

# Ohio Passenger Rail Poll

*Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers  
March 8, 2001*

A recent poll indicates a majority of Ohio adults want the state government to develop passenger rail service. The poll was conducted by Ohio State University's Center for Survey Research (OSU-CSR) and was funded by the George Gund Foundation of Cleveland and the Environmental Law & Policy Center of Chicago.

A supermajority of Ohioans -- four out of five (80.2%) -- said they favored or strongly favored state-supported efforts to develop passenger rail services in Ohio. Only 5.8% said they opposed or strongly opposed those efforts. If federal funding is available for improving passenger rail services, two of every three (65%) Ohioans said state money should be used to attract these funds to Ohio, while fewer than one out of five (18.1%) neither favored nor opposed the state doing that. Only 13.7% of Ohioans opposed using state funds to attract federal dollars for Ohio passenger rail improvements.

More than half of Ohioans -- 53.5% -- said the best way to relieve road traffic congestion is to "improve all forms of transportation including mass transit and high-speed rail." Another 10.2% said traffic congestion should be reduced by changing land use patterns, such as curbing urban sprawl. A clear minority -- only about one out of four Ohioans (27.9%) -- said the solution is to expand or build more highways and roads. Slightly less than half (48.1%) of Ohioans believed road traffic congestion in their communities was getting somewhat worse or much worse. Only two out of five (42.3%) said it was staying the same, and far fewer people -- just 8.8% -- said things were getting better.

The best way to relieve congestion and delays at Ohio's airports is to "build alternatives such as high-speed rail systems," said two of five Ohioans (41%), making it the most popular solution to airport gridlock. Less than one of five Ohioans (only 19.4%) said the best solution is to add more runways to existing airports, while only about one of seven people (15.2%) said no changes should be made to Ohio airports. Fewer than one out of 12 people (8.5%) felt that the best solution is to construct new airports. If a system of fast, modern passenger trains was available to Ohioans, more than 4 out of 5 of them (83.8%) said it was somewhat likely or very likely they would consider taking a train to a destination 75-300 miles from home.

For trips of 75-300 miles away from home, a majority of Ohioans -- or 6 out of 10 (59.6%) -- said they would prefer taking a high-speed train to/from their destination. Next on their list of favorites, at a distant second place, was to fly, with fewer than 2 out of 10 (18.8%), followed by bus (13.1%) and car (4.2%) for trips of that distance. Nearly three out of four Ohioans, or 74%, said they believed a modern, convenient and efficient passenger rail network would improve the quality of life in Ohio. Only 3 out of 20 people (16.5%) said it would not.

Among cities in Ohio or in adjoining states, Ohioans ranked Columbus (14.8%) as their most popular destination, yet Columbus has no rail passenger service. Ohio's capital city was followed by Cleveland (8.9%), Cincinnati (7.3%), Dayton (5.6%), Toledo (3.3%), Akron (3.1%), Chicago (2.5%) and Pittsburgh (2.5%) as Ohioans' most popular destinations in the region.

Of the different levels of rail passenger service which Ohio might build, nearly half of all Ohioans (46.7%) said they preferred 110 mph passenger trains, running on rebuilt tracks. At a distant second place was a more basic level of service operating below 80 mph on existing freight tracks, with about 1 out of 4 (26.2%) desiring that level. One of five (21.5%) wanted a more elaborate version in which trains would operate at 180 mph or faster and use totally new tracks.

Among the most frequently discussed methods of financing an Ohio passenger rail system, 1 out of 4 Ohioans (24.4%) said they favored using state general funds such as sales taxes, followed by borrowing money via a bond issue (23.5%), raising the gas tax a penny per gallon (21%), or taking the money from existing highway/transportation funds (19%).

**Buckeye State  
(Ohio) Poll  
Demographic  
Snapshot**

*Of those participating  
in the survey:*

86% were voters registered in Ohio;

78.5% own their homes;

61.2% were married;

57.9% were females;

51.3% considered themselves as having a conservative political ideology while

26.3% considered themselves liberal and

19.8% said they were moderate.

51.2% worked fulltime while

20.6% were retired;

32.7% had a high school diploma as their highest educational achievement while

21.5% said they had attended some college and another

16.3% had earned a bachelors degree;