



Have Ohio Rejoin the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) ADVOCACY TOOLKIT for AAO Members and Partners

Updated October 10, 2024

AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP

The [MIPRC](#) is the governing body that makes decisions about the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Midwest Regional Rail Plan. Ohio left the MIPRC over a decade ago, and it's time to rejoin.

The good news is, Ohio's legislature is taking action! **House Bill 488** - [Adopt the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact](#) – has bipartisan support and is finally getting hearings in the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee.

The legislature is preparing for summer break and **NOW** is a great time to push our advocacy efforts and prepare for the next steps in the legislative process!

WHAT IS MIPRC AND WHAT DOES HB488 DO

MIPRC is a twelve-state coalition of leaders that manages interstate passenger rail operations in the region. Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota and Wisconsin are current members. Iowa, Nebraska, **Ohio** and South Dakota are also eligible to join.

The main purposes of the compact are to promote, coordinate and support regional improvements to passenger rail service:

- Promote both current improvements and long-range plans for intercity passenger rail service in the Midwest.
- Coordinate interaction among Midwestern state officials, and between the public and private sector at all levels (federal, state and local).
- Support efforts of Midwestern state DOTs involved in developing and implementing passenger rail service.

HB488 provides the framework for Ohio to rejoin MIPRC. It allows for four commissioners: the Governor or their designee, a member of the general public, and one member from each chamber of our legislature (one representative, one senator).

HB488 does **NOT** provide funding to join MIPRC. The cost is estimated to be **\$25k/yr** and would be funded in the **Transportation Budget** beginning in 2025.



WHY IS MIPRC IMPORTANT

As we reach out to our elected officials to advocate for Ohio rejoining MIPRC, we need to explain why it's so important to participate.

- **Why it's important NOW:** Ohio has three passenger rail routes that pass through, and the times they do are downright terrible. The Lake Shore Limited and the Capital Limited both pass through Toledo and Cleveland with smaller stops along the way, but these are all in the wee hours of the morning making travel for Ohioans tough. Along with similarly terrible times, the Cardinal in Cincinnati only runs three days a week. When we rejoin MIPRC, Ohio will have a seat at the table to advocate for improved service along these routes.
- **Why it's important IN THE FUTURE:** Ohio has four routes under study in the Corridor ID program and two more in the FRA Long Distance Study program. As these routes come to life, it's critical that Ohio have a voice to make sure riders can interchange between routes without long layovers.
- Finally, having an open discussion about MIPRC and passenger rail in general will give us an opportunity to show Ohio's legislature that this is important to ALL Ohioans!

NEXT STEPS FOR HB488

HB488 is assigned to the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee. It had its first hearing on Tuesday, June 25 at 9:30am – [the testimony can be seen here and begins at the 15:00 mark.](#)

The first hearing is for **sponsor testimony**. **There will be no public testimony at this hearing.** Representatives **Ghanbari** (District 75 – R) and **Skindell** (District 13 – D) will present the bill and potentially answer questions from the committee. Because of the legislative calendar, this will be the only hearing before summer break. We WILL NOT have any more activity until after the November election, but that doesn't mean we can't reach out to our elected officials!

The Chair of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee committed to hearing proponent testimony for **HB488** in November, potentially as early as November 12.



HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR MIPRC

Right out of the gate, our best advocacy is to thank the representatives that have been instrumental in this process. Bonus points if one of these is **YOUR** representative – [find out here!](#)

1) THANK THE SPONSORS:

- Haraz Ghanbari (District 75 – R): rep75@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-8104
- Michael Skindell (District 13 – D): rep13@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-5921

2) THANK THE COSPONSORS:

- Munira Abdullahi (District 9 – D): rep09@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-2473
- Sean Brennan (District 14 – D): rep14@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-3485
- Darnell Brewer (District 18 – D): rep18@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-1414
- Rich Brown (District 5 – D): rep05@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 644-6002
- Richard Dell'Aquila (District 15 – D): rep15@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-3100
- **Michele Grim** (District 43 – D): rep43@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 644-6017 (**Asst Minority Whip**)
- Brett Hillyer (District 51 – R): rep51@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-8035
- Lauren McNally (District 59 – D): rep59@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-9435
- Adam Miller (District 6 – D): rep06@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 644-6005
- Joe Miller (District 53 – D): rep53@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-5141
- Ismael Mohamed (District 3 – D): rep03@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-1896
- Justin Pizzulli (District 90 – R): rep90@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-2124
- Elgin Rogers (District 44 – D): rep44@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-1401
- **Allison Russo** (District 7 – D): rep07@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-8012 (**Minority Leader**)
- Daniel Troy (District 23 – D): rep23@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-7251

A sample thank you email might look like:

Dear Representative NAME –

(I'M A CONSTITUANT AND – if you live in the district) I'm writing today to thank you for your support of House Bill 488 – Adopt the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact. Rejoining the MIPRC is an important first step to improve passenger rail in Ohio because (INSERT ONE OF THE REASONS FROM ABOVE). For me, improved passenger rail is important because (INSERT A PERSONAL REASON YOU WANT TO SEE PASSENGER RAIL). Thank you again for your support!

SIGNED

You can use a similar framework over the phone if you plan to call. Most likely you'll be interacting with a legislative aide, not the representative themselves.



THANK THE SPEAKER AND THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Another group of people we need to thank are the Speaker of the House for assigning the bill to committee and the Chair of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee for having hearings.

3) THANK THE SPEAKER

- Jason Stephens (District 93 – R): rep93@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-1366

A sample thank you email might look like:

Dear Speaker Stephens –

I'm writing today to thank you assigning House Bill 488 – Adopt the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact to committee for hearings. Rejoining the MIPRC is an important first step to improve passenger rail in Ohio because (INSERT ONE OF THE REASONS FROM ABOVE). For me, improved passenger rail is important because (INSERT A PERSONAL REASON YOU WANT TO SEE PASSENGER RAIL). Ohio is on track to becoming a major hub of passenger rail activity, and leaders like you are going to help make it happen!

SIGNED

4) THANK THE CHAIR

- Brian Lorenz (District 60 – R): rep60@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 644-6011

A sample thank you email might look like:

Dear Chair Swearingen –

I'm writing today to thank you for scheduling hearings on House Bill 488 – Adopt the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact. Rejoining the MIPRC is an important first step to improve passenger rail in Ohio because (INSERT ONE OF THE REASONS FROM ABOVE). For me, improved passenger rail is important because (INSERT A PERSONAL REASON YOU WANT TO SEE PASSENGER RAIL). Ohio is on track to becoming a major hub of passenger rail activity, and leaders like you are going to help make it happen!

SIGNED

Again, if you'd rather make phone calls instead of sending emails you can use a similar framework for Speaker Stephens or Chair Lorenz.



ASK FOR SUPPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE

The first group of legislators we need to show our support to are those that serve on the Economic and Workforce Development Committee. If you look at [the full list](#), you'll see some folks we've already thanked – Representatives Dell'Aquila, Grim, and McNally all serve on this committee. The rest of the folks who serve on this committee are responsible for a favorable report to the rest of the House. Let's let them know this is important to us!

5) WRITE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- **Nick Santucci** (District 64 – R): rep64@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-5441 (**Vice Chair**)
- **Terrance Upchurch** (District 20 – D): rep20@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-7954 (**Ranking**)
- Willis Blackshear (District 38 – D): rep38@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-1607
- Thaddeus Claggett (District 68 – R): rep68@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-1482
- Dave Dobos (District 10 – R): rep10@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-9690
- Marilyn John (District 76 – R): rep76@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-5802
- Darrell Kick (District 98 – R): rep98@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-2994
- Melanie Miller (District 67 – R): rep67@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-0961
- Jena Powell (District 80 – R): rep80@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-8114
- Andrea White (District 36 – R): rep36@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 644-6008
- Josh Williams (District 41 – R): rep41@ohiohouse.gov or (614) 466-1418

A sample email asking for support might look like:

Dear Representative NAME –

(I'M A CONSTITUANT AND – if you live in the district) I'm writing today to ask for support of House Bill 488 – Adopt the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Compact. Rejoining the MIPRC is an important first step to improve passenger rail in Ohio because (INSERT ONE OF THE REASONS FROM ABOVE). For me, improved passenger rail is important because (INSERT A PERSONAL REASON YOU WANT TO SEE PASSENGER RAIL). Please consider supporting this critical piece of legislation in the Economic and Workforce Development Committee when the time comes.

SIGNED

Representatives John and Williams have expressed support of passenger rail and/or public transportation so bonus points if you live in those districts.



FOR OUR PARTNERS – GET TESTIMONY READY FOR LAME DUCK

If you are one of our Coalition Partners, we ask that you prepare testimony for the fall when the legislature reconvenes. Please reach out directly to [Executive Director John Esterly](#) for guidance on what to include, but at a high level it should include why MIPRC is important to your organization or the constituents you represent.

We will let you know **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE** when the next hearing on **HB488** will occur, but we may only be able to give several days' notice. The committee meetings are typically Tuesday mornings and we may not get the agenda until the Friday before.

LET'S BE READY TO GET THIS ACROSS THE FINISH LINE!

More to come as we have more information to share.