

# NEWS

## OHIO RAIL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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### **ORDC Commissioners OK Rail Vision for 2008 *Action Plan Approved Along with Ohio Hub Resolution***

**(Columbus)** – Citing the increasing need to address a variety of economic, mobility and quality of life issues by moving more people and freight by rail in and through Ohio, ORDC Commissioners have approved a 2008 Action Plan aimed at a number of goals and funding strategies.

The plan is the result of discussions ORDC Chairwoman Jolene Molitoris has had with individual Commissioners since being named Chairwoman by Governor Ted Strickland late last year. The Governor has prominently featured the role of railroads in his “Turn Around Ohio” plan for Ohio’s economy.

The ORDC action plan takes a multi-tiered approach toward:

- Seeking funding for rail infrastructure initiatives for freight, passenger and rail safety
- Accelerating efforts to develop inter-city passenger rail through exploring opportunities for Amtrak start-up services and continuing to build a long-term system of fast, corridor-based passenger trains under the Ohio Hub Plan
- Develop a State Rail Strategy Plan in cooperation with ODOT and other state agencies like the Ohio Department of Development to identify challenges like rail choke-points and needs like increasing capacity for more trains
- Continuing Ohio’s strong commitment to improving rail safety projects that benefit the public and improve delivery of those projects.

In a related action, Commissioners approved a resolution asking Ohio Congressional delegation “to work to establish a federal program with the long-term funding necessary for full participation in the development of the Ohio Hub corridors.” The resolution also

requests each member of Ohio's Congressional delegation to support the development of an intercity/interstate passenger rail system by funding a "program-level" environmental impact statement (PEIS) for the Ohio Hub passenger rail corridors that will serve the citizens of their districts.

That resolution is already being communicated to Ohio's members of Congress.

In still more actions:

Commissioners approved a \$200-thousand dollar matching grant to build a 2,500 foot rail spur to serve the Case Farms feed mill near Massillon. The project will expand operations and allow creation of 20 new jobs at the mill. It will also enable Case Farms to expand their chicken processing operations at Winesburg in Holmes County and create 200 new jobs at that facility. \$100,000 in matching funds for the project will come from Case Farms, the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railroad and local sources.

Another impact of the project is that it also opens up 150 to 350 new acres of land in a local industrial park to attract new rail-related industries and more jobs.

In a second rail spur project, Commissioners approved a staff-recommended \$300,000 loan to MGQ Inc. (Maple Grove Quarry) to help offset the costs of building 4,200-feet of new track to better accommodate unit trains of aggregates at the quarry near Maple Grove (near Tiffin) in Seneca County. The project will help improve operations for both MGQ and the Norfolk Southern Railroad and eliminate the cost and loss of time in storing empty hopper cars several miles away from the quarry site. Completion of the project will also help create 6 to 20 new jobs and increase car-loadings from 750 to 4,000 new carloads.

In other business, Commissioners approved a new committee to begin considering possible legislative remedies for insurance liability relief as it relates to operation of excursion trains, rail trails and other non-railroad activities in active freight rail corridors. It was determined that the issue needs to be addressed as a statewide concern. Three commissioners will serve on the Committee and work with staff on a possible legislative solution.

**(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/>)**