

Ohio Passenger Rail News

Intermodal + Intercity Rail + Commuter Rail + Public Transit

Issue E-16

All Aboard Ohio

May 2017



Calendar of Events:

AAO LOCAL MEETINGS:

Meetings start at 10 AM on the 2nd Saturday (except for Toledo – see below):

CLEVELAND – 3rd-level conf. room above AAO ofc. & Tower City food court, 230 West Huron Rd., Cleveland.

COLUMBUS – Grandview Public Library, 1685 West First Ave., Columbus.

TOLEDO – 3pm, 2nd Friday, AAO office, 3rd floor (next to old ticket counter), 300 MLK Drive, Toledo.

COMING EVENTS:

AAO Spring Meeting

9 am – 3 pm, Sat. May. 20
Makoy Center, 5462 Center Street, Hilliard, OH (see last page for more details)

NOTE: most bold text in our E-newsletters is a Web link to more info & resources!

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Ohio could be a big beneficiary of funding boosts for Amtrak, transit

In February, the Trump Administration proposed to eliminate all federal funding for public transportation and 77 percent of federal funding for Amtrak over the next two years.

On May 1, Congress chose to ignore the Trump Administration when it released a bipartisan, House-Senate, omnibus **funding agreement** that increased transit funding by 5.5 percent and passenger rail by 14.5 percent for the 2017 federal fiscal year (ends Sept. 30). Meanwhile, federal spending on roads will rise by only 2 percent. President Trump will sign the bill.

All passenger rail service in Ohio and 22 other states would have ended under President Trump's proposed budget. Instead, rail advocates are celebrating a well-earned victory.



Attend All Aboard Ohio's **Spring Meeting May 20** in Hilliard, OH to talk with Jim Mathews, president/CEO of the National Association of Railroad Passengers about a budget boost for Amtrak and public transportation (Ken Prendergast photo).

All Aboard Ohio played its own small role by focusing its educational efforts on **Rep. Bob Gibbs** (R-Lakeville). He is Ohio's only Congressperson on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Most exciting for Ohio is that the agreement funds three new passenger rail programs in the five-year

Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act that Congress passed in 2015 but starts with FY2016.

So instead of losing passenger rail service, Ohio is now financially positioned to gain more trains and improved stations. Attend our Spring Meeting and see the *Pennsylvanian* and *Cardinal* articles inside.

Ohio provides tiny boost for transit

A \$5 million per year increase for public transit was provided by the Ohio General Assembly in the Ohio Department of Transportation budget passed before the April 1 deadline.

However, more state funding could soon be coming to transit thanks to a U.S. court ruling against German automaker Volkswagen. VW sold 590,000 diesel motor vehicles with "defeat devices"

that cheated federal emissions tests.

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency is due to **receive \$71.4 million** from VW. The money must go to the purchase of new diesel vehicles or clean-fuel vehicles, including for public transit. There is strong support among some lawmakers to use the entire amount for acquiring new, cleaner public transit vehicles in

Ohio. Plus, the VW settlement funds can be used to leverage federal dollars.

If used on an 80/20 matching basis and the entire VW settlement was used for transit, the total federal/VW amount reaches \$357 million. It would fix Ohio's \$273 million backlog of **transit vehicle needs** and pay nearly half of the \$192 million tab for expanding Ohio transit fleets to meet growing demand.

West Virginia creates the *Cardinal* Compact

West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice signed into law a resolution that authorizes the state's tourism commissioner to enter into agreements with Amtrak and other states served by Amtrak's *Cardinal* to improve the quality and frequency of *Cardinal* service. The resolution was passed by the state's House of Delegates by a 95-5 vote and the Senate by a 32-1 vote.

This is a big first step toward the expansion of thrice-weekly *Cardinal* service into a daily train. This action was a direct result of the *Cardinal* conference held in September 2016 in Cincinnati and organized by All Aboard Ohio Vice Chair Derek Bauman with the assistance of Amtrak and the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber of Commerce.

"Everybody was pretty clear at the (Cincinnati) meeting, West Virginia is going to have to lead the way in forming this coalition," said Chuck Riecks, a vice chairman of the National Association of Rail Passengers and co-chairman of **Friends of the Cardinal**.

"I couldn't be more solidly behind it," said WV Commerce Secretary Woody Thrasher. "It's integral to tourism to have that train operating daily."



All Aboard Ohio efforts for a daily *Cardinal* are progressing (Ian M. Hapsias photo).

The new law also authorizes the tourism commissioner to set up a special account where funds can be deposited to promote daily *Cardinal* service, although the law provides no state funding for the account.

The *Cardinal* operates between Chicago and New York City via Cincinnati and stops in towns across the Ohio River from Ohio (Maysville, KY, South Portsmouth, KY, Ashland, KY and Huntington, WV). Plans are underway for a station stop to be added soon at Oxford, OH.

In 2010 when Amtrak conducted a **Performance Improvement Plan** of

the *Cardinal*, it found that running the train daily would grow ridership 96 percent. Yet the cost to run the train would rise by several million dollars per year. Under federal law, Amtrak can't expand service that increases its subsidy unless it has a new source of revenue to offset it.

Fortunately, Congress has finally funded the new **Restoration & Enhancement Grants** program created in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (see Pg 1). There is only \$15 million for expanded services in the 2017 budget, but that might be enough to expand the *Cardinal* to daily service.

Pennsylvania weighs Keystone West expansion

State Rep. Doyle Heffley (R-Lehigh-ton), chair of the House Subcommittee on Railroads, has amended a bill directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) to study the feasibility of providing two additional passenger rail trips daily linking Pittsburgh and Harrisburg. LBFC is the state legislature's research body.

There currently is only one daily round trip passenger train running between Pittsburgh and Harrisburg – Amtrak's *Pennsylvanian*. This train continues on to Philadelphia and New York City via the Keystone East and Northeast corridors. First introduced as **SR76** (since amended by Rep. Heffley), the bill directs the LBFC to identify:

1. Findings in recent studies relating to **Keystone West** expansion.

2. Estimated costs and schedule from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and Amtrak for two more daily trains.
3. Infrastructure improvements and operational requirements.
4. Locomotives and rail cars needed and availability of federal grants for purchase of trains and operations.

After the **Lawrence County** Commissioners (New Castle) **urged** extending Amtrak service west of Pittsburgh, All Aboard Ohio added text to the bill:

"Pursuant to the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, Amtrak in 2010 recommended extending *Pennsylvanian* service west of Pittsburgh to Cleveland and Chicago once it had sufficient rail cars and track improvements."

Also, All Aboard Ohio got a fifth part added to the LBFC study outline:

"5. An identification of the existing and proposed Keystone West round trips that could feasibly be extended west to Cleveland and Chicago pursuant to Federal appropriations authorized under section 11104 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (Public Law 114—94)."

To expand passenger rail, **Congress appropriated** \$5 million for operations and \$10 million in capital in 2017 (see Pg 1). We'll seek more funds in 2018.

After Amended SR76 passes, parts 1-4 of the LBFC study would be completed in nine months and Part 5 in 12 months. Please ask family/friends in **Pennsylvania** to support Am.SR76.

CVSR ridership grows 15% in 2016, sets record

The Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad (CVSR) recorded the highest annual ridership in the history of the railroad with 214,063 passengers in 2016.

CVSR has experienced continued year-over-year growth. The excursion railroad recorded the highest passenger counts of both its scenic excursions and special-event trains in its 44-year history.

Ridership of the National Park Scenic excursions reached an all-time high at 117,478. CVSR's popular Bike Aboard! program attracted 23,911 participants – another record for the railroad.

The Polar Express, a holiday tradition that has continued in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park for 23 years, remains one of the most highly-demanded programs in the Greater Cleveland area. This past year, more than 42,000 passengers climbed aboard the CVSR to experience the magic of the Polar Express.

“The staff and volunteers of CVSR are pleased that so many people chose our trains as a way to experience **Cuyahoga Valley National Park**,” said Kim Gillan-Shafron, CVSR VP, marketing & community alliances.



An urban-adjacent Cuyahoga Valley National Park plus good local/federal support equals success for the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad (Mark Schwinn photo).

CVSR introduced a variety of special events that have attracted visitors locally and nationally. In 2016, CVSR offered several new programs for families including Read Aboard, the first summer reading program aboard the train and Royalty on the Rails and the Superhero train, excursions for children to meet and greet with their favorite characters on the train.

CVSR continues to offer popular beer and wine tastings each month, regular dining excursions, murder mystery

trains and special four-course dinners featuring renowned chefs and restaurants in Cleveland.

“Our diverse program offerings for all age groups and our dedicated volunteers were key drivers enabling our record year,” said CVSR President & CEO Craig Tallman.

Trains operate year-round with summer/fall service five days a week. For fares and train schedule information, visit **National Park Scenic**.

Developments growing at Cleveland-area rail stations



Centric apartments/retail building at the Little Italy-Mayfield Red Line rail station.



Plans for **Aspen Place** at the West 65th Red Line station were approved by Cleveland.



Townhomes of Van Aken rising at the Onaway Blue Line station in Shaker Hts.



Two more developments were OK'd at the Little Italy station – **Mayfield Station** apartments, left, and **Quattro** condos, right.



1 University Circle apartments are rising between the Red Line rail and HealthLine BRT.

All Aboard Ohio

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Illustration of the month



Cincinnati's streetcar, the **Cincinnati Bell Connector**, continues to draw riders and accolades. On April 25, two planning/engineering firms, Parsons Brinckerhoff and HDR Inc., along with the City of Cincinnati jointly received an award at the American Consulting Engineers Council gala held in Washington DC. The award recognized their work for excellence in engineering for the design of the Cincinnati Bell Connector's right of way, stations, maintenance facility and more. All Aboard Ohio congratulates the whole design team for their excellent work in engineering a tremendous urban asset and economic development engine for the historic core of Cincinnati! (ACE Council photo)

NARP CEO to speak at AAO's spring meeting

Join us at our Spring Meeting 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday May 20 at the Makoy Center (MAP) at 5462 Center St., Hilliard, OH. [REGISTER HERE](#)

This is your opportunity to have a conversation with Jim Mathews, president and CEO of the **National Association of Railroad Passengers**. Get the latest on federal issues for Amtrak and transit, and what the future may hold for the Federal Railroad Administration's Midwest rail plans, plus Amtrak projects and services.

Also, hear from Elliot Doza, project manager/service planning at the **Central Ohio Transit Authority** that implemented an innovative service plan May 1. Even more aggressive plans are in the cards, including rail!

All Aboard Ohio will also hold a short business meeting with updates from around the state of Ohio.



During check-in from 9:00-9:30 a.m. will be coffee, juice and pastries. For lunch will be a deli buffet with an assortment of sliced deli meats and cheeses, breads, relishes, sides and beverages will be served.

Cost is \$30 per AAO member + \$25 for the second person in each party.

Please register [BY MAY 11](#). See your print newsletter (mailed April 21) for more details or [REGISTER HERE](#). Or send check/money order payable to:

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