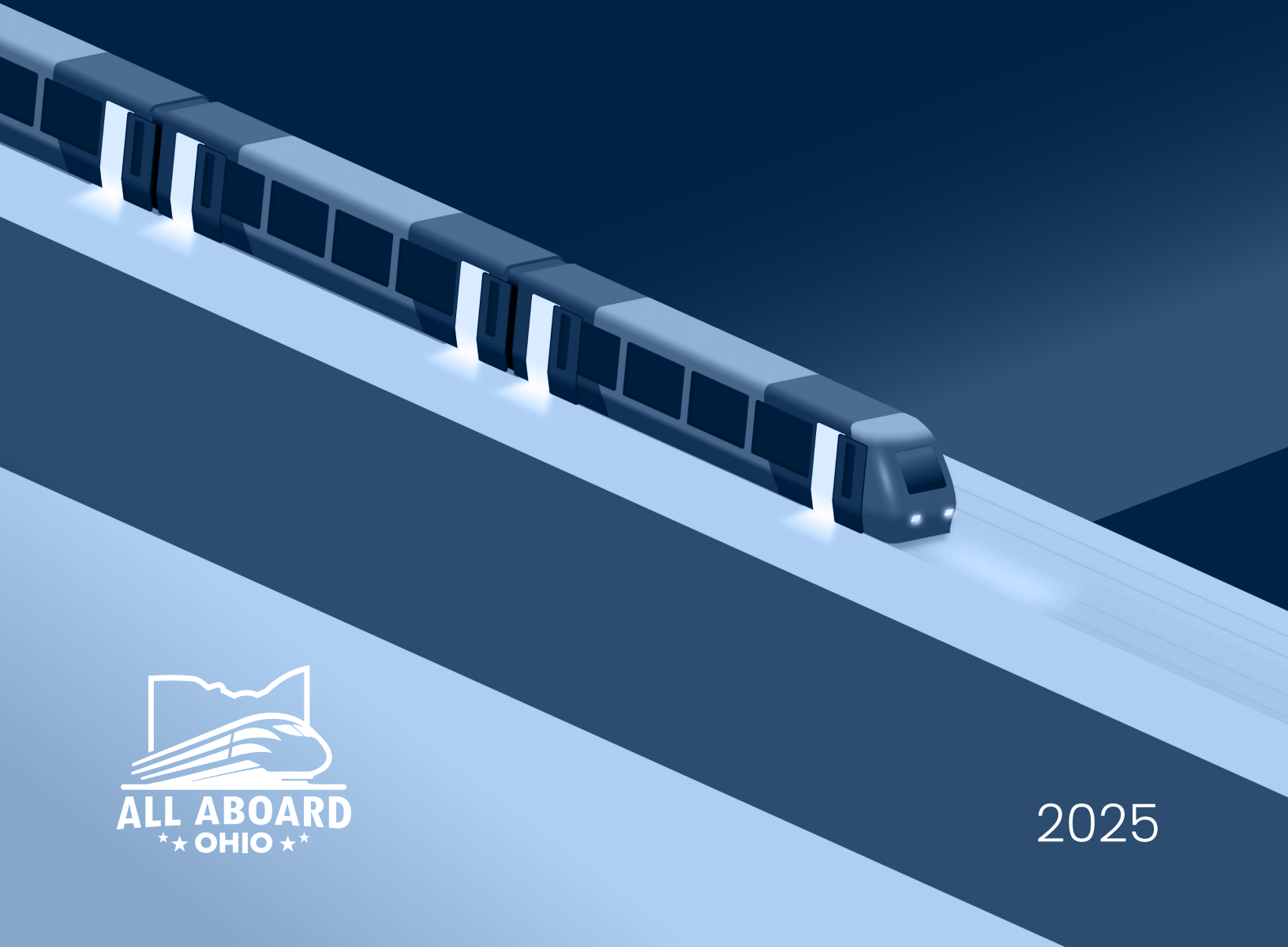


ANNUAL REPORT

All Aboard Ohio 2024-2025
Ohio's Future: Built By Rail



2025

Executive Director's Message:

As I reflect on this past year with All Aboard Ohio, I'm struck by just how far we've come—and how urgently our work must continue. The 2024–2025 planning year was a defining period for our organization. It asked us to grow—fast—and to lean into uncertainty with clarity, collaboration, and courage.

When I accepted the role of Executive Director, it was because I believed in the mission and the moment. Today, that belief has only deepened. Ohio stands on the precipice of a new era in transportation—one that prioritizes access, sustainability, and regional vitality. We don't have to guess whether passenger rail is viable. We know that it is. The question we must answer is: will Ohio be ready?

Our team, our board, and our statewide network took that question seriously. We made tough, strategic choices to build the kind of organization that can not only advocate but activate. That meant strengthening our internal structure—bringing on skilled staff, defining volunteer leadership roles, and investing in partnerships like our engagement with the OneSource Center for Nonprofit Excellence. With their guidance, we launched a strategic plan grounded in accountability and driven by results. We clarified our objectives, tracked our progress, and empowered chapters to engage locally while connecting to a broader statewide mission.

We also made bold moves externally. Our presence at the Ohio Statehouse—from Rail Advocacy Day to legislative testimony—was not just symbolic. It was catalytic. We raised the visibility of passenger rail in conversations where it had long been absent. We ensured that even without formal MIPRC membership, Ohio had a seat at the table. And we organized, online and off, to bring people with us—business owners, students, disability advocates, suburban families, and everyone in between.

None of this came without cost. Our financials reflect a calculated investment: in people, platforms, and policy wins we believe are not only possible but imminent. The deficit we report was not incurred passively—it was a decision to meet the scale of the moment with the energy it

demands. And looking at what we've achieved so far, I have no doubt that investment will pay dividends.

Looking ahead, our path is clear. We are preparing Ohio for Phase 2 of the federal Corridor ID Program. That means deeper coalition-building, sharper public engagement, and smarter use of data to show what rail can deliver in jobs, equity, and opportunity. It also means growing our capacity—from expanding our grassroots membership to strengthening the leadership pipeline that will sustain this work well into the future.

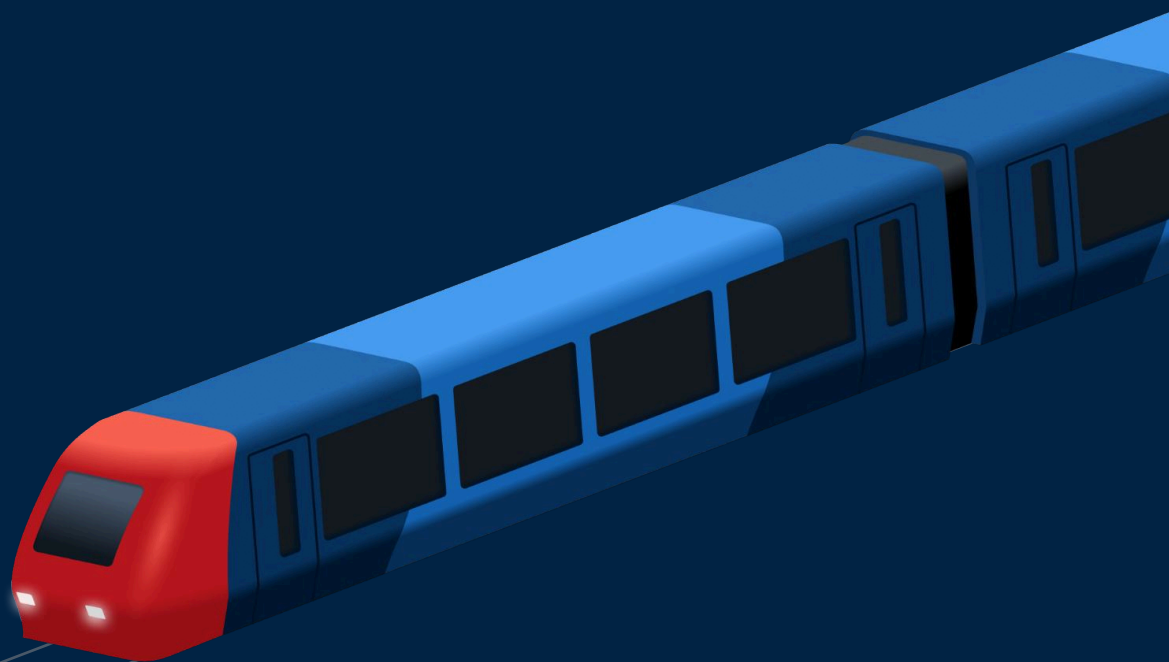
All Aboard Ohio is no longer simply making the case for rail—we are changing the conversation around what's possible for Ohio's communities. We are showing that transportation isn't just about moving people—it's about empowering them. It's about connecting towns to opportunity, reducing emissions, and ensuring no community is left behind.

To our members, supporters, partners, and friends: thank you. Your time, your voices, and your belief in this work continue to fuel our progress. Let's keep building—mile by mile, story by story, step by step.

We are not just advocating. We are advancing. And the future we're imagining? It's already on the horizon.

**Executive Director
John Esterly**





Mission Statement:

All Aboard Ohio advocates for the establishment, improvement, and maintenance of a robust transportation system, including expanded choices, enhanced mobility, and increased access.

Chief Strategy:

AAO will bring together stakeholders and influential coalitions to take advantage of the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that presents itself via the Corridor ID program funding. AAO will act as a liaison in assisting the coalition achieve the vision by uniting leadership to navigate the Corridor ID program.

Organizational Values:

- Improved Transportation Choices for All
- Statewide Collaboration
- Community Empowerment
- Catalysts for Change

2024 – 25 Strategic Plan Retrospective

Objective 1: Financial Sustainability

- Created and implemented 2024 fundraising plan
- Built Development Committee with experienced volunteers
- Maintained financial stability while expanding programmatic work

Objective 2: Organizational Structure & Capacity

- Hired part-time Executive Director and Communications Director
- Developed chapter and intern role descriptions
- Established university chapter framework for future growth

Objective 3: Increase Education, Awareness & Networking

- Held Passenger Rail Day of Advocacy at Ohio Statehouse
- Mapped legislator positions; engaged all new GA members
- Launched re-brand for improved public presence
- Mobilized supporters for budget advocacy campaigns
- Significant digital growth (see Comms section)

Future Steps

- Launched new 3-year strategic planning process at 2025 Board Retreat
- Continuing partnership with OneSource Center for Nonprofit Excellence
- Plan will include statewide input and external accountability framework



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Ohio Runs on Rail
advocacy book for legislative
meetings featuring All Aboard
Ohio's updated branding

Photo Courtesy of Amtrak

260+

Financial contributors in
the last year

30k

Website visits since
AAO re-brand - up 92%

250k

social media impressions
every month

18k

social media followers
- up 92% since 2023

40

live or in-person events
across Ohio in the last
year

Meet Our Team

Executive Committee

Mitch Radakovich, Chair
Lisa Buffo, Vice Chair
Sujan Kakumanu, Secretary
Shelby Erickson, Treasurer

Regional Directors

Sally Fish, Northwest Region
Riley Gilson, Central/SE Region
Lisa Lorenz, Southwest Region
Brian Shriver, Northeast Region

Board

Brian Shriver
Riley Gilson
Lisa Lorenz
Sally Fish
Theresa Allen
Austin Railey
Shane Coleman
Andrew Storck
Andrew J DiLiddo, Jr
Robert Winn
Marla Jones
Sue Mancino
Liz Quigley

AAO Staff

John Esterly
Executive Director
Beth Russell, MBA
Communications Director

Chapter leaders and
communications team
on page 10



2024 – 25 New Board Members

Lisa Buffo – Cleveland (Vice Chair)

Founder of the Cannabis Marketing Association, Lisa brings entrepreneurial expertise and experience growing a grassroots membership organization in a highly regulated industry. Her background in coalition-building, fundraising, and policy advocacy supports AAO's strategic efforts and organizational growth.

Sally Fish – Toledo (Northwest Ohio Regional Director)

A leading disability rights advocate with The Ability Center of Greater Toledo, Sally also founded and chairs the Disability and Aging Passenger Rail Coalition (DARC). She brings policy knowledge and a commitment to equity, ensuring AAO's work is accessible and inclusive for all.

Lisa Lorenz – West Chester (Southwest Ohio Regional Director)

Lisa brings a background in education, event planning, and community engagement. She's passionate about introducing families—especially suburban women—to the benefits of sustainable transportation and increasing support for passenger rail across demographics.

Riley Gilson – Hilliard (Central Ohio Regional Director)

Riley serves as Vice President of Operations at Assetwatch, where he oversees strategic planning and operational efficiencies. He brings strong organizational leadership and a belief in the transformative power of transit to connect and strengthen communities.

Liz Quigley – Grove City

A sustainability professional with a national background in community programming and advocacy, Liz is committed to helping AAO broaden its audience through education, partnerships, and accessible messaging that links transportation to climate and equity goals.

Austin Railey III – Cincinnati

Austin has a decade of experience in government and public service, including transit initiatives like Cincinnati's BRT and expanded bus service. A lifelong transit advocate, he offers deep policy knowledge and a commitment to improving transportation infrastructure across Ohio.

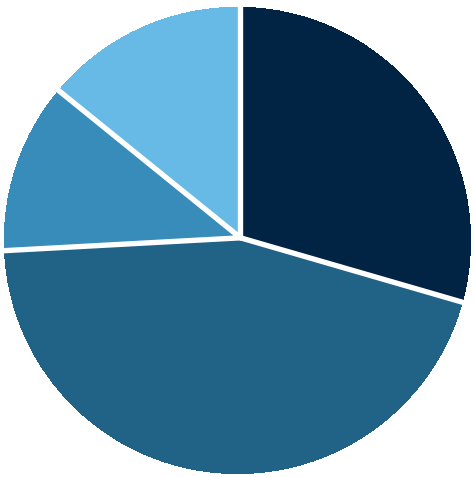
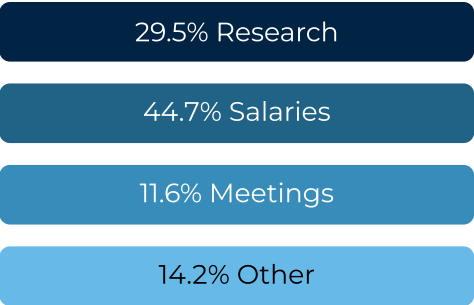


Financial Overview

This year’s deficit reflects strategic investments in staff, outreach, and advocacy during a pivotal moment for Ohio rail. Our priority moving forward is to strengthen fundraising and diversify revenue to ensure long-term sustainability and a positive margin.

2024 Financials

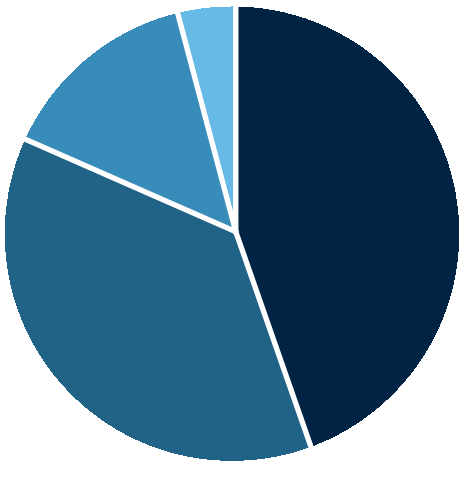
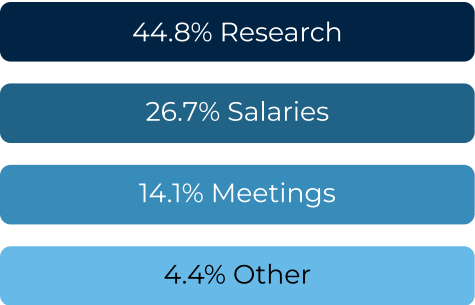
Total Revenue	\$36,155
Total Expenses	\$44,203
Net Revenue	\$(8,048)



January 1st - May 31st

2025 Financials

Total Revenue	\$10,262
Total Expenses	\$29,145
Net Revenue	\$(18,883)



Business Memberships

To support long-term growth and financial resilience, All Aboard Ohio is also rolling out a new business membership program. This initiative invites companies that believe in sustainable transportation and regional connectivity to invest directly in our mission. Membership opportunities will support statewide events, digital campaigns, and local chapter initiatives, while offering visibility and engagement benefits for participating organizations. It’s a strategic step toward broadening our funding base and building meaningful partnerships with Ohio’s business community.



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Advocacy Report

AAO launched multiple campaigns in 2024 - 25 to influence Ohio's state budget and advance rail priorities. Key efforts included:

- Passenger Rail Day of Advocacy: Supporters from across Ohio met with legislators at the Statehouse to advocate for increased investment and visibility for passenger rail.
- State Budget Campaigns: Advocated for the inclusion of:
 - Funding for Ohio to rejoin the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC)
 - Restoration of passenger rail representation on the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC)
- Legislative Strategy:
 - Mapped legislator positions on passenger rail
 - Maintained "chaser" assignments for key targets
 - Delivered testimony on HB488, including quotes picked up by Rep. Willis and Rep. Daniels
 - Activated membership for more than 1600 calls/emails to legislators
- MIPRC Engagement:
 - Although Ohio did not formally rejoin MIPRC, AAO ensured continued representation by sending Board Chair Mitch Radakovich to the MIPRC Annual Meeting, the only delegate from Ohio
 - This presence helped maintain Ohio's visibility in regional planning discussions, critical for future Corridor ID coordination



Giving Tuesday Fundraising Campaign 2025 paired with website and social media content.



Regular updates on corridor ID progress utilize AI to track federal funding and build posts



Membership call to actions created results for Ohio during the long-distance rail studies

Chapters and Events Report

AAO’s chapter network continued to evolve as a cornerstone of our grassroots strategy. Chapters in Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati and Dayton hosted regular meetings averaging 20+ attendees, deepening local connections while aligning with statewide goals.

New educational experiences—including field trips to Chicago, COTA, and the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad—engaged members across generations and geographies. We also laid the groundwork for a university chapter framework to ensure the next generation of advocates is ready to lead.

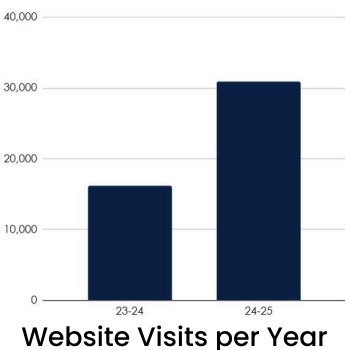
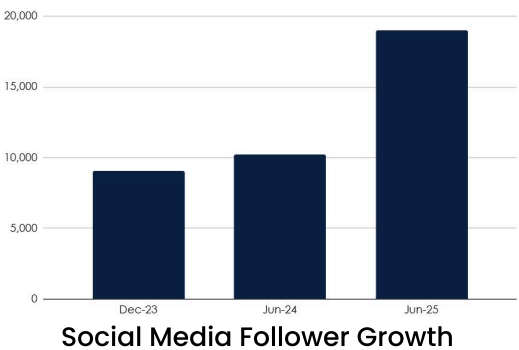
Major events like Rail Advocacy Day and monthly statewide Zoom meetings solidified AAO’s role as a convener for education, policy, and coalition-building at all levels.

Chapter Leads:

Cincinnati: Andrew Hesch + Ryan Minnich
Dayton: Nate Halm
Toledo: Sally Fish + Kurt Schwamberger
Columbus: Liz Quigley + Ron Pilatowski
Cleveland: Brian Schriver

Communications Report

In 2024–2025, All Aboard Ohio’s communications strategy helped raise public awareness and build narrative momentum around passenger rail. Our first full year under the new brand identity brought significant digital growth, with Instagram and LinkedIn audiences each expanding by 200%, and email engagement holding strong at a 50% open rate. The blog averaged 4–5 posts per month, highlighting timely rail issues and community voices. Strategic storytelling around events like Rail Advocacy Day and Corridor ID updates strengthened our media presence and supporter engagement. Looking ahead, AAO aims to deepen our impact by expanding content partnerships, launching improved advocacy toolkits, and exploring further engagement pipeline opportunities.



AAO Communications Team

Beth Russell, Communications Director
Ryan Pecaut, Lead Communications Strategist
Ben Paulus, Social Media
Nathan Halm, Engagement

Economic Impact:

Ohio Estimates Show Major Economic Impact

Amtrak's Connects US corridor vision estimated an annual economic impact of the 3C&D corridor at \$130M with \$2.6B in economic activity from capital investments and 170-320 ongoing jobs. For the Cleveland Detroit route, this was estimated at nearly \$100M and \$4.5B, respectively. Job creation and retention is a key focus as well. A 2013 Business Case Study for the Chicago to Columbus rail corridor estimated that construction and ongoing operations and maintenance of the rail service were estimated to spur the creation of 12,000 construction jobs and 26,000 permanent jobs over 30 years.

\$230M+

Estimated ongoing annual impact to Ohio's economy from 3C&D and Cleveland, Toledo, Detroit Corridors - Amtrak Connects US

Passenger Rail Has Benefited Economies In Other States

Passenger rail has significantly benefited the economies of states like Missouri and North Carolina who's routes resemble those planned for Ohio: Midwest Connect and 3C&D respectively.

In Missouri, the Missouri River Runner Amtrak service has been a vital contributor to the state's economy. It generates approximately \$208 million in annual economic activity, supports 1,250 jobs, and brings in \$22 million in annual tax revenue. The service also boosts tourism, particularly in small communities like Hermann, where local wineries and businesses benefit from increased visitor spending.

North Carolina's passenger rail system, including the NC By Train service, contributes over \$128 million to the state's economy and supports 430 jobs. The rail network enhances mobility, reduces road congestion, and provides expanded travel options for both urban and rural communities. The state's rail system also supports rail tourism, attracting approximately 410,000 visitors annually.

86%

86% believe in the importance of a strong American passenger rail system - Amtrak

81%

81% of residents welcome passenger rail service locally - Amtrak

1:5

For every dollar into public transit, \$5 returns to the economy - APTA

2.8%

Only 2.8% of ODOTs current budget goes toward public transit

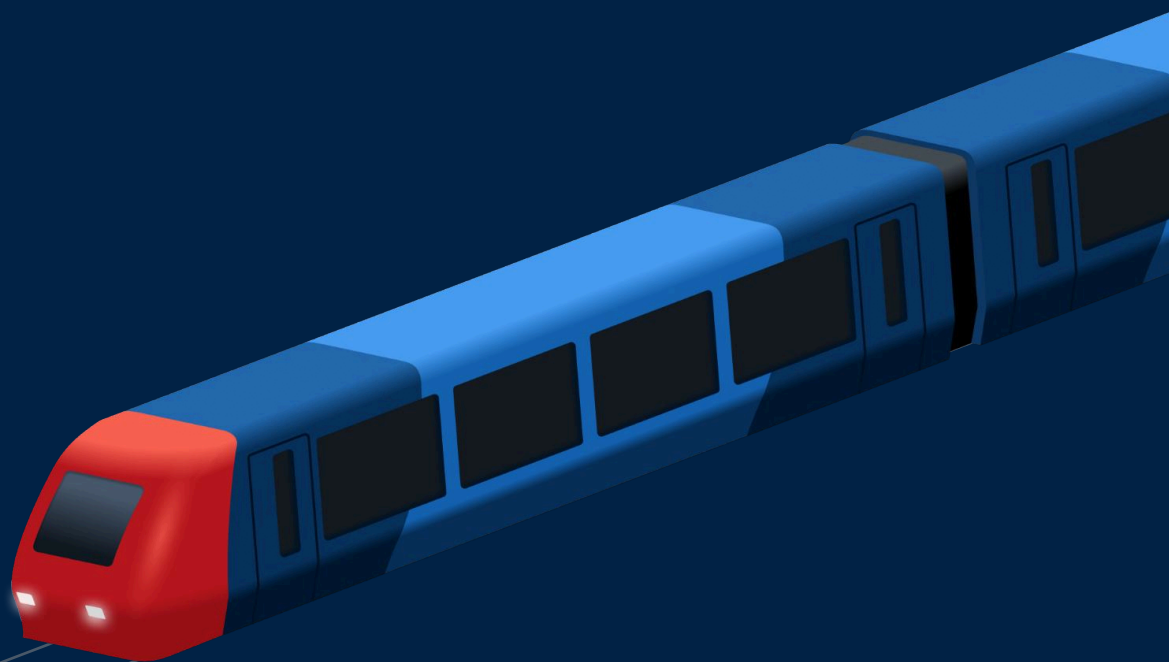
5.1B

Total possible funding for Corridor ID passenger rail programs from the IIJA that states are eligible for

Photo Courtesy of OHFalcon72



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2025 – 26 Strategic Goals

All Aboard Ohio's top priority for 2025 - 26 is to ensure that Ohio is prepared to advance into Phase 2 of the federal Corridor ID Program. Our focus is on building public understanding, strengthening community partnerships, and positioning the organization as a catalyst for long-term rail investment. This year will see an expanded grassroots base, increased capacity within our chapter network, and stronger relationships with lawmakers and institutional stakeholders. Our approach blends education, advocacy, and local engagement to create an unstoppable case for passenger rail expansion.

- Top priority: Build momentum for Corridor ID Phase 2 and position Ohio for future infrastructure funding
- Organizational Health: Expand staff capacity, leadership pipeline, and chapter support systems
- Advocacy Strength: Grow relationships with lawmakers, deploy regional "chaser" strategy, and conduct site visits & briefings
- Community Engagement: Strengthen chapters, create funding pipeline for local initiatives, grow grassroots and business membership
- Education: Publish studies and reports to demonstrate rail's economic and social value



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All Aboard Ohio is a 501c-3 nonprofit with over 50 years of advocacy work, advocating for improved public transportation and passenger rail service in the Midwest.