

# NEWS

## OHIO RAIL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Commissioners Support Gov. Strickland's "Building Ohio Jobs" Plan/ Oppose Increased Truck Weights Proposal**

(Columbus)—Calling Governor Strickland's proposed "Building Ohio Jobs" plan a way to make Ohio's rail systems stronger and make the state an even more important link in the world and national distribution chain, ORDC Commissioners unanimously approved a motion to support the \$1.7-billion dollar bond package, which the Administration wants to put on the statewide ballot this November.

\$150-million dollars of that package would be aimed at investing in Ohio's logistics and distribution infrastructure to create a seamless multi-modal system linking Ohio's rails, roads, waterways and airports. ORDC Chairwoman Jolene Molitoris cited the recent grand opening of the Rickenbacker Intermodal Yard near Columbus as a "portent of the future" as an example of the demand for moving more freight by rail and why Ohio needs to invest more in all elements of its transportation system.

Commissioners voted to oppose a move in the Ohio General Assembly proposing increased truck weights for both coiled steel and steel slabs on Ohio highways. The proposal would allow gross vehicle weights to increase from the current 92-thousand pounds to 120-thousand pounds. ORDC Chairwoman Molitoris, recently appointed as Assistant Director at ODOT, says ODOT is still examining the legislative proposal and has not yet taken a position. Ohio Railroad Association Executive Director Art Arnold told Commissioners that if the bill passes, Ohio would be the only state allowing such a weight increase, calling it a "drastic proposal."

Commissioner and State Representative Robert Hagan called it "frustrating" that the issue continues to come up over the past 20 years." "Once that door is opened", said

Commissioner Herk Wolfe, “everyone will want greater truck weights” and voiced concern over the damage it would do to highways. A motion opposing the truck weight proposal was subsequently passed with 5 “yes” votes and three abstentions.

In other business, Commissioners approved a slate of 10 rail projects....

- **Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway / Carrollton Line Rehabilitation:** 26-mile long project that will create 50 new jobs and retain 360 jobs
- **Akron Metro Regional Transit Authority/Canton Line Bridges:** preserves freight service to industrial park and 70 rail-dependent jobs, improves safety for Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad.
- **Camp Chase Railroad (Columbus) Track Rehabilitation:** preserves & improves service for grain elevator and enhances service for other rail shippers.
- **Cleveland Commercial Railroad Track Improvements:** improves service to shippers who employ over 50 people, improves safety
- **RJ Corman Cleveland Line Track Rehabilitation:** improves service to rail dependent shippers who employ 650 people in Tuscarawas and Stark Counties.
- **Indiana & Northeastern Railroad/Grade Crossing Upgrades:** enhances service to grain elevator in Williams County, benefiting area farmers and 39 employees.
- **Maumee & Western Defiance Yard Improvements:** 2,400 jobs positively impacted by new Transload facility, rehabilitated rail freight yard, ability to move more and heavier carloads, taking 1,200 truckloads of local highways.
- **Ohi-Rail Grade Crossing Vegetation Control:** improves safety for motorists and trains crews at 22 grade crossings and improves efficiency of rail line in Carroll and Jefferson counties.
- **West Central Ohio Port Authority/ Sugar Creek Bridge Replacement (Fayette County):** improves train speeds and service to both existing customers and major Job-Ready industrial site.
- **Youngstown & Southeastern Railroad Grade Crossing Rebuilds:** improves safety for motorists and train crews, improves rail operations and service to customers.

If you would like a copy of the project briefings on any of these projects, please contact Stu Nicholson at ORDC to have it faxed or e-mailed.

Art Arnold with the Ohio Railroad Association can be contacted at 614-783-7959, if you have a question on the railroad industry view of the increased truck weights proposal.

(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 services and railroad grade crossing safety. For more information about what ORDC does for Ohio, visit our website at <http://www.dot.state.oh.us/ohiorail/>)

