



The Ohio Hub

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Overview

The Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) and the Ohio Department of Transportation have studied the feasibility of expanding transportation capacity by improving the regional railroad system for both passenger and freight trains. These efforts have resulted in the Ohio Hub Plan, a 1,244-mile interstate rail network with 46 passenger stations serving 22 million people in five states and southern Ontario, Canada.

The Ohio Hub rail corridors would interconnect with the proposed Midwest Regional Rail System, New York's Empire corridor, Pennsylvania's Keystone corridor, and VIA Rail Canada. The system would be integrated into the region's air, highway and local transit networks.

The objective in planning the Ohio Hub is to provide additional rail capacity for passenger trains while improving safety and removing impediments to efficient freight and passenger rail operations. If the Ohio Hub rail corridors were fully funded through construction, it would take approximately seven years to plan, design and construct each corridor's improvements needed to operate reliable, fast, frequent passenger service with train speeds up to 110-MPH as defined in the Ohio Hub Plan.

Rail System Feasibility

On the basis of criteria established by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) the proposed Ohio Hub rail corridors are considered viable and the system would be an appropriate extension of the nation's federally recognized passenger rail network. The results of two economic impact reports confirmed that the benefits justify the investment, that construction is justifiable assuming an 80% federal match, and that the operation of the system will not be a burden on the State's biennial budget.

Current Planning Activities

The ORDC has requested federal funding to advance four program-level, first tier Environmental Impact Statements for the following Ohio Hub rail corridors:

- Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit;
- Cleveland-Pittsburgh;
- Cleveland-Columbus; and
- Columbus-Dayton-Cincinnati.

The Programmatic EIS (PEIS) is the first step in National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance and will result in a record of decision (ROD) to be approved by the Federal Railroad Administration. The ROD will identify the selected route and stations locations, the railroad capacity improvements, the environmental impacts, community priorities, and will define the next steps needed to advance the project through second tier, project level NEPA documentation. The federal funding would be matched with state funds and used to hire a general engineering consulting firm to manage the project and complete the PEIS.

OHIO RAIL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION