

News

OHIO RAIL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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Major Railroads Support Ohio Hub Plan “Best New Year’s Present Ohio Could Get” says ORDC’s Seney

(Columbus) – If a passenger rail plan can get a Hollywood movie-style review, the Ohio Hub Plan just got “Two thumbs way up” from two major partners in the plan.

“ORDC is to be commended for its work and vision in undertaking this ambitious initiative” – John M. Gibson / VP of Operations Research & Planning, CSX Transportation

**“... a good start. It outlines a bold approach to implementing regional passenger service...”
– Bill Schafer / Director of Corporate Affairs, Norfolk Southern Corporation**

“This news is the best New Year’s present Ohio could get”, says ORDC Executive Director Jim Seney. “To have two of the nation’s premier freight railroads make these statements is a powerful answer to those who ask ‘do the railroads support the Ohio Hub Plan?’ But this support didn’t come without laying a solid foundation in the planning process. The railroads have been a part of planning the Ohio Hub from the very start and they have helped make it one the strongest, most innovative regional rail plans in the nation.”

Seney says the two letters of support from NS and CSX doesn’t mean there aren’t still details to be worked out. “After all,” says Seney “this is a little like building a swimming pool in your next door neighbor’s back yard and inviting the rest of the neighbors to swim in it. You’d better talk to your neighbor in advance and make sure not only if they’re okay with your plan for their property, but that there is a significant and positive benefit in it for them.”

In both letters, the two railroads, which are also the dominant freight railroads that serve Ohio, say details need to be worked out as to route alignments, infrastructure needs (bridge, tunnel, track and signal improvements) and the potential impact of having 6 to 8 high speed passenger trains a day operating in the freight railroad-owned corridors.

“The potential benefit for the freight railroads is a major reason we were able to bring them to the planning table in the first place”, says ORDC’s Seney. “They have basically told us that running passenger trains on their corridors can be done, as long as there is no interference with their freight trains.”

In fact, says Seney, the Ohio Hub Plan calls for reducing or eliminating many of Ohio’s railroad “bottlenecks” in or near the large urban areas and upgrading tracks, bridges and signals so both passenger and freight rail traffic can move faster and in greater numbers than they are now able to do. “This is absolutely necessary if we are to grow Ohio’s economy. The end result of the Ohio Hub Plan must be positive for all parties involved, because increasing the ability to move more people and freight makes our state a stronger competitor for new business and jobs, and brings prosperity with it”, says Seney.

(The Ohio Rail Development Commission is an independent agency operating within the Ohio Department of Transportation. ORDC is responsible for economic development through the improvement and expansion of passenger and freight rail service, railroad grade crossing safety and rail travel & tourism issues. For more information about what ORDC does for Ohio, visit our website at <http://www.dot.state.oh.us/ohiorail/>)