

Clyde A. Whitaker (145)  
**Chairman & State Legislative Director**  
Kurt L. Schwamberger (1529)  
**Assistant State Legislative Director**  
William J. Darling (1376)  
**Secretary**



**Ohio State Legislative Board**  
**LO - 038**

750 Cross Pointe Road, Suite E  
Gahanna, Ohio 43230  
Phone: (614) 604-6731  
Email: smartunionoslb@gmail.com

May 09, 2023

The Ohio Senate –  
Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

My name is Clyde Whitaker, I hold the position of Chairman & Director for the Ohio State Legislative Board part of the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, Transportation. Our organization is the largest rail labor group nationwide representing Conductors, Engineers, Trainmen, and Yard Master crafts.

My principal role is to protect, improve, and ensure the safety of rail workers, as well the general public. Until this year, rail safety has always been on the back burner so-to-speak. Railroad equipment is very dangerous to be near and needs adequate protection for the public. Public safety is expensive no matter what mode of transportation, but when it comes to collisions with rail equipment the stats for a positive outcome are low.

Having vested interest in both safety and economic sustainability for rail in Ohio. We support the needs of the funding of the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) as it was originally presented in Substitute House Bill 23, funding for 2024-2025 operating years, prior to the carveout. ORDC is one of the most responsible agencies in this state and strategically invests money in rail infrastructure for safety and economic growth.

Be mindful most programs begin with a planning phase that may take years to come to fruition yet are matched by either federal funding or the railroad corporations themselves. Ohio is the crossroads of the Midwest for rail in my humble professional opinion, almost everything coast to coast of various commodities passes through our state.

The data presented to me shows we are within the top ten states for most originating and terminating trains carrying commodities like; aggregates, chemicals, food, bulk materials like grain, metallurgical material, and steel. That in itself is major tonnage off our highway system. A 10,000-foot intermodal train hauling 53ft truck trailers is equal to approximately 189 trucks off the highway. Dozens of trains on a daily basis pass through, originating, or terminating with this type of lading. Imagine if you will the conditions and the economic impact of a thousand more daily trucks on the highway system. Projects the ORDC invest in reduces such impacts both on the highways and financially.

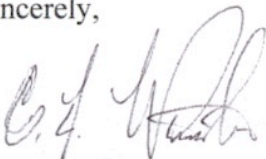
The funds enhance the system of shortlines railroads which have lesser funds for infrastructure invest of that of a Class I railroad. Shortlines railroads feed more revenue into the larger rail system from state and nationally. We must invest in these railroads, so they do not take their business to neighboring states. Supporting a strong shortline infrastructure allows us to compete for future business and to be more attractive for others wishing to relocate from neighboring states with poor rail service.

With the train length in Ohio at or more than 10,000 feet in length on most daily revenue trains. Civilians are extremely frustrated with legislators both state and federal on the blocked crossing issue. ORDC is the principal agency that needs funding for grade crossing separation programs, which these do take time to prepare. That is why the funding is needed to invest in the future. At the moment grade crossing separation or closure of crossings is really the only solution to lessen the impact of blocked road crossings. Unless favorable train length reduction legislation were passed.

Crossing protection is for both the safety of the public and railroad workers. Properly lit crossings equipped with gates and other safety electronics protect the fluidity of the railroad network. How does it help the railroads you may ask? When a train strikes an automobile or pedestrian that rail line comes to a complete stop until the investigators retrieve preliminary data and the scene is deemed safe for passage. This could take hours impacting both fluidity of the rail system and the public highway, as all forms of traffic are stopped.

Investing in Ohio's rail infrastructure creates jobs, increases revenue, grows business, reduces carbon footprint, reduces wear on our roadways, allows for capitalizing on federal funding for projects, etc. I urge you to restore the funding for this agency and invest in our future for Ohio.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. J. Whitaker', written over a faint circular stamp.

Clyde Whitaker  
SMART-TD  
Ohio State Legislative Board  
Chairman & Director  
LO-038