

# ***NEWS***

## ***OHIO RAIL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION***

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### ***“Heartland Corridor” Gets Ohio \$\$\$ ORDC Commissioners Approve State Share & Other Projects***

**(Columbus)** – Ohio will fund its share of improvements for the planned “Heartland Corridor” high-speed freight rail line between Columbus and the Port of Norfolk, Virginia. ORDC Commissioners have approved a grant of \$836,355 dollars to help eliminate low-clearances along the Ohio portion of the route. That route will also connect to the Rickenbacker Intermodal Hub now under construction just south of Columbus. Similar intermodal terminals are planned for both Norfolk and for possible site in West Virginia.

The heaviest and costliest work involves increasing height clearances by re-boring numerous tunnels along the Norfolk Southern Railroad through the mountains of West Virginia. But when complete, the \$186-million dollar project will enable the movement of fast, double-stack container trains between the East Coast and Midwest markets. \$90-million dollars for the project was approved earlier this year by Congress, including the strong support of Ohio’s delegation.

Most of the work in Ohio will involve work on four bridges at Ashville, Lunbeck and Glen Jean, Ohio and lowering a portion of track underneath an existing bridge at Ironton, Ohio. The entire double-stack clearance project will likely take until 2009 to complete. But with the ORDC assistance, Ohio’s share of the work will be complete by late 2007.

Completion of the project carries several significant benefits:

- Reduce travel distance for double-stack container trains between Columbus and Norfolk by 300 miles.
- Opens new and expanded, two-way double-stack service between Chicago-Columbus-Norfolk, saving shippers and the railroad an estimated \$200-million.

- Increased intermodal rail service will result in reduced fuel consumption and reduced air pollution by the reduction in long-haul truck traffic.

In addition, an independent study for the Columbus Regional Airport Authority, which owns a portion of the Rickenbacker Intermodal Hub site, found that the Hub facility will help generate 9,500 jobs over the next 30 years. In the same time frame, the study estimates the project will also generate \$800-million in state and local tax revenues and potentially save shippers an estimated \$660million in transportation costs.

“Given the way fuel costs are increasing, savings like this are important to hold down the impact on the cost of raw materials to manufacturers and finished products to consumers”, says ORDC Executive Director Jim Seney. “That’s why our commitment to both the Rickenbacker and Heartland Corridor projects is so vital to Ohio and its economy.”

For another view on the Heartland Corridor project check out the following link:

***<http://home.hamptonroads.com/stories/print.cfm?story=104153&ran=173071>***

In other business at its May meeting, ORDC Commissioners also approved the following:

- A \$1,000,000 dollar loan and grant of up to \$150,000 dollars for the rehabilitation of the 14-mile Camp Chase Railroad and reconstruction of their Avenue Yard in West Columbus. The project includes replacement of old ties to accommodate heavier carloads. The loan/grant package is critical, as the railroad expects to see an increase of 2,400 carloads per year. Much of that increase will come from a new ethanol facility at Sunoco Logistics, as well as traffic from existing shippers who currently employ over 1,300 people. The loan would be repaid by the railroad.
- A loan of up to \$650,000 and a \$100,000 grant for construction and equipping of an intermodal (rail-truck) bulk transfer facility at the Jacobs Industries plastics facility at the CSX Railroad’s yard at Walbridge, Ohio (near Toledo). The facility, once built, would allow for greater and easier transfers of plastic pellets from rail cars for local / regional deliver by truck to plastics manufacturers. An estimated 30 new jobs would be created and the company estimated the facility would generate 500 to 800 carloads per year. That translates as well to less dependence on long-haul trucks to bring in the raw materials and, thus, reduced fuel and reduced traffic in the area. The company would repay the loan.

Details of all of these projects are available on-line through the ORDC website. Look for the link to “Meeting Information” and click the “Agenda” item.

(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/> )

