

Ohio Passenger Rail e-News

Volume 4 Issue 5

August 2013



Calendar of Events

LOCAL MEETINGS:

All meetings start at 10 A.M. on the second Saturday of each month:

CLEVELAND -- 10th-floor conference room, City Club Building, 850 Euclid Ave.

COLUMBUS -- Grandview Public Library, 1685 W. First Ave., Columbus.

TOLEDO -- Amtrak station, Toledo MLK Plaza, 415 Emerald Ave.

COMING EVENTS:

Status Report: Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Bill

Our dysfunctional Congress left Washington, D.C., for their 5-week summer recess without passing fiscal-year 2014 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bills. It is virtually certain that Congress will need to pass a continuing resolution to fund the federal government later this year.

As reported in previous editions of the Ohio Rail Passenger e-News, the two houses of Congress are billions apart in agreement. The bills that passed out of committee are \$10 billion apart, with a \$3.3 billion gap in U.S. Department of Transportation appropriations. This is because the GOP-controlled House is working with more constrained



budget numbers that assume sequestration is here to stay, while the Democratic majority in the Senate is assuming that sequestration will go away. The House bill provides no funding for high-speed rail, while the Senate version recommends a modest \$100 million.. The House bill also includes a provision requiring federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) approval for each section of California's high-speed rail project, as well as language prohibiting any funds in the bill from

being used for this project. The Senate bill provides higher funding for transit New Starts, Amtrak and Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants. House leaders pulled their bill from consideration last after it appeared the legislation didn't have enough votes to pass. Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.) wrote in her Aug. 2 blog that the Republican-controlled House didn't have enough votes to pass its THUD bill because the bill's proposed cuts to Amtrak funding — 21 percent for operations and 34 percent for capital and debt service — were too high even for some Republicans to approve. Rep. Holmes Norton wrote, "Americans are flocking to Amtrak."

Highway Trust Fund

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U.S. Department of Transportation and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) staff testified before the House Highways & Transit Subcommittee on the financial condition of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). Between 2008 and 2012, Congress transferred over \$53.3 billion of Gen-

eral Fund revenue into the HTF to replenish its depleted balance due to declining revenue from gas taxes. According to the CBO, the HTF will experience a cash shortfall of \$8.7 billion in FY 2015. If left unaddressed, the CBO projects that this cash deficit will grow to \$132.6 bil-

lion in FY 2023. The CBO pointed out that to sustain current levels of spending, either the gas tax has to rise 10 cents per gallon now or more General Fund transfers need to be made. Roads pay their way? By contrast, Amtrak has received \$39.3 billion from its inception in 1971 to 2012.

Update on Elyria Amtrak Station

In a letter dated July 25, Amtrak made an offer of \$2.9 million toward further rehabilitation of the Lorain County Transportation Center so passenger rail service may return to the historic New York Central passenger station located in Downtown Elyria. The Commissioners have an additional \$900,000 to \$1 million to contribute to the project. The reintroduction of passenger service to the historic station is still contingent on Norfolk Southern Railway (NS) allowing work to be done on the rail lines it owns. The work would include building new low-level platforms on both the eastbound and westbound tracks and related station improvements including an ADA accessible elevator at each platform possibly from the passenger tunnels under the tracks to



Historic New York Central Station in Elyria

permit safe passenger access to the platforms. All Aboard Ohio endorses this design concept as it would maintain the historic integrity of the National Register landmark. The pedestrian tunnels have been restored but access to the passenger platforms remains blocked. The total cost of the restoration to date is nearly \$6 mil-

lion. As we understand the circumstances, NS has refused to permit Lorain County and Amtrak from using the existing pedestrian tunnels under their tracks to access passenger platforms. NS is concerned with liability. However, NS permits Amtrak to use pedestrian tunnels at other stations on their system, notably Johnstown, PA. People walk under the NS bridges adjacent to the Elyria station daily. County officials are hopeful that the new financial commitment from Amtrak and the County will help with negotiations with NS. Elyria Mayor Holly Brinda and U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, have sent letters to Amtrak and NS urging them to help move the project along. Amtrak listened. Now it's up to NS to respond and act in the public interest.

Transit Oriented Development "TOD on Tap" Tour

The inaugural TOD on Tap event was a huge success attracting nearly 30 avid transit enthusiasts and new urbanists to an evening of interesting speakers and delicious food. The event began at Shaker Square, the premier example of TOD in the county. There, they were greeted by Peter Rubin, President/CEO Coral Co., and Maribeth Feke, Director, Programming & Planning of RTA who provided insight into the importance of TOD. Peter discussed his plan to create places people are attracted to, such as Shaker Square, which has over 1 million transit passengers getting on and off trains every year. He also discussed Intesa, his \$100 million development planned near the new Red Line Mayfield Road Station, which will become the gateway to Little Italy and Uptown. Intesa entails a cluster of high-tech buildings 8-12 stories tall including more than 100,000 square feet of offices, 96 apartments possible student housing perched on top. Maribeth provided an excellent outlook on new TOD projects presently underway and providing



data on the tremendous success of the HealthLine BRT. After being fueled by delicious food from Zanizbar restaurant, the group boarded the Waterfront Line to the Flats East Bank Station. Navigating through an estimated 70,000 Browns and Indians sporting fans, the group was invited



to the Aloft Hotel where they listened to Harley Cohen tell the amazing story of the Flats East Bank development envisioned by Developers Diversified and how the project became a labor of love by the The Wolstein Group, led by Scott Wolstein, Chair and CEO of Starwood Retail Partners and Iris Wolstein, CEO of Heritage Development. The views from the Aloft Hotel are remarkable! And so was the food provided by Lago Restaurant! The last stop on the tour was Uptown in University Circle at Constantino's Market. The speaker was Ari Maron, Partner, MRN Ltd. who discussed the new urbanism in Cleveland, which has resulted in transit oriented developments in Downtown, Uptown and the Market District near the West 25th Street Red Line Station. His infectious enthusiasm for Cleveland TOD was evident as he talked about future phases of the highly regarded Uptown development on Euclid Avenue at Mayfield Road. TOD on Tap will be scheduled again next fall. Watch for it!

Red Line/HeathLine Extension Study

Public Informational Meetings Scheduled for September 9-12, 2013

The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA) is kicking off a \$1.1 million planning study of a potential rapid transit extension east from the Louis Stokes Station at Windermere.



HealthLine bus rapid transit vehicle

Following the success of RTA's \$200 million investment in the award winning HealthLine bus rapid transit and other new development planned around Red Line Stations, RTA wants to study how major transit capital investments can attract continued transit oriented development along other priority transit corridors. The HealthLine has already generated significant reinvestment and redevelopment along Euclid Avenue. More than \$5 billion in new investments have occurred and more is planned along the HealthLine bus rapid transit route. Residents continue to see redevelopment occurring in Midtown and the University Circle area. The new growth occurring in University Circle is beginning to spill over into East Cleveland, as the University Circle institutions' influence expands beyond the Cleveland border marked by the railroad bridge crossing Euclid Avenue near East 120th Street.

The Red Line/HealthLine extension study will examine how restructuring service on Greater Cleveland's northeast side can improve access to University Circle, Midtown and Downtown Cleveland by reducing travel time and cost from the furthest reaches of RTA's eastern service area. By providing additional mobility options and improving access to the region's core throughout the day, redevelopment opportunities could be increased in this part of the

RTA service area resulting in substantial economic benefits to local communities improving their attractiveness and regional competitiveness.

RTA hired a global transportation consulting firm, AECOM, to examine all reasonable and feasible alternatives, which include alignments, station location and technologies. Potential route alignments could include links from Windermere to Lakeshore Boulevard, St. Clair Avenue or continue east along the Euclid Avenue corridor to the City of Euclid and adjacent communities in Lake County. Alignments also could be adjacent to existing railroad rights-of-way. Potential technologies could include rail and bus rapid transit vehicles including streetcars operating along some portions of routes in some locations.

A key goal for the Red Line/HealthLine extension study is to provide sufficient technical, financial, and economic information to RTA, local governments and the community to make an informed decision. This study will comply with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulations for New Starts and Major Capital Transit Investment Projects and is scheduled to take not more than 24 months to complete.

RTA wants to engage all stakeholders in authentic community dialogue embracing collaboration by providing early, inviting, and ample opportunities for a continuous, meaningful dialogue with stakeholders, agencies, decision-makers, the general public, and the business community.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Community engagement is extremely important to this process and the public is highly encouraged to attend the following scheduled public meeting sessions:

September 9 – City of East Cleveland
Place: East Cleveland Public Library
14101 Euclid Ave., East Cleveland, 44112
Time: 6-8 p.m.

September 10 – City of Cleveland
Place: Western Reserve Historical Society
10825 East Blvd., Cleveland, 44106
Time: 6-8 p.m.

September 12 – City of Euclid
Place: MCMS, Inc.
22639 Euclid Avenue, Euclid, 44117
Time: 6-8 p.m.

The RTA and AECOM study team will make presentations about the study and will be available to answer questions regarding RTA service, the study process and timing of future public meetings.

More information is available:

Study web site:
<http://redlinehealthlinestudy.com>

Facebook page:
[Facebook.com/RedlineHealthlineStudy](https://www.facebook.com/RedlineHealthlineStudy)

Twitter handle:
[@RedlineHLStudy](https://twitter.com/RedlineHLStudy)

Study Answer Line:
(216) 282-6113

RTA assures everyone there are no pre-conceived solutions, bias toward any potential solution or pre-determined outcomes. The study will be conducted transparently, objectively and with a lot of opportunities to discuss study findings and determinations with the RTA and consultant study team. We encourage you to attend the meetings!



Red Line rapid transit train

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All Aboard Ohio Summer Meeting

Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad Outing

All Aboard Ohio's Summer Meeting and Family Outing took to the rails on Aug. 10, riding Ohio's busiest passenger trains -- the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad (CVSR). The CVSR links Greater Cleveland, the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, downtown Akron and Canton along the track used by the Baltimore & Ohio Valley Line. CVSR carried a record 210,000 passengers in 2012.

Thirty persons from around Ohio and Pennsylvania joined the Summer Outing, with some riding CVSR for the first time. Several persons commented that CVSR is a "first-class" operation. The outing rode in an exclusive rail car from Rockside Station in Independence to Akron and return, with a Park Ranger providing expert, personal guidance of historic and natural sites along the route.

Afterwards, the outing walked from the Rockside Station across the four-months-old Cuyahoga River bridge to the Lock 39 Towpath Trail trailhead, and then to Yours Truly restaurant for lunch with

CVSR President Craig Tallman. Mr. Tallman, who last year succeeded Steve Wait as head of the railroad, discussed the railroad's successes and challenges, with much of it geared to accommodating continued growth. That includes addressing declining federal funding for the National Park Service while needing to improve station and maintenance facilities, adding and/or improving the rail fleet, and considering low-cost expansions.



Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad

The question of improving access from the Cuyahoga Valley National Park to more of Cuyahoga County, including downtown Cleveland, was raised. Plans to extend the rail service to Downtown Cleveland lie dormant because of the steadfast refusal of CSX to allow CVSR trains to serve Downtown Cleveland and terminate at the historic Baltimore & Ohio passenger terminal. The new, \$1 million bike/pedestrian bridge to Lock 39 built by the National Park not only provides a link to the Towpath Trail into Cleveland, it also provides a street-level link to Rockside Road, which is served by the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority's #35 bus route to the Cleveland Zoo, Ohio City and downtown Cleveland. The new bridge also offers an opportunity in the future for shuttle buses from area hotels to more easily link to CVSR's Rockside Station.

All Aboard Ohio thanks Mr. Tallman for speaking to our Summer Meeting & Family Outing, and looks forward to working with CVSR on developing and implementing ideas to improve transportation linkages to Downtown Cleveland in the future.