

Ohio Passenger Rail News

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Special points of interest:

- Rally for Rail at Baker Street Station; 221 Baker Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana; April 3, 2009 at 4:30 p.m.
- All Aboard Ohio 5th Annual Legislative Summit; April 29, 2009; Downtown YWCA, Columbus, Ohio
- APTA Rail Conference; Chicago, IL; June 14-18, 2009

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Ohio Senate Approves 3-C Corridor Budget Battle Moves to Conference Committee

In late-evening action March 17 by the Ohio Senate Highways and Transportation Committee, an amendment was passed giving the Ohio Department of Transportation or the Ohio Rail Development Commission the go-ahead to compete for federal stimulus funding for passenger rail in the Cincinnati, Dayton, Columbus, Cleveland (3-C) Corridor.



Senator Thomas F. Patton

This is a step in the right direction for the committee whose chairman, Sen. Thomas F. Patton (R, Strongsville) was rumored to be intent on stripping all passenger rail language from House Bill 2, the ODOT biennial budget bill for 2010-11.

Removed from HB-2 was language that authorized study and the preparation of programmatic environmental impact statements for other corridors including Pittsburgh, Youngstown, Cleveland and Toledo - Columbus. The omnibus amendment adopted by the Ohio Senate Highways and Transportation Committee reads in part: "The Ohio Rail Development Commission or the director of transportation may apply for federal funding for passenger rail made

available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. However, before any funds for passenger rail are expended, they shall be specifically appropriated by the general assembly."

The ODOT budget bill was passed by the full Ohio Senate. The final ODOT bill must be approved by the General Assembly by April 1.

"Getting this passenger rail language from the senate improves the chances of getting a better bill out of the House-Senate conference committee negotiations next week," said Ken Prendergast, executive director of All Aboard Ohio, "We will work with a growing coalition in support of passenger rail to take more steps forward."

Poll Shows Support for 3-C Rail Service

Quinnipiac University released a poll that showed 64 percent of Ohio voters support passenger rail service between Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Cincinnati (3-C Corridor). Even though the poll was statewide and that passen-

ger rail is still just an abstract concept for most Ohioans, a surprisingly large number of respondents said they would likely ride 3-C Corridor trains. Highest levels of support were among young adults, those with college

degrees and women. The fact that young people supported passenger rail more than those over the age of 55 shows that passenger rail isn't about nostalgia. Republicans supported passenger rail too, 56 percent to 38 percent.

Virginia to Provide Funding Support to Amtrak New Passenger Rail Services to Lynchburg Announced

In a first for Virginia, the state will provide \$25.2 million in state funding to run two round-trip Amtrak trains serving Washington, D.C., over a three-year period. One train would link the nation's capital with Lynchburg, Va., adding a second frequency over Norfolk Southern right-of-way used by Amtrak's *Crescent*. A second round trip would add more Amtrak service between Richmond and Washington, over right-of-way owned by CSX Transportation.



Virginia Railway Express

Current plans call for Lynchburg service to begin Oct. 1, with the added Richmond trains beginning operations on Dec. 15. Virginia is the 15th state to assist Amtrak intercity passenger in some fashion.

Virginia will pay Amtrak \$17.2 million to operate the two-round-trip trains, while \$8 million will be used to rehabilitate cars and locomotives for the new service. Each train will consist of up to eight passenger coaches, a business-class coach, and a café car.

State officials anticipate ridership of 42,000 for the added Richmond frequency, and 51,000 per year on the Lynchburg service. Both trains will depart from their respective Virginia cities bound for Washington during the morning, returning from Washington in the evening, as part of Amtrak's Northeast Regional service.

The proposed new morning train from Richmond will depart at 7:00 a.m., and likely would provide a more punctual alternative for potential "short-distance" Amtrak customers, especially business and day-trip riders traveling to and from Washington. The current morning train originates in Florida and departs Richmond at 5:09 a.m. when on schedule.

Virginia Beach Purchases Norfolk Southern Rail Line

The city of Virginia Beach, Va., recently signed an agreement with Norfolk Southern Corp. to acquire right of way that's being studied as a possible light-rail route from Norfolk to the Virginia Beach resort area. The out of service 10.6-mile rail line runs from the Norfolk city line to Birdneck Road, parallel to Interstate 264. Under the agreement, the city will

commit \$10 million toward the right-of-way purchase, while the Commonwealth of Virginia and Hampton

The purchase price of the 10.6-mile NS line is \$35 million shared by the city, state and transit authority.

Roads Transit will provide \$20 million and \$5 million, respectively. NS will retain an easement for the

Dominion Resource transmission line that runs along the right of way, though the city has a three-year option to buy the easement for \$5 million. Hampton Roads Transit currently is building a 7.4-mile light-rail line in Norfolk. The 11-station LRT line will run from the Eastern Virginia Medical Center through downtown along a corridor paralleling Interstate 264. Construction is scheduled to be complete in 2010.

Turkey Opens First High Speed Train Line

Turkey's first high-speed train, running between Ankara and Eskişehir, has started to carry passengers. An extension of the high-speed line running between Eskişehir and İstanbul is also planned. Turkey will have realized a 10-year dream when the



Turkish High-speed Train built by CAF

entire Ankara-İstanbul line is completed. By the end of 2010, an Ankara-Konya line should also be complete. Turkey is building high-speed passenger railroads across the country.

The Turkish State Railways (TCDD) pur-

chased 12 high-speed passenger trains from Spain's CAF. So far three trainsets have been completed and delivered to the TCDD. By the end of 2010, the other nine trains will be delivered to Turkey. The trains feature the latest technology, with the ability to travel at speeds up to 155-miles per hour. A complete train costs 17.5 million euros (\$23.7 million) each.

Group Recommends Constitutional Change Gasoline Taxes Need to be Reallocated to Public Transportation

Creating a dedicated source of funding for public transportation leads a list of seven recommendations contained in a report prepared by a non-profit, nonpartisan research organization, Policy Matters Ohio.

The report says Ohio voters should be asked to approve a constitutional amendment to allocate 20% of the state's gasoline tax revenues toward increasing public transportation services. Nearly 18 percent of the federal gas tax goes to



A Cleveland RTA light rail train at Shaker Square

transit. In Ohio, zero gas tax revenues go towards public transit due to a constitutional prohibition the report said. Ohio should amend the state constitution to allow 20 percent of Ohio's gas tax revenues to go into an Ohio Transit Trust Fund to develop a 21st Century public transportation program the report said.

Release of the analysis comes as the General Assembly weighs Gov. Ted Strickland's \$7.6 billion, two-year transportation

budget (HB 2) for the Department of Transportation and the Department of Public Safety.

Relying on the National Transit Database of nine large Ohio transit systems, Policy Matters found that the number of public transit rides taken by Ohioans averaged an increase of five percent during a year ending in May 2008. During the same period, the number of vehicles operated declined six percent, and the number of miles traveled dropped eight percent.

The same high gasoline prices that increased demand for public transportation also forced transit agencies to cut service levels because of increased operating costs.

Ohio Leads Nation in Decline in Driving

New estimates released by FHWA show the decline in American driving continued in January 2009 with 7 billion fewer vehicle-miles traveled (VMT), or 3.1 percent less, compared to the same month a year earlier. This is the first "back-to-back" decline for January since 1981-1982.

The decline now exceeds 122 billion VMT, compared to the same 14-month period - December 2006 to January

2008 - a year earlier. As it has since the trend began, the decline in rural driving in January 2009 outpaced urban driving. The new data show the North Central area - a bloc of 12 states ranging from Ohio to the Dakotas - experienced the biggest regional decline at 6 percent fewer VMT com-

pared to January 2008. At 10.2 percent fewer VMT, Ohio led the nation with the largest decline in January.

Ohio led the nation with the largest single-state decline in VMT in January 2009.

Automobile manufacturers continue to report substantial declines in automobile sales worldwide. Despite the downturn in the economy, Amtrak long-distance trains continue to be sold out.

Erie County Council Wants High-Speed Train

The 190-mile railroad corridor between Cleveland and Buffalo -- which includes Erie -- currently, is not part of a federal plan to add high-speed rail lines throughout the United States. Erie County Councilman Kyle Foust wants that to change. Foust wants his County Council colleagues to support a resolution that asks federal offi-



Union Station; Erie, Pennsylvania

cials to include the Cleveland-Buffalo corridor -- and an Erie train stop - in their plans. Foust wrote

U.S. Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper, of Erie, about the issue and hopes Dahlkemper will lobby the federal Department of Transportation and others on the region's behalf. Foust plans to discuss the issue with other County Council members at the panel's Finance and Personnel committee meetings. The Ohio Hub Plan calls for service between Cleveland, Erie, Buffalo and Toronto.

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Mai l i n g A d d r e s s L i n e 5

All Aboard Ohio Annual Legislative Summit

Join All Aboard Ohio as it continues to advocate for public transit and passenger rail in Ohio.

PLEASE REGISTER ON-LINE:
Visit our website to register and become a member: <http://www.allaboardohio.org/cms/index.php>

When:

Wednesday, April 29th, 2009
9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Where:

Columbus Downtown YWCA
Huntington Hall
65 South 4th St.
Columbus, OH 43215

Featured Speakers:

- Ty Marsh, President and CEO; Columbus Chamber and Principal Co-Chair of the ODOT 21st Century Transportation

Priorities Task Force. Ty will provide a summary of findings and recommendations of the ODOT 21st Century Transportation Priorities Task Force Final Report

- Joseph Calabrese, the General Manager & CEO of the Greater Cleveland RTA and Chair of the Moving People Subcommittee of the ODOT



Amtrak train in Toledo Central Station

21st Century Transportation Priorities Task Force. He will outline the Task Force recommendations for public transit and the outlook for the new budget.

- Matt Dietrich, the Executive Director of the Ohio Rail Development Commission, will discuss 3C Corridor implementation and provide an update on funding for the Ohio Hub Plan programmatic environmental impact statements.
- Senator Capri Cafaro (*invited*); Ohio Senate Minority Leader, will discuss funding strategies for public transportation and passenger rail investments in Ohio.