programs such as the Pennsylvanian and Empire Corridor should be added to the already busy schedule.
Amtrak’s Lake Shore Limited
Daily east and west between Chicago-New York City/Boston
Serves the Ohio cities of Bryan, Toledo, Sandusky, Elyria and Cleveland

History: Begun as Amtrak’s 1975 experimental route at the behest of the Ohio Congressional Delegation to provide regular daily passenger train service to Toledo and Cleveland. At the time, Cleveland was the nation’s largest metro area without intercity rail service (today it is Columbus, OH).

Ridership: In Fiscal Year 2010, the Lake Shore Limited carried 364,460 riders. Ridership increased 6.6% in FY2011 to 387,043. However, despite a year of record ridership systemwide, the Lake Shore’s 2011 total is still short of it’s highest mark when it ran on a different schedule. Although research is incomplete, it appears that the highest ridership carried by the Lake Shore Limited was in FY1986 with 387,968 riders. The Amtrak timetables issued in 1986 show the trains serving most of the population centers with usable if not convenient schedules.

On-time performance problems with the Lake Shore Limited and those of western connections at Chicago forced Amtrak to abandon serving northern Ohio at convenient times. Today, on-time performance has improved.

Market: In addition to serving the large cities of Chicago, New York City and Boston, the Lake Shore Limited also serves numerous other cities along its 1,158-mile route. These are the Lake Shore’s top-10 enroute population centers...

- Chicago
- New York City
- Boston
- Buffalo
- Erie
- Buffalo-Waterloo
- Sandusky
- Toledo
- Cleveland
- Dayton

Lake Shore Limited at select cities, Summer 1986

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US CENSUS 2010 central city (metropolitan area) populations:

1. Cleveland, OH: 396,815 (metro 2,945,831)
2. Toledo, OH: 287,208 (metro 651,429)
3. Buffalo, NY: 261,310 (metro 1,135,608)
4. Fort Wayne-Waterloo, IN: 253,691 (metro 610,015)
5. Rochester, NY: 210,565 (metro 1,054,322)
7. Syracuse, NY: 145,170 (metro 742,603)
8. Erie, PA: 101,786 (metro 280,566)
9. South Bend, IN: 101,168 (metro 317,538)
10. Albany, NY: 97,856 (metro 857,592)
Cincy streetcar makes more progress

After surviving yet another ballot attempt on its life, Cincinnati Streetcar construction bids are due to be awarded in the first quarter of 2012. The first segment of the streetcar will link The Banks between the two riverfront sports stadiums, north through the central business district, to Findlay Market at the north end of the Over-The-Rhine District. Future additions will reach the University of Cincinnati, the zoo and Clifton neighborhood.

That followed the Dec. 15 awarding of $10.9 million in U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) funding from the TIGER III program to extend the streetcar south from Second Street/Government Square into The Banks, an area of riverfront housing, shops, cafes and offices now under construction.

The city originally requested $58 million to restore funding previously awarded by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) but was later withdrawn after John Kasich was elected governor and former asphalt industry lobbyist Jerry Wray was named his new ODOT director. The withdrawn funding, given earlier this year to lower-ranked road projects and bus-based transit projects, would have allowed the first phase of the Cincinnati Streetcar to go north of Findlay Market, up the hill to the Uptown area where the University of Cincinnati and major medical facilities are located.

Sadly, many other city-building rail transit projects around the country have had to endure similar fights that only delay the inevitable. Dallas, Houston, Phoenix, Denver, Seattle, Charlotte and many other cities all have gone through what Cincinnati is now going through. The Cincinnati Streetcar has survived two ballot issues – one in 2009 and the other in November that would have banned all passenger rail development in the City of Cincinnati.

Unless anti-rail and anti-urban forces get a law passed that prohibits travel outside of Greater Cincinnati, the opposition will lose. Too many people are acquiring rail and transit experiences from other cities and returning to ask that lifestyle.

December, designs for the streetcar station shelters were released by the city (see photo, below).

“The streetcar project is a series of smaller pieces that must come together before construction of the track begins,” said Chris Eilerman, the city’s streetcar project manager, in a written statement. “The shelter design is another milestone in that list of items. This design combines a modern look, while at the same time, fits in with the historic architecture served by the streetcar.”

The shelters, designed by Cincinnati-based DNK Architects and chosen because of their clean, simple and modular approach, comply with USDOT “Buy American” requirements. After researching stations along streetcar routes in several cities, DNK Architects developed a design that would be easily recognized and protect riders from the elements for the short time they will be waiting at stops. There are 18 stations along the route.

“We designed the station structures to call to mind what the Streetcar will bring to Cincinnati – a public transportation system that everyone can use to connect to neighborhoods,” said David Kirk, founder and principle architect, DNK Architects, and lead architect for the streetcar station design. “We want people to look at the stations and see how easy, safe, and comfortable it is to explore all that Cincinnati has to offer.”

Selection of the station design was the final step in reaching a complete design on the first segment of the streetcar. In order to reach final design, the streetcar team completed a number of other critical steps, including surveys of the entire route, inspections of basements near the route that lie under sidewalks, coordination of vehicle options, completion of an independent peer review of the project and performance of a quality control review of the entire project.

Next steps for the project are continued negotiations to reach agreements with utility companies and to select a preferred design for the modern streetcar equipment. Seven basic designs are being considered – five streetcar types that would draw electric power from overhead wires and two types of streetcars that would draw electricity from batteries.
Cleveland area transit is expanding again

After one of the worst recessions in memory, the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority is expanding 4.3 percent thanks to more county sales tax revenues from growing economic activity.

Many services cut in 2008 are being restored in 2012, including more frequent train service on the 19-mile Red Line (Airport-Downtown-Windermere) where 20-minute off-peak headways will be improved to 15 minutes. Red Line usage grew by about 13 percent in 2011 to nearly 6 million riders. No service changes are proposed for the 12 miles of light-rail Blue and Green lines linking the Waterfront and Shaker Heights where ridership grew about 2 percent last year.

The HealthLine bus rapid transit on Euclid Avenue will see slightly more frequent service to address serious overcrowding in the afternoon. Use of the HealthLine grew a healthy 7 percent in 2011 to exceed 4 million riders. Total GCRTA ridership grew about 3 percent in 2011 to nearly 170,000 riders per day.

Major new transit projects and plans are moving forward since publication of the last Ohio Passenger Rail News:

**University Circle-Mayfield Station**  
- The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) on Dec. 15 awarded $12.5 million to this $18 million Red Line station project which is now fully funded. The Euclid-East 120th Station will be relocated to Mayfield Road-Little Italy, track bridges over Mayfield will be replaced and Circle Drive/East 115th Street will be extended. This may spur a planned mix of housing, offices and shops between a bus layover on Circle Drive and the new station (see graphic, below). Construction is scheduled to start by the end of 2012 and take about two years. Also starting this year, GCRTA is replacing but not relocating the University Circle-Cedar Red Line Station for $13 million.

**Red Line/HealthLine extension to Euclid**  
- GCRTA was awarded $1 million by the USDOT on Oct. 17 to conduct an alternatives analysis of extending rail or bus rapid transit about six miles eastward. Either would provide enhanced commuter options to downtown Cleveland/University Circle and promote redevelopment. The study will examine the potential options for a Red Line rail or HealthLine bus rapid transit extension along six linear miles through Cleveland, East Cleveland and Euclid. An alternatives analysis is the first step in the planning process if federal funds are desired for construction.

**West Side Transit Center**  
- At the request of two nonprofit development corporations in downtown Cleveland, a major new transportation center is being planned by GCRTA just west of Public Square. It would occupy the entire block bounded by Superior, West 3rd, St. Clair and West 6th streets. Sidewalk frontage would have retail spaces and above them would be a multi-level parking facility, topped by an apartment tower.

**North Coast Harbor Pedestrian Concourse**  
- Although not a GCRTA project, it will have major impacts on improving access to public transit including Amtrak. City officials are advancing planning on a 1,000-foot-long pedestrian concourse above the lakefront tracks and Shoreway (Ohio Route 2) that would link the new convention center with the Great Lakes Science Center, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and proposed lakefront developments. Midway through the pedestrian concourse, which would have open-air and enclosed sides, would be a stairwell and elevator to provide access to a proposed parking deck, the Waterfront Line’s North Coast station and the Amtrak station.
Akron, where the wheel meets the steel

Akron was where America’s rubber tires were made and the phrase “where the rubber meets the road” certainly applied. Today, most of the tire factories are gone but the rail lines that served them remain thanks to the Akron METRO Regional Transit Authority which owns 51 miles of them. In fact, no Ohio transit agency owns more rail route miles than Akron METRO RTA, including the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) which owns just 31 rail route miles. The question is: what to do with them?

An answer came in October, when METRO was awarded $270,000 by the Federal Transit Administration to fund a $337,500 alternatives analysis of an introductory commuter rail service for the 1.1 million population of the Akron-Canton area. METRO will provide the matching dollars and analyze a starter, 8-mile commuter rail service between the Valley Business District on Merriman Road, running southeast through the north side of downtown Akron and into the vicinity of the new Goodyear Corporate Campus in South Akron.

Most urban alternatives analyses consider a variety of modal options like bus and rail services, plus a no-build option to evaluate the consequences of inaction. But this analysis will consider only rail alternatives (plus no-build) as there is no parallel roadway for bus services. It will also look at ways to improve bus connectivity to a rail service and assess land uses within a half-mile of the line.

The starter route is a curious choice from a ridership market standpoint, as METRO owns rail lines in more heavily traveled corridors such as from Hudson, through Akron, past the Akron-Canton Airport, south to Canton, or another route from Kent to Akron. But it is an understandable choice in terms of infrastructure as most tracks, bridges and grade crossings may be in their best condition since the line was built in the 1880s.

There is also an active Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad train station at Akron Northside which is due to expand in 2012 with new restrooms and retail across Ridge Street from a planned 10-story Marriott Hotel. That station is used by more than 100,000 passengers a year, making it busier than any Amtrak station in Ohio. CVSR’s popularity helped encourage Akron officials to investigate commuter rail. Former GCRTA Planning Team Leader Richard Enty was hired as METRO’s new planning director this past fall and will oversee the commuter rail analysis. Mr. Enty oversaw commuter rail planning for GCRTA and Lorain County.

There is also growing interest in an Akron-Kent commuter rail route. A $50,000 Connecting Communities Planning Grant application to the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study was sought for 2012 so Akron-Kent commuter rail could be studied. But the application lacked a stronger land use component which may be why it was not recommended for funding. All Aboard Ohio encourages METRO to submit a new application for 2013 and leverage federal alternatives analysis funding.

After all, where else in Ohio are there two large universities (Kent State University and University of Akron) with 72,000 students total, only 12 miles apart and linked by a railroad right of way already owned by a transit authority? This is a direct, well-engineered rail corridor with gentle curves and grades that once handled 70 mph Erie

Kent’s and Akron’s universities partner in numerous learning programs, including technology and medical curricula. Under the Ohio Higher Education Rail Network model, tuition for shared learning programs could support commuter rail operating costs and reduce parking/driving costs for universities and students. The METRO-owned rail line goes into downtown Akron and the university and into the heart of downtown Kent where the university and the central business district are coalescing around nearly $400 million in new development, including a $27 million transit center.

Yellow Line = 8-mile starter commuter rail line
Black Line = Akron Metro RTA-owned rail corridors

Akron-area

commuter rail

of Akron-Kent

Network in the 1980s.
Where will WestShore Corridor go from here?

The WestShore Corridor Transportation Project (WCTP) seeks to address the lack of transit options in the corridor which extends from downtown Cleveland through western Cuyahoga, Lorain and Erie Counties to Sandusky. The need for improvements is based on several factors including a lack of public transit options for inter-county travel, lack of transit options within Lorain and Erie Counties, and the need for more sustainable land use patterns in suburban growth areas. An alternatives analysis conducted by Parsons Brinkerhoff for project sponsor Lorain County was begun to address these needs, but more funding is required to complete federally compliant planning before any service can start.

Development of commuter rail service along the Norfolk Southern (former Nickel Plate) rail line that passes through Lakewood, Bay Village and much of northern Lorain County has been the goal for many citizens and political leaders in the WestShore Corridor. But the analysis conducted for the WCTP indicates that a transit market must first be established within the WestShore Corridor before commuter rail can become a reality. The WCTP suggests that an inter-county transit market could be established in several phases.

Phase 1, during the next five years, would include implementation of commuter bus service between Lorain County and downtown Cleveland. In this phase, Lorain County Transit would also be restored to its pre-2009 service levels to distribute passengers throughout Lorain County. This would cost about $11 million per year for buying buses and outfitting park-and-ride lots in Lorain County. The estimated annual operating cost of Phase 1 is $8.3 million.

In Phase 2 (Years 6-10), commuter bus service in Lorain County would expand, and commuter bus service between Erie County and downtown Cleveland would begin. The estimated cost of this second phase of service would be about $16 million for additional buses and park-and-ride lots, and about $10 million in additional annual operating cost. Also in this phase, regional transit officials would complete the analysis of commuter rail service, reach an agreement with Norfolk Southern regarding use of their rail line, and begin designing the commuter rail service.

In Phase 3 (Years 10-15), commuter rail service would begin operation and replace some or all of the commuter bus services in Lorain County plus some bus services in Cuyahoga County. The commuter rail service would operate between Lorain's Black River Landing and downtown Cleveland. Stations would be located in Lorain, Sheffield, Avon, Westlake, Bay Village, Rocky River, Lakewood and Cleveland. Commuter bus service would continue to be operated between Sandusky and Cleveland.

The estimated annual cost of operating the rail and bus services in Phase 3 is approximately $17 million.

Identifying a potential operator of the commuter bus and rail service—whether it be Lorain County Transit (LCT), GCRTA, Erie County Transit, some combination of those agencies, or a new agency—is another issue that must be resolved before operation can begin. The high cost of commuter rail may be beyond the funding capacity of the region at this time, but the phased approach may allow for the more fiscally manageable commuter bus service to begin operating while the region works toward the goal of developing commuter rail.

The budget for this phase of the WestShore Corridor Transportation Project was $423,000 — 80 percent of it came from a 2008 federal appropriation secured by Congresswoman Betty Sutton, D-13, of Copley at the urging of All Aboard Ohio. The remainder of the project budget was contributed by local sources including the private sector, municipalities, transit authorities and government agencies from all three project area counties. Representatives from the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, Ohio Department of Transportation, Lorain County Transit, All Aboard Ohio and other organizations helped manage the project via the WestShore Corridor Commuter Rail Task Force.

If commuter rail is to happen in the WestShore Corridor, it will be because of the success of a new Lorain County Transit Coalition to promote dedicated funding for transit in this county of more than 300,000 people.

Except for mostly rural and exurban Geauga County, Lorain County is the only county in Greater Cleveland that lacks a dedicated funding source for transit. It is also the most populous county which does not have any public transportation to downtown Cleveland.

To support the Lorain County Transit Coalition, please contact Virginia Haynes at (440) 328-2362 or vhaynes@loraincounty.us.
All Aboard Ohio’s President
It’s time to think big in America again

By Bill Hutchison
President, All Board Ohio

One thing I have been thinking about lately is that old “why is rail always under attack when other modes aren’t” thought that usually just leaves me frustrated. Make a pro-rail argument by telling opponents that highways are also subsidized and you usually hear “yeah, but everyone drives.” No further thought needed.

The difference this time is that I have come to realize that a reason might be is that there has never been a development-based service improvement and expansion process at Amtrak or elsewhere that would make rail service so tightly woven into the nation’s fabric that any service cuts would be unthinkable. True, we have seen sporadic development near some train stations, such as at New Buffalo MI and elsewhere, but these are usually coincidental, not by design.

Instead, Amtrak was created to let the private railroads exit the passenger business. It was supposed to quietly fade away and it would have if it wasn’t for the Arab oil embargo and other events. Successive administrations either tried to kill it or just gave it enough money to get by and Amtrak, for its part, never developed any sort of plan to make itself more relevant to national needs. This is why we are where we are.

Over the past 40 years, Amtrak has developed a siege mentality and a timidity that will not allow any real expansion or improvement. It is, as Trains magazine columnist Don Phillips writes, a calcified organization not likely to think creatively. At the same time, promising initiatives started by President Obama have stalled at the hands of intransigent Republicans who a) will oppose anything President Obama is for and, b) who don’t want free-market solutions to apply to highways and aviation, but want them only for rail.

So what to do? Think big! I think it’s time for a national growth and development strategy for a truly national passenger rail system by creating associated development and jobs near stations. The passenger trains could become a loss leader – a catalyst – that makes large scale development possible and that development supports the trains. They go hand-in-hand.

We should think of the entire country as a huge tax increment financing (TIF) zone. Areas within a mile of every train station could become such zones, with new tax revenues from development used to finance rail improvements. One feeds the other. This would mostly be possible only if new or improved service delivers a product attractive enough to justify development. This could be done as a part of a public private partnership (P3) scheme and/or a joint powers authority that bypasses legislative naysayers.

This almost happened in Ohio. Forest City Enterprises was to partner with the state to pour hundreds of millions into new development in Riverside near the Air Force Museum outside Dayton. They saw trains as a catalyst that made their proposed development possible, even with a conventional-speed service. What if this was approached nationally in an organized fashion? The payoff could be huge – enough to pull the country out of its doldrums and to negate the subsidy issue. I think that, on this basis, we can also justify a dedicated rail fund as well.

What is needed is to find others out there who could pick up the banner and run with it. A few might be developers, trade unions, rail service operators (Amtrak, Virgin, Veolis, SNCF, etc.), on-line cities and local chambers of commerce, construction companies and their suppliers.

We could assume that the federal government would spend $500 billion over 20 years at an annual rate of $25 billion. Likewise, the private sector would spend another $10 billion annually, coming from TIF financing, direct investment and other sources. This would give us an annual investment of $35 billion for a total of $700 billion, which, coincidentally, is about the size of the 2009 federal stimulus. This is still less than we spend on highways every year, which few question.

So, how to pay for this? Simple. When the Bush-era tax cuts for the wealthy expire, dedicate the funding to this program! This could easily accommodate the $25 billion yearly cost of a federal program. The burden could be far less when tax revenues from all those new jobs are taken into account. Indeed, the program could actually end up paying for itself.

The economic impact of such a proposal could be huge. If we have a $700 billion outlay, with $500 billion from the federal government and a $200 billion private sector match (TIFs, etc), we could end up with about $2.8 trillion in new economic activity. That’s based on the U.S. Department of Commerce assumption that you get $3 in economic activity for each dollar invested in infrastructure improvements.

What about jobs? To start with, these would be good-paying, non-exportable jobs which would strengthen the battered middle class. Secondly, the number of new jobs created would be huge: 14 million new direct and spin-off jobs. This is from the U.S. Department of Commerce which says a $1 billion investment in rail yields 20,000 jobs.

Finally, this should be inclusive of all forms of intercity rail. As when Frank Sinatra sang Love and Marriage “you can’t have one without the other,” we will want a truly national system of high-speed and conventional rail services. This seamless rail system would feed between transportation modes (especially airlines that are walking away from short-haul markets) and between HSR and conventional rail.

Critics might complain this is too big or costs too much. They should be asked: What else will put millions of people to work with good-paying jobs, create trillions in new economic activity AND simultaneously address our oil dependency, focus development in urban areas, create mobility and help protect our environment? A question to them might be: How can we afford to NOT do this?

America became great by building great things. We have to THINK BIG!
“Changes” from page one

"Changes" from page one

the old and proposed language were provided to all members in attendance. The vote on the amendments was made at the end of the meeting so attendees would have all day to review the proposed amendments, ask questions and suggest changes. No changes were offered. The amendments passed unanimously.

As approved, the amendments:

- Authorize the board of directors to choose the officers — chairman, vice chairman, secretary and treasurer — from their own ranks. These four positions comprise the Executive Committee, a standing committee (the only other standing committee is Development, appointed by the board).
- Give the chairman the same powers as president and the vice-chairman the same as vice-president. No changes were made to the duties of secretary or treasurer.
- Continue to have dues-paying members vote for candidates to most of the 15 board seats.
- Continue to have 10 elected board members, four of which continue to be regional directors elected by the membership from within each region, and six at-large directors elected by the membership statewide.
- Allow up to five associate directors with needed expertise and/or influence selected by the sitting board of directors following the election.
- Provide all board members (Regional, At-Large and Associate) with equal voting powers except when adding or removing Associate Directors to/from the board. Only the membership-elected directors have those powers.
- Tightened up the election procedure timetable and allowed the mail ballot to be initiated by a notice in the newsletter rather than by a special mailing to save money.
- Allow all persons serving as officers and board members to remain in those positions until the general membership election at the 2012 Annual Meeting in Columbus.

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The first 75 words of the statement written by each candidate will be printed as-is on the ballot.

The Election Committee, comprised of the Immediate Past President and two other non-elected members, 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 OARP Board of Directors. Contact the elections committee chairperson (listed below) for further details.

Please mail your statement to (do not fax or use e-mail):

All Aboard Ohio Election Committee

c/o Past President Ed D'Amato

135 Barberry Dr

Berea, OH 44017

(440) 826-4035 (not after 8 p.m.)

ejdamato@sbcglobal.net (for questions only)
Directory of All Aboard Ohio

When Columbus' young professional were asked in a survey last fall by the Columbus Chamber of Commerce what makes the city "cool" for the young jobs. System rail people

"The streetcar plan is not something the mayor is pursuing in any way," said Mayor Coleman's spokesman Dan Williamson in a Feb. 10, 2011 Columbus Dispatch article.
When Columbus' young professionals were asked in a survey last fall by the Columbus Chamber of Commerce what makes the city "cool" for the young and talented, they said they liked the city's amenities, social engagement and vitality.

But when asked if they had one wish to make Columbus a magnet for young, talented people, most respondents (37 percent) said "alternative transportation such as improved public transportation and the addition of passenger rail," according to the chamber. This was up from 23 percent, measured in a similar chamber survey conducted in 2007.

The chamber launched an initiative to attract and retain talent in 2007. Results from a survey of young professionals conducted at that time drove a community discussion and action plan to improve the community's ability to attract and retain these professionals, the future of the workforce.

The 2011 survey measures progress made in the attraction and retention of young professionals, changes in perception of the Columbus region among those young professionals, and informs the dialogue around how Columbus can continue to evolve and improve as a home young and talented people. More than 1,000 young professionals responded to this latest survey.

Respondents to the survey included "boomerangers" who have moved back to Columbus from another location. Another is "homegrown" who have lived in Columbus all of their lives. A third group is "transplants" who moved to Columbus with no prior experience or tie to the region. And the last group was former Columbus residents now living elsewhere. Forty percent of respondents were between the ages of 26-30, and 31 percent reported 4-7 years of professional work experience.

But the fact that improved public transportation, especially rail, was cited most often as the "cool" asset Columbus needed most should come as a wake-up call to the chamber and other community leaders who stayed noticeably silent during the 3C passenger rail development initiative, and especially when it came under attack by political extremists.

No outcry by community leaders was voiced either when Columbus Mayor Michael Coleman withdrew his support for a $103 million, 2.8-mile streetcar along High Street from the Brewery District to Short North that would have served as the first phase of a larger network. Ohio State University and the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission were among those pledging millions of dollars to support the project. The city's leaders did not heed the results of another poll back then, either. Conducted for the Downtown Streetcar Working Group, a 2007 poll showed 68 percent of Columbus residents supported the streetcar project.

"The streetcar plan is not something the mayor is pursuing in any way," said Mayor Coleman's spokesman Dan Williamson in a Feb. 10, 2011 Columbus Dispatch article.

The same thing happened when the Central Ohio Transit Authority requested federal stimulus money in 2009 to build a rail line between downtown and Polaris, about a dozen miles north of downtown. The request was turned down and COTA says it is no longer pursuing any streetcar, light-rail or regional commuter rail projects. COTA was one of the fastest-growing transit systems in 2011, with ridership up nearly 10 percent.

Why is there so much inaction on rail when the city's young professionals, who are tomorrow's leaders, consider it such a high priority? Some chamber and city officials have privately told All Aboard Ohio that the current political environment does not favor rail projects at this time. That is referring to state officials, from Gov. John Kasich to many state legislators who are hostile to any passenger rail projects. Sadly, this remains the case, even as our young people are telling us they think trains are cool.

"We've got to make Ohio cool," said Gov. John Kasich in a speech available on YouTube. "You know, I was down at Lexis-Nexis down in Dayton, I'm meeting with the CEO of the company, and he says, you know, a lot of these, these young people, you know, they want to head for the coast. Why do they want to go to the coast? It's cool. Why do they want to go to Austin? You've been to Austin? It's very cool. You want to go to the Triangle of North Carolina, go down there and check it out, it's cool. We need to make Ohio cool.

And what do the East Coast, West Coast, Austin and Raleigh all have that Columbus doesn't?
Giving rails’ ruster new luster

Since Ohio probably won’t have enough passenger traffic or funding in the foreseeable future to provide dedicated, passenger-only tracks, the availability of quality rail infrastructure will depend on the presence of freight service. Thus, if there is no freight service, there will be no tracks. Unfortunately, freight rail can’t afford all the private capital it needs to serve potential customers.

So at its Dec. 15 teleconference, the OARP Board of Directors voted to create a new statewide organization of freight shippers and economic development interests to complement All Aboard Ohio’s passenger rail and transit interests. Tentatively, this organization is called Rail Enhancements = Sustainable Transportation, Opportunity, Revitalization and Employment, or RESTORE.

The concept for this organization is based on the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency program, more commonly known as CREATE, to address rail traffic congestion with public-private investments in infrastructure capacity enhancements. RESTORE is similar in that it seeks a public-private rail infrastructure program on a regional level. It differs from CREATE because it deals less with rail traffic congestion and more with restoring abandoned or low-quality rail infrastructure to accommodate light-density, short-distance freight traffic.

Because freight railroads – especially short-line and regional rail freight companies – do not cover their cost of capital from revenues, they cannot afford to extend their infrastructure to reach new customers and produce new growth. Many freight railroads often do not even bother looking beyond their existing right of way for new growth opportunities because they can’t afford to reach them. Nor do many freight railroads plan more than a few months into the future to physically position themselves to reach emerging new traffic opportunities because they can’t afford to do much about it even if they wanted.

This is notable in places like the Youngstown-Warren area that lost most of its heavy industry and much of its extensive railroad infrastructure over the past 35 years. Manufacturing is starting to return to that region to serve energy companies wishing to exploit the Marcellus and Utica shales. Unfortunately, freight railroads – especially short-line and regional carriers – cannot afford to reactivating rail infrastructure to serve them and draw even more manufacturers to the region.

It is physically impossible for a train, be it freight or passenger, to travel directly between Cleveland and Youngstown – the only two Ohio metro areas lacking a direct rail link (despite having three high-quality rail lines until several decades ago).

Although other travel corridors in Ohio have direct rail infrastructure linking metro areas, they may need new or improved links to off-mainline shippers. Development of regional rail market assessments and infrastructure plans, more and better partnerships and information sharing with port authorities and local development organizations, and more local, regional, state and federal capital investment tools for rail infrastructure are among the goals of RESTORE. Ohio has a lot of catching up to do, as neighboring states invest up to 20 times more in freight rail infrastructure than Ohio does.

RESTORE will start out by raising funds to hire an executive director and to assess basic needs for freight rail infrastructure statewide. However, there appears to be interest in conducting a market assessment of rail freight growth opportunities in the Youngstown-Warren Mahoning Valley region. Then an infrastructure guide-plan for that region would be conducted to identify where rail system capabilities are insufficient to supply the market with rail service and how the shortcomings can be addressed.
The Great Office Move of 2011 took place Nov. 26-27 and was led by Larry Robertson who invested many hours of his personal time and money to All Aboard Ohio to make the move go smoothly. All Aboard Ohio's board sent a letter that expressed its thanks and appreciation to Larry for all his hard work.

Helping Larry were Bill Johnson, Eric Childress, Ken Clifford, Marvin Ronaldson, Steve Rubin, Mark Zannoni and Ken Prendergast.

The office was moved because the association no longer has its executive director or any paid staff living in Columbus. Previously, the office was in Dayton when we had staff (Manfred Orlov) living there. All Aboard Ohio’s board also considered not having any office, but the City Club Building in downtown Cleveland offered a deal that was too good to pass up -- a low-cost space for non-profit organizations, a corner office with great views, shared business center, WiFi internet, shared conference room, security staff, plus excellent transit access and enclosed parking all included in the rent. Best of all, this professional setting will save All Aboard Ohio $3,000 per year compared to the Columbus office.

Above left, the moving van sits on South Fourth Street in front of our old office in downtown Columbus. Above middle, the new office in downtown Cleveland. Above right, Marvin Ronaldson and Larry Robertson set up furniture and boxes in Cleveland. Right, Executive Director Ken Prendergast settles into his desk at the new office with downtown Cleveland’s cityscape as a backdrop.

Calendar of Events/Meetings

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

**February 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Cleveland Local Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>10th Floor Conference Rm, City Club Bldg, 850 Euclid, Cleveland</td>
<td>Ken Prendergast 216-288-4883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Columbus Local Meeting</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Grandview Public Library 1685 W. First Ave. Grandview</td>
<td>Larry Robertson 614-459-0359</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</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>
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**March 2012**

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Youngstown Local Meeting</td>
<td>12:00 noon</td>
<td>Powers-Gibson Room (4th Floor), The Youngstown Club, 201 E. Commerce St., Youngstown</td>
<td><a href="mailto:restore4rail@gmail.com">restore4rail@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Bill Gill 419-536-1924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Akron Local Meeting</td>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
<td>The Lockview 207 South Main St. Akron</td>
<td>Ken Prendergast 216-288-4883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Cincinnati Local Meeting</td>
<td>6:30 pm</td>
<td>Tower “A” at Union Terminal 1301 Western Ave. Cincinnati</td>
<td>Beau Tuke <a href="mailto:beautuke@yahoo.com">beautuke@yahoo.com</a></td>
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**April 2012**

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