

# NEWS

## OHIO RAIL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### ORDC Panhandle Line Advisory Committee Continues Discussions on Possible Long-Term Lease of the State-Owned Rail Line

(Columbus) – The second in a series of meetings on a possible long-term lease of the state-own Panhandle Line rail corridor will take place:

11:30 A-M  
Wednesday, October 31  
Conference Room  
Ohio Rail Development Commission  
50 West Broad Street, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus

Prompted by a staff proposal at their September 13<sup>th</sup> meeting to study a long-term lease of the state-owned Panhandle Line, ORDC Commissioners at that meeting approved formation of an advisory committee to conduct a study and report recommendations on whether a long-term lease is beneficial and, if so, what provisions should be detailed in such a lease. The full Commission also asked that a report and recommendation be presented to the Commissioners by the January 2008 regular meeting.

At the initial meeting on October 5<sup>th</sup>, a list of issues was created from comments by both advisory committee members and interested parties such as the Ohio Central Railroad, shippers and communities along the line, which runs from Columbus to the East to Mingo Junction on the Ohio River.

Among the list of issues to be discussed are:

- Determining the lease cost of the line and how existing debt service is handled.
- What will be the public input process once a proposed lease document is created?
- Responsibility for shipper relations, track & signal maintenance and track speed standards.
- Establishing standards & responsibilities for economic development along the corridor.
- Identifying and addressing long-term needs for corridor infrastructure, potential passenger service and public uses for corridor (rail excursions, recreational trails, etc).
- What risks are involved and who is responsible for minimizing and otherwise dealing with those risks?

In addition to ORDC staff, the Advisory Committee includes ORDC Commissioners Tom McOwen (who will also serve as Committee Chairman), Kimberly Gibson, Solomon Jackson and Jim Hartung. The Committee has been asked to seek input from all interested parties including the Ohio Central Railroad, which is currently operating the state-owned portion of the Panhandle Line under an existing 5-year lease. Input will also be sought from communities, shippers and other interests along the line.

**(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/>)**