



**Press Release - June 23, 2017**

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## **Passenger Train Advocates Gather to Sound Alarm *and* Hope**

**Train advocates rail against Trump proposal to slash Amtrak...while hoping that emerging new plan to link Columbus and Chicago continues to pick up steam**

### ***Local Event Mirrors Rallies Held Across USA for #Rally4Trains***

(Columbus, OH) -- Local passenger train advocates gathered today near the site of Columbus' former Union Station to sound a cautionary alarm but also a message of hope.

The hard-bitten but hardy train supporters had a warning for the 60 million passengers who rode an Amtrak train to one of America's 500 train stations last year: The Trump Administration's budget proposes to slash all long-distance train funding. If Congress approves it, 27 states -- including Ohio -- will lose all Amtrak service.

"Once you lose your train, like Columbus did 38 years ago, it could take generations to get it back. That's why we are sounding the alarm today in Columbus, Ohio - North America's largest city without a train," said Larry Robertson, central Ohio coordinator of [All Aboard Ohio](http://AllAboardOhio.org) and a member of the [National Association of Railroad Passengers](http://NationalAssociationofRailroadPassengers.org).

The advocates crow that Columbus is ranked among the nation's top cities for young professionals, entrepreneurs, artists, and music, sports and more. But it also has the dubious distinction as the largest North American city with no inter-city passenger rail service. The last Amtrak train left Columbus in 1979, a victim of federal budget cuts.

Public transportation advocates like Elissa Schneider, chair of [TransitColumbus](http://TransitColumbus.org), have hardly lost hope. They are encouraged about the prospects of an [emerging plan to link Columbus and Chicago with a new 110-MPH passenger rail line](#) that cuts the travel time between the two cities to just 3 hours and 45 minutes, without the hassles of flying and driving.

"Columbus is isolated from the passenger rail network in the United States. I believe that Columbus is a destination worthy of that connection. For me, it's that simple, the people of Columbus deserve to be connected," said Schneider.

The Columbus-Chicago train appears to be picking up steam. Studies already are underway for the Lima OH to Gary IN portion of the route. All four Ohio cities with prospective stops along the route (Columbus, Marysville, Kenton and Lima) along with MORPC are helping fund the review. And unlike previous proposals, this one was initiated by business interests, in Ft. Wayne, IN.

**MORE**

But the train supporters know that President Trump's proposal to slash Amtrak and transit funding could dash any plan to restart train service in Columbus. The Trump budget:

- Eliminates all funding for Amtrak's long-distance train network, shunting remaining Amtrak funding, instead, to Amtrak's Northeast Corridor and state-supported trains.
- Zeroes out funding for the highly successful TIGER grants program that invests in passenger rail and transit projects of national significance.
- Slashes funding for the Federal Transit Administration's "New Starts" Capital Investment Program, which is crucial to launching new transit, commuter rail, and light-rail projects.

President Trump's backward budget is especially puzzling, given that Congress earlier this year had thoroughly rejected cutting Amtrak's budget. Further, Amtrak has greatly economized operations. It trumps the Federal Aviation Administration and Federal Highway Administration for recovery of total costs from user revenues: Amtrak-94%, FAA-88%, FHA-78%.

A [recent report by All Aboard Ohio](#) assessing Ohio's passenger rail needs finds that neighboring states and Ontario are investing billions in passenger rail, leaving Ohio far behind.

That's why train and transit advocates are rallying their members to support the prospect of a new train for Columbus by keeping alive Amtrak's existing passenger rail network, even though there currently is no train to Ohio's capital city.

"Connection. Convenience. Commerce. That's the cargo passenger trains are delivering to smart cities like Ann Arbor MI, Harrisburg PA, Lafayette IN, Bloomington IL and others. Columbus may finally be in line for higher-speed rail. But if Congress pulls the plug on Amtrak's long-distance train network, it could be 'Goodbye Columbus' for another two generations to get a train back," said Jack Shaner, chair of [All Aboard Ohio](#).

More information:

[Map](#) of 27 states (including Ohio) that will lose Amtrak train service

[Ohio - Amtrak fact sheet](#)

[Map](#) of proposed Columbus-Chicago 110 MPH train

[Details](#) of proposed Columbus-Chicago 110 MPH train

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