

# My Train Ride

By Cleve Ricksecker  
*Ohio Passenger Rail News contributor*

This past summer on an impulse, I took a 24-day trip on 16 Amtrak trains to 12 cities in the eastern United States. The trip included 10 segments on a USA rail pass, which I supplemented by paying for an additional six train trips.

My adventure began with a Vermont-to-Boston trip, starting from White River Junction, where I boarded the state-funded *Vermonter* for a scenic trip along the Connecticut River. A trip to Boston requires a transfer and three-hour layover in Springfield, Massachusetts, which has a beautifully restored train station.

After three nights in Boston, I traveled to Portland, Maine on the *Downeaster*, then south to Philadelphia, transferring in Boston and again in New York. Two transfers allowed me to ride the *Acela* on one leg and experience both Boston's South and New York's Moynihan Stations, both of which are magnificent.

Later trips included the *Palmetto* for a 714-mile, 13-hour trip to Savannah, GA, the *Carolinian* from Wilson, NC to Raleigh, a North Carolina State-branded *Piedmont* train to Salisbury, NC, then two of Amtrak's national routes: the *Crescent* to Charlottesville, VA and the *Cardinal* to Chicago.

After an overnight in Chicago, I used Amtrak's *Lincoln Service* to travel to St. Louis, took a *Missouri River Runner* to Kansas City, then traveled to Chicago on the *Southwest Chief*. For my final train leg, I took the *Wolverine* from Chicago to Detroit.

Among the many things that impressed me on my trip, several stand out:

- State-funded service in North Carolina, Maine, Illinois, and Michigan is fabulous. These routes have new or renovated stations (Charlotte's new station is under construction), well-maintained

## Editor's Note

(Many of us at All Aboard Ohio have great memories of train trips we've taken in the past. But what about traveling on today's Amtrak? It's especially significant, given the passage of the Nation Infrastructure Act and a funding level for passenger rail development our nation has never seen since Amtrak was created in 1971. Amtrak announced major service expansion plans in January, 2021 and All Aboard Ohio and our allies have been pushing for the State of Ohio to step up and pursue these plans, which will make passenger rail a much more viable and convenient travel option for more Ohioans.

So with this story from long-time transportation and urban development advocate, Cleve Ricksecker, All Aboard Ohio is kicking off what we hope will be a regular news feature: My Train Ride.)



Adam Schultz photo courtesy of NC By Train

**Six Piedmont trains, owned and operated by the N.C. Department of Transportation, offer daily service to Charlotte, Kannapolis, Salisbury, High Point, Greensboro, Burlington, Durham, Cary, and Raleigh.**

The state has operated intercity passenger trains for decades. What started with a single round trip has grown over the years to four daily round-trip Piedmont and Carolinian trains with connecting Amtrak Thruway Motorcoach routes.

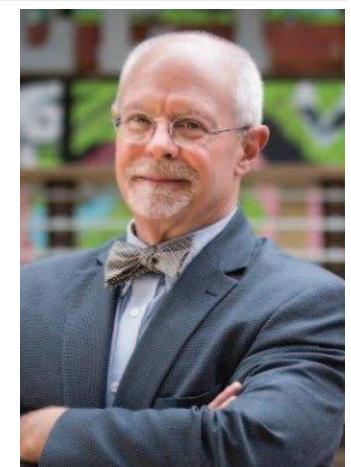
Amtrak and NCDOT are working to expand the state's system to new routes connecting Salisbury to Asheville, and routes connecting Raleigh to Wilmington, Greenville, Morehead City, and Hampton Roads, VA. Such expansion could occur thanks to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act signed into law by President Joe Biden on Nov. 15, 2021.

tracks, and on-board personnel who behave professionally, which is not always a given on Amtrak, especially long-haul trains.

- Raleigh's new train station is a particularly beautiful, grand edifice with public art and great local bus connections. Surprisingly, all my stops had good public transit connections at train stations except for Savannah, GA. Seamless travel to U.S. cities is now a reality in many places.
- Missouri was a big surprise. The State's tourism office heavily promotes train travel between St. Louis and Kansas City. In one community, Hermann, a local tourism official greeted arriving passengers with information about area attractions.
- The *Cardinal* passes through some of the most magnificent scenery I have ever seen.
- Illinois and Michigan are serious about reducing air travel from Chicago airports by diverting travelers to rail. Both the *Lincoln* and *Wolverine* trains will soon offer 110 mph service from Chicago all the way to Detroit and St. Louis, allowing trains to compete with planes.

Sadly, my trip ended with an ignoble return to Ohio

by Greyhound. The Greyhound stop in Bowling Green spoke volumes about transportation in Ohio. It's an abandoned BP gasoline station with no signage and no waiting room except the awning that once covered gas pumps. Even worse was my arrival at the Greyhound terminal in downtown Columbus, a filthy and disorderly place under a consent agreement with the Columbus City Attorney for being a public nuisance.



Cleve Ricksecker

(Editor's Note: Being true advocates, we must acknowledge that not all of Ohio's transportation options...as Cleve experienced... are as good as they should be. The good, the bad and the ugly of Ohio's transportation system are why All Aboard Ohio continues to advocate for more and better service, whether it's intercity passenger rail, public transit or bicycle and pedestrian friendly communities.)

## Reminder

Don't forget to renew your dues for 2022! You can use the coupon on Page Two.

It is a busy year as All Aboard Ohio fights for state and federal funds for rail and transit.

Member dues provide the bulk of All Aboard Ohio's funding.



Ohio Passenger Rail News

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Upper Arlington, OH 43221

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# Ohio Passenger Rail News

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Printed on recycled paper with soy-based inks



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[www.AllAboardOhio.org](http://www.AllAboardOhio.org)

## Mission Statement

All Aboard Ohio exists:

- To increase public awareness about the need to improve efficient intercity passenger rail and local public transit in Ohio;
- To support objective, nonpartisan research and provide that research and information to civic as well as public and private sector leaders;
- To educate the public about the use, benefits, and investments required to improve safe and efficient passenger ground transportation.

All Aboard Ohio supports the innovation and development of a balanced transportation system that provides viable mobility choices to all Ohioans.

## Support All Aboard Ohio!

All Aboard Ohio has entered into a number of fundraising partnerships that you, your family and friends can participate in to help support rail and transit advocacy (please share these!).

AmazonSmile – Go to Smile.Amazon.com, select “Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers” (the incorporated parent of All Aboard Ohio) and shop at Smile.Amazon.com as you would any Amazon purchase. AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to All Aboard Ohio!

GoodShop – Go to GoodShop.com, select “All Aboard Ohio”, and shop via the GoodShop site among numerous participating retailers. All Aboard Ohio will receive a donation based on the amount of shopping you do via GoodShop.com.

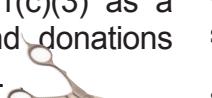
General Electric Foundation – Thanks to an All Aboard Ohio member who is an employee of GE, if you work for this company (that has plants in several Ohio cities plus a locomotive factory in Erie, PA), you can have a direct payroll deduction from your paycheck go to All Aboard Ohio and GE will match it through its matching gifts program!

Individual foundation support remains a critical piece of our fundraising plan. But some of you are already generously helping us through your favorite foundations through donor-advised funds, creating your own foundations or by making introductions to foundation staff in your town. Here are a few of them:

- Bob Roehm Foundation, Columbus
- Columbus Foundation, donor-advised fund
- Dayton Foundation, donor-advised fund
- Haile U.S. Bank Foundation, Cincinnati
- Kristen M. Myers & Christopher D. Heckman Fund, Cincinnati
- Marla And Joseph Shafran Foundation, Cleveland

One of our most generous supporters is Bedrock Real Estate which donates office space to All Aboard Ohio in the Sustainable Cleveland Center at Tower City Center, owned by Bedrock Real Estate. We are grateful to them and all of our supporters.

The Ohio Association of Railroad Passengers (dba All Aboard Ohio) is incorporated in Ohio as a non-profit association and exempt from federal income tax under the IRS Code, Section 501(c)(3) as a publicly supported educational organization. Dues and donations may be tax-deductible in accordance with the IRS Code.



**Sign me up! I WANT BETTER RAIL PASSENGER SERVICES!**

Enclosed is a check or money order for selected membership level...

- \$100+ Club Car
- \$ 50 First Class
- \$ 35 On Board
- \$ 25 On Track (limited income, Military or Student)

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Title.....  
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Telephone..(.....)  
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A one-year membership in All Aboard Ohio includes a subscription to the *Ohio Passenger Rail News*, plus action alerts, notice of rail-oriented events, and local meetings.

(Dues and contributions to All Aboard Ohio may be tax deductible.) Mail this application with a check or money order to:

All Aboard Ohio  
3136 Kingsdale Center, #112  
Upper Arlington, OH 43221

Join or renew: [allaboardohio.org/become-a-member](http://allaboardohio.org/become-a-member)

# Keep Up the Pressure, It's Working!

By Stu Nicholson  
Executor Director, All Aboard Ohio

You could hear jaws drop all over Ohio on January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021: the day a big story showed up on the pages of one of Ohio’s smallest newspapers, the Ashtabula *Star-Beacon*.

The headline was innocuous enough: “**Federal Transportation Bill Could Bring Amtrak Station to Ashtabula**”. But the body of the story revealed much larger news. Amtrak, the now 50 year old, perpetually underfunded national passenger railroad not only was looking at massive funding increase, but also had big plans for Ohio.

Amtrak was planning historic increases in passenger service to every one of its existing corridors in Ohio. But the biggest news in what has become known as the “Amtrak Connects US” plan was the news that Amtrak had identified the Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Cincinnati (3C&D) route as a “priority” project for reviving passenger rail in Ohio’s most densely populated and most heavily traveled corridor.

We knew immediately this was “game on” time for All Aboard Ohio and our advocacy and political allies, especially those of us who remembered the promising 2010 attempt to start-up passenger rail in the 3C&D when then Governor John Kasich killed the plan by returning a \$400-million-dollar grant to the Feds, effectively killing it.

This time is different.

This time it’s Amtrak knocking on Ohio’s door with a bold, broad plan. Ohio has a second chance. And this time, it’s up to all of us to make sure our leaders doesn’t blow that chance.

As I write this, it is Spring 2022 and the question on all our minds is whether the current Ohio Governor, Mike DeWine, will issue an executive order to the Ohio Department of Transportation to commit to work with the Federal Railroad Administration and Amtrak. In simple terms, will Gov. DeWine “raise his hand” and roll Ohio’s transportation future on rails?

You can make... and have made a difference.

- You’ve made calls, sent emails and written letters to your state legislators and local officials.
- You’ve authored op-ed columns and letters to the editors of all of Ohio’s major newspapers...
- And those newspapers have also taken prominent editorial stances in favor of Amtrak’s plans for Ohio.
- All Aboard Ohio has become the “go-to” source for broadcast, print and Internet journalists for their stories.
- A resolution in support of Amtrak’s plans has been approved by city councils in every city along the 3C&D Corridor.
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations around Ohio have stood up in support and have made expansion of passenger rail in Ohio their #1 lobbying goal in the Ohio General Assembly.
- A resolution of support was introduced in the Ohio House and has 10 sponsors, including one Republican.
- All Aboard Ohio volunteers delivered a fact sheet and letter to every member of the Ohio General Assembly, asking for their support and to ask the Governor to “Raise Ohio’s hand”.
- All Aboard Ohio has posted almost all the above on our Facebook, Twitter, Linked-In, Instagram pages and other social media.

But our message to you today is.... **Don't....Let....Up!!!**

We are being told our voices are being heard at the Ohio Statehouse and in The Governor’s office. Now’s the time to keep up the pressure.

Keep writing letters and making calls and sending emails....and tell your story.

- Tell your story to the Governor and legislators about why YOU need the option of connecting to jobs, education, health care or just going to a ball game, concerts or museums....by taking the train.
- Let them know that most Ohio legislators live in and represent districts that are or could be served by Amtrak. One Republican legislator has already been quoted saying he would ride to Columbus from his district for every session.
- Let them know the millions of dollars in travel expenses by state employees that could be saved by not having to drive a car on state business.
- Let them know how more Ohioans riding trains helps reduce traffic, automobile emissions and dependence on oil and gasoline at a time when pump prices are gouging all of our budgets.
- Let them know how the Amtrak station stops in or near your community means attracting more economic development and jobs as it has in other states.

Ohio gets billions in federal dollars for highways, airports to move people. Why would we not want more investment in moving more Ohioans by rail and making our state a more attractive place to live, work or visit?

We share your impatience and frustration waiting for our state’s leaders to make a decision. But I’m convinced we are very close on this and that now is NOT the time to let up.

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# New AAO Public Affairs Director

**By Beth Russell**  
**Public Affairs Director, All Aboard Ohio**

I inherited a love of trains when I married my husband, almost by osmosis. One day as I scrolled through Facebook, it was only natural that the words “train” and “Amtrak” jumped out at me from a job advertisement. Reading further, it seemed I must have written the ad myself; it was such a perfect fit. This job combines my family’s train fandom with my experience working for non-profits and my background in marketing, public relations, and economic development.

When I joined All Aboard Ohio at the beginning of

the year, I dove headfirst into one of the largest undertakings of my career: a complete rebrand that included the launch of a new website. I am proud to say that we have come a long way since January 1. We debuted our new logo and tagline in February along with the soft launch of a new website. In March, we published major changes to the website with plans to build out more features in the coming months.

Looking past my first six months with AAO and thinking about my goals for the organization, one of the things I am most excited about is the opportunity to grow our membership and add corporate sponsorships. I plan to create cohesive marketing collateral that will tell our story and explain why what we do is

so important. Our social media platforms will always be a focus, and I will ensure that we utilize these mediums to connect and inform our membership as well as the public at large. I am excited to continue serving our supporters in my capacity as Public Affairs Director and to see all of the progress we will make together.



Beth Russell

# New Year, New Look

One of All Aboard Ohio’s strategic goals for this year was to launch a new, more user-friendly website, and we are excited to announce that we have done just that! Our new website’s soft launch was completed in February along with our new logo and branding, with an additional buildout of features completed in March.

The more modern look for Allaboardohio.org also spotlights key issues on the front page with dynamic

eye-catching content that leads visitors to our most important urgent public transit work. New features also include a calendar of meetings and events, ways to get involved in our work, and current information regarding our initiatives.

This summer, we will be adding a password-protected section to the website where our members will have exclusive access to online newsletters, insider news and

updates, and more. Members will also be able to access their membership information to update their information and communication preferences and renew or upgrade their membership. We will also be adding a link to our Bonfire store where you can purchase All Aboard Ohio merchandise featuring our new logo.

Check it out and let us know what you think at allaboardohio.org!

The screenshot shows the All Aboard Ohio website. At the top, there's a dark header bar with the logo "AllAboard Ohio" and "For a Connected Midwest". Below the header, a large banner features the text "Empowering people through transportation access..." with a "LEARN MORE" button. The main navigation menu includes links for HOME, ABOUT, OUR WORK, NEWS, SUPPORT, TRANSIT LINKS, and CONTACT US. A teal footer bar at the bottom contains the text "FOR A CONNECTED MIDWEST". In the bottom right corner, there's a bio for All Aboard Ohio: "All Aboard Ohio is a 501-C3 non-profit, member-based organization dedicated to promoting more and better intercity passenger rail service and public transit throughout the state."

# Toledo's National Train Day Returns!

By Bill Gill  
Regional Coordinator, All Aboard Ohio

After an almost three-year hiatus, the popular and family friendly National Train Day returns to Toledo Union Station. Thanks to a team of dedicated volunteers who kept planning alive during the Covid pandemic, we can once again gather to celebrate the past and future of passenger rail.

October of 2019 began with promise. The 13<sup>th</sup> annual *National Train Day Toledo* was shaping up nicely for May of 2020. The NTD Organizing Committee had begun firming up many of the important participants. The Toledo Lucas County Port Authority agreed again to allow the use of the historic station; Dan Romick's children's train ride were preparing to attend; Phil Linne promised to have several handcars/"Speeders" available for free rides on tracks east of the station; and



## SAVE THE DATE

*Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan*

Thirteenth Annual OPEN HOUSE

**Saturday, May 14, 2022**

9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

### Toledo Amtrak Station

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Plaza

415 Emerald Avenue, Downtown Toledo

Served by TARTA

Opening Ceremony 9:30 a.m.

Children's Train Ride, Model Train Layouts,  
Rides on Handcars and Speeders, Displays,  
Train Trip Drawing, Vendors, Exhibits, Food, Music,  
Operation Lifesaver's Kid's Rail Safety workshops

### Celebrating the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Lake Shore Limited!



**FREE EVENT - FREE PARKING**

For information: [traindaytoledo@aol.com](mailto:traindaytoledo@aol.com)

National Train Day Toledo

Event subject to Covid restrictions

Ellen Gatrell was overseeing the return of an estimated 40-50 returning vendors.

In addition, model railroad layout groups - including the students from Eastwood School - were on board. We were assured there would be *Operation Lifesaver Workshops* for the children. Under discussion was Food and Music Entertainment... and the Theme was to be the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the former NYC System "Central Union Terminal", the last modern station to be designed and built by the former New York Central Railroad at what's now known as Martin Luther King Jr. Plaza.

*Then, in March of 2020, the plug was pulled due to Covid-19 restrictions.*

Fast forward to 2022! National Train Day is back!!! Arriving on time for **Saturday, May 14**.

Many or most of the features of past years are back. This year's theme is the **125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Lake Shore Limited**.

And it couldn't happen at a more appropriate time, as Amtrak is proposing major service upgrades for trains through Ohio, including Toledo and the revival of service for the important rail corridor between Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton & Cincinnati. As of press time, we are still awaiting the State of Ohio to step up and formally work with Amtrak on these plans.

But while we wait, National Train Day is still sched-

uled to roll into Toledo Union Station.

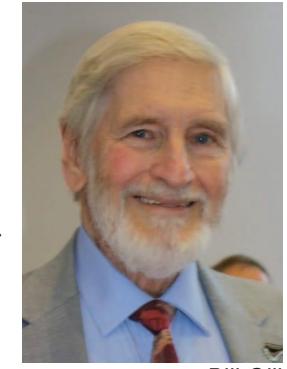
Here's what to expect:

- Panel Discussions with experts representing such subjects as Amtrak's plans for Ohio, the future of high-speed passenger rail and the future and historical significance of Union Station and the the *Lake Shore Limited*.
- Ohio artist Craig Staufer to be the featured guest. In addition to offering some of his works for sale, he will demonstrate his style of painting.
- For music, the nationally known **NS Lawmen Band**, made up of railroad employees, will be performing.
- Food and beverage vendors will also be at the depot.

Toledo National Train Day has historically drawn great crowds of families and railfans. One year, it topped over 15,000 attendees for the single-day event.

We're expecting one of the best events of its kind once again.

If any AAO members might like to join our Volunteers to help out, let us know at: [traindaytoledo@aol.com](mailto:traindaytoledo@aol.com).



Bill Gill

# All Aboard Ohio Annual Meeting

**Saturday, July 9<sup>th</sup> 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

*Registration and breakfast starts at 9:00*

### Makoy Center

5462 Center St., Hilliard, Ohio

#### Agenda:

**National Update** from the Railroad Passengers Association.

**Ohio Update**, including Ohio's portion of the "Amtrak Connect US" plan: 3C&D Corridor, Columbus-Lima-Chicago, and passenger rail extensions from Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New York. Ohio rail/transit funding report.

#### Meeting and Registration Information:

\$35 for AAO members  
\$45 for non-members

Meeting details are still being arranged.

For up-to-date information (such as speaker announcements and possible internet streaming for those who cannot attend) go to [www.AllAboardOhio.org](http://www.AllAboardOhio.org).

**Registration includes: breakfast, meeting, lunch and unlimited beverages.**

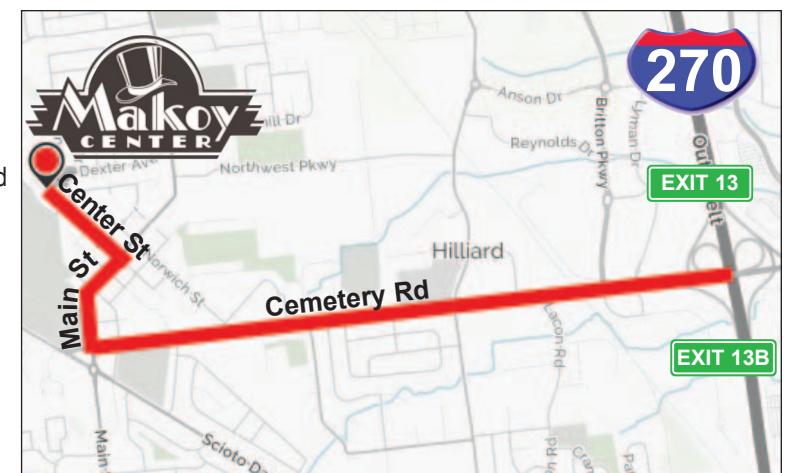
#### Driving Directions

##### From I-270 Southbound:

I-270 south to Exit 13 (Cemetery Rd.). Turn right on to Cemetery Rd. Continue 2 miles on Cemetery Rd. to roundabout and take the first exit onto Main St. Drive 0.3 miles to Center St. Turn left and drive 0.3 miles to the Makoy Center.

##### From I-270 Northbound:

I-270 north to Exit 13B (Cemetery Rd.). Continue on exit ramp on to Cemetery Rd. Continue 2.4 miles on Cemetery Rd. to roundabout and take the first exit onto Main St. Drive 0.3 miles to Center St. Turn left and drive 0.3 miles to the Makoy Center.



# AAO Supporting Regional Projects

Though All Aboard Ohio's current focus is on Amtrak's plans for all of Ohio, we are also supporting local and regional efforts aimed at improving passenger rail prospects.

Here's a partial list of how we are showing our support:

- Letter of support for the **City of Sandusky** for a \$1.5-million-dollar grant to upgrade track and platforms at the Sandusky Amtrak Station. The grant would also study the possibility of an entirely new station.
- Letter of support for the **Northern Ohio Area Coordinating Agency (NOACA)** for a \$3-million-dollar Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) grant application.
- Continuing support for the efforts of the **Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)** to

grant to do a critical needs study of the Amtrak corridor between Cleveland and Chicago. The study will examine both problems and solutions that can improve both rail capacity and improved speed and on-time performance in the corridor.

- Supporting the efforts of the **Lakeshore Rail Authority** to undertake a critical needs study of the Amtrak corridor between Cleveland and Buffalo (NY). Hosted by **All Aboard Erie** they are working with local officials and Metro Planning Organizations (MPOs) to gain support for an FRA grant application.
- Continuing support for the efforts of the **Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)** to

include the proposed Chicago-Fort Wayne-Lima-Columbus-Pittsburgh passenger rail corridor on future FRA / Amtrak corridor maps.

- Supporting the efforts of **Clevelanders for Public Transit** for greater accountability and transparency from the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (GCRTA) for replacement of aging light rail vehicles as well as consistent, improved maintenance and public communications about service issues.
- Supporting the revival of the hugely popular **Toledo National Train Day** after a two-year, Covid-related shutdown. (See "Toledo's National Train Day Returns!" above).