

Ohio Passenger Rail News

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Special points of interest:

- All Aboard Ohio Board Meeting; December 6.
- Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission Meeting in Omaha, NE; December 3 and 4.
- Legislative Summit planned for March 2009.

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California Voters Approve Bond Issue for High-Speed Rail

On November 4th, California voters approved a \$9.9 billion bond issue for a state-of-the-art, high-speed train that will link every major city in the state.

The public constituency for high-speed rail was built over 20 years as the state invested billions in improved Amtrak services, commuter rail and transit. Californians came to recognize the tremendous economic and environmental benefits of high-speed trains.

The high-speed train network will cost two to three times less than expanding freeways and airports needed to accommodate the millions of new Californians expected by 2030.

It was estimated that a reliable 220-mile-per-hour electric high-speed train system will reduce California's dependence on foreign oil by more than 12 million barrels per year and reduce greenhouse gases that cause global warming by 12.7 billion pounds annually. In short, California seeks to reduce traffic congestion, protect its environment and give energy and life to its economy by creating 450,000 new jobs.

According to Judge Quentin Kopp, Chairman of

the California High Speed Rail Authority, "In turbulent economic times, this vote was particularly satisfying. Our approach will be grounded by public-private financing and guided by scrupulous fiscal discipline and accountability. We accept the charge to build this train."



Artists rendering of high-speed rail station Sacramento, California

All Aboard Ohio Congratulates Obama

All Aboard Ohio President Bill Hutchison congratulated President-Elect Obama and Vice President-Elect Biden on winning the election on Nov 4th. Revitalizing our economy, creating jobs, reducing our nation's de-

pendence on foreign oil and investing in rail are all interrelated. Coming from Chicago, President-Elect Obama has seen firsthand the crucial role that public transportation has in creating jobs and stimulating economic de-

velopment. All Aboard Ohio looks forward to working with President-Elect Obama and Vice President-Elect Biden who are strong advocates for public transportation. Biden is a regular Amtrak rider.

Transit Ballot Measures Win Big in Ohio and Across the Country on November 4th

In addition to the California high-speed rail ballot initiative (page 1), voters in 16 states approved ballot measures on November 4 that authorized expenditures approximating \$75 billion. In the face of difficult economic conditions, transit won big!

According to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), voters across the country demonstrated that they are willing to vote in favor of transit tax measures that will improve the quality of their lives—and increase their mobility choices.

The largest transit measures approved were in Los Angeles County (\$40 billion) and Washington State (\$17.8 billion in three counties).

Measure R in Los Angeles County, passed with 67.4 percent of the vote. Los Angeles will invest \$40 billion in comprehensive public transit and traffic relief efforts through a quarter-cent increase in the county's sales tax. Voters in the Puget Sound region of Washington State approved Proposition 1, which provides for a one-half percent increase in the local sales tax to support a \$17.8 billion transit expansion package over 15 years. Fifty-three percent of voters in Honolulu approved an amendment to the city and county charter to establish a \$3.7 billion rail transit system.

Here in Ohio, voters in the Youngstown area approved a sales tax measure that had failed earlier this year in



March. Faced with the prospect of seeing its transit system shut down without its approval, voters passed the sales tax with 55 percent voting yes. The sales tax will raise about \$7 million annually for the Western Reserve Transit Authority (WRTA). WRTA will now be able to eliminate the Youngstown levies that currently fund the system.

Windsor to Quebec City High Speed Rail

The Premiers of Ontario and Quebec provinces say the Canadian Government should back a multi-billion-dollar high-speed train link from Windsor to Quebec City to create jobs and a lasting legacy for a country struggling with hard economic times. The 715-mile route has been studied many times over the decades. The cost today is estimated at almost C\$25 billion.

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty is

hoping the Canadian Government can turn the current worldwide economic crisis into an opportunity by investing in a visionary project that can be a major catalyst for job growth. Quebec Premier Jean Charest supports the proposed high-speed train project because of traffic problems and from an

environmental perspective. The Canadian Government commissioned another high-speed rail study last

January. The federal Government and each province budgeted \$1 million to hire a consultant to review the previous reports and come up with a revised plan.

The Canadian high-speed rail line could link with the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative at Detroit and the Ohio Hub Plan at Buffalo with connecting services.

West Shore Corridor Commuter Rail Update

Lorain County Commissioner Betty Blair invited West Shore Corridor commuter rail project principals to a meeting at the Black River Transportation Center in Lorain on October 31, 2008. The principals included Lorain Port Authority Executive Director Rick Novak; Ohio Rail Development Com-



Lorain County Commissioner Betty Blair

mission Executive Director Matt Dietrich; ODOT Public Transit Director Marianne Freed; Lorain County Development Director Ron Twining and representatives from Lorain County; NOACA and Cleveland RTA. The principals discussed the Congressional

appropriation for an FTA New Starts alternatives analysis (AA). It was affirmed that the AA process was the proper method for studying commuter rail. They also denied there was any available funding for a competing "Business Plan" proposed by the Northern Ohio Commuter Rail Coalition. AAO Interim Executive Director Ken Prendergast also attended the meeting.

Private Developer Builds Amtrak Station in New Buffalo, Michigan

Developer Jimmy Gierczyk is building an Amtrak station in New Buffalo, Michigan. The passenger rail line that runs through New Buffalo's downtown is on the federally designated Detroit—Chicago high-speed rail corridor. In the next six months, Amtrak expects that the speed between New Buffalo and Kalamazoo will be 110 mph.

Gierczyk has been investing for years in developments in New Buffalo, which is a growing Harbor Country weekend



Amtrak running through Downtown New Buffalo, MI

getaway for wealthy Chicagoans. He wanted an Amtrak train station right in the middle of downtown. The current station is about a mile away. The commute between Chicago and New Buffalo takes just a little over an hour.

Gierczyk broke ground on the new train station Oct. 31 and hopes to complete it before Christmas. He spent \$1.5 million on parking lots and a 250-foot railroad platform, right by his condo and luxury town

home development.

Asked why he was willing to spend his own money on a public project, Gierczyk said the new station would help him market New Buffalo real estate to Chicago buyers. He said the only way to get the job done was for the private sector to jump in and do it themselves.

Amtrak said that this is the only 100 percent privately financed station in their system.

It is obvious that the benefits of spending private money for this station outweigh the costs according to the developer!

(see Chicago Sun-Times, Nov. 10, 2008)

Touting Transit's Benefits to College Students

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) recently unveiled *The College Route*, a new marketing campaign aimed at promoting rail and bus service to area colleges and universities.

The agency will bring a traveling exhibition tour to several schools to inform students of the economical and environmental benefits, as well as convenience, of using local public

transit services. LACMTA already is working with several universities to distribute pocket guides tailored to each school's transit needs. The guide features an area map,

Marketing transit to college students plays on their intense desire to be environmentally conscious and good stewards of the earth's scarce resources.

list of local transit services, and nearby rail and bus stops. The guides have been distributed to the University of California Los Angeles, University of Southern California, Pasadena City College, and other Los Angeles area colleges.

NorthStar Commuter Rail Fridley Station

The Northstar Commuter Rail Fridley Station is being designed with passenger tunnels under the BNSF freight tracks for safety reasons. It is expected to be fully operational when Minnesota's first commuter rail service begins service in late 2009. The Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) granted \$9.9 million for construction. When combined with other

funds already invested by the Anoka County Regional Rail Authority and the City of Fridley, the funding needed for the \$10.65 million station is complete. The pedestrian tunnels under the freight tracks cost approximately \$1.5 million of the total station costs. Total station cost also includes land acquisition, parking facilities, platforms and ADA elevator access.



Rendering of NorthStar Fridley Station

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Looking for a Few Good Men and Women All Aboard Ohio Invites Members to Join Board of Directors

At its recent regular Fall Meeting held in Elyria this year on Nov. 8th, the members accepted several proposed changes to the by-laws that affect future elections of board members and officers of All Aboard Ohio. One of the changes added more seats to the Board of Directors. Coupled with the resignations of Barry Fromm and Coletta Kubik for personal reasons, All Aboard Ohio needs to fill vacant positions on the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors is responsible for establishing the policies governing the business affairs of All Aboard Ohio and sets the agenda for our statewide and special campaign advocacy programs.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Board of Directors and have an active interest in assisting in advancing the cause of investments in

passenger rail and public transportation services and infrastructure in Ohio, please send a letter of Interest along with a current resume addressed to Bill Hutchison, President of the Board.

All Aboard Ohio is specifically looking for people with significant experience and accomplishments in government affairs, advocacy campaigns, fundraising and related civic activities.

Knowledge of issues regarding regional and statewide transportation and land-use planning, passenger rail and public transportation finance and economic benefits is desirable.

We want to hear from you!

