

## **Ohio could see expanded Amtrak service by end of 2010** *Proposals to be delivered tomorrow to Congress*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

COLUMBUS – On Thursday, Amtrak will deliver a report to Congress on how to improve five of its lowest-performing train routes. Two of those routes cross Ohio and would represent the first Amtrak service expansion in Ohio since 1998.

In a departure from the past, neither Congress nor Amtrak are seeking to cut those routes. Instead, they are doing what is necessary to create a stronger passenger rail system for Ohio and America when its two largest generations are helping to drive train travel to its highest levels in four decades.

“When Congress and Amtrak cut routes in the past, all it did was weaken the national system, isolate dozens of towns and create the next-most vulnerable routes for budget cutters to target,” said All Aboard Ohio President Bill Hutchison. “Congress and Amtrak are moving in the right direction by creating more travel options for a state and a nation that desperately need them.”

As required in the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, Amtrak will submit Performance Improvement Plans to Congress on Sept. 30 for these two Ohio routes:

- ♦ Cardinal (Chicago-Indianapolis-Cincinnati-Washington DC-New York);
- ♦ Capitol Limited (Chicago-Toledo-Cleveland-Pittsburgh-Washington DC).

Plus three other national system routes:

- ♦ California Zephyr (Chicago-Denver-Salt Lake City-Bay Area);
- ♦ Sunset Limited (New Orleans-Houston-San Antonio-El Paso-Tucson-Los Angeles); and
- ♦ Texas Eagle (Chicago-St. Louis-Dallas-San Antonio-El Paso-Tucson-Los Angeles).

Next, agreements will be sought with the track-owning host railroads. Amtrak’s Board of Directors will then likely consider the Performance Improvement Plans. All Aboard Ohio hopes the proposed changes for

Ohio can be implemented before the start of the holiday travel period in late November.

Recommendations in the Cardinal improvement plan are to implement daily service between New York and Chicago via Cincinnati and the cross-Ohio River towns of Maysville, South Portsmouth, Ashland and Huntington as well as improving food service, baggage handling and marketing. The Cardinal has operated thrice-weekly since 1981 (previously it was daily), making it difficult for travelers to plan their trips around the train's infrequent schedule.

The key proposal for Capitol Limited service is the introduction of single-seat through-service at Pittsburgh, allowing passengers from Chicago, Toledo, Sandusky, Elyria, Cleveland and Alliance stations to connect directly with cities along the Pennsylvanian route, including Altoona, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Trenton and New York. This will be the first passenger rail service linking Chicago, Northern Indiana and Ohio, Central/Eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey since 2005 when a mail/package express train that also carried people via Fostoria, Akron and Youngstown was eliminated.

"With both expanded services – the Pennsylvanian/Capitol Limited and the Cardinal – All Aboard Ohio urges Amtrak to schedule these trains at convenient times when Ohioans want to use them," Hutchison said. "Conveniently scheduled trains would also whet the appetite for and enable connections to 3C Corridor trains to/from Columbus, Dayton and Cincinnati – the Midwest's busiest travel corridor."

Begun in 1971, Amtrak is on track this year to break its all-time ridership record set two years ago when average gas prices hit \$4 gallon. Now, record ridership is influenced in part by the largest demographic group in American history, people 21-30 years old, driving 7 percent less than the same age group did in the 1990s (see: [http://autos.yahoo.com/articles/autos\\_content\\_landing\\_pages/1523/generation-y-giving-cars-a-pass/](http://autos.yahoo.com/articles/autos_content_landing_pages/1523/generation-y-giving-cars-a-pass/)). Also, the next-largest demographic group in American history, the Baby Boom, starts turning 65 years old next year. As people age, they become less physically able to drive longer distances or drive at highway speeds and need options to cars.

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