



*House Transportation Committee*

*February 12, 2025*

*Testimony of Mitch Radakovich, Board Chair of All Aboard Ohio*

Chair Willis, Vice Chair Daniels, Ranking Member Grim, and members of the Ohio House Transportation Committee - my name is Mitch Radakovich, and I am here today on behalf of All Aboard Ohio - the largest transportation advocacy organization in Ohio with over fifty years of history. We urge your support for an amendment to House Bill 54 which would reinstate and fund Ohio's membership in the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC).

MIPRC is the subdivision of the Midwest Council of State Governments that represents the interests of passenger rail. It serves as a vital forum where Midwestern states work together on funding, development, and operation of rail routes—connecting our region and ensuring we have a voice in national rail discussions.

I had the privilege of attending MIPRC's annual meeting last November in St. Paul, Minnesota, where I engaged with legislators, transportation administrators, and planners from states like Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, North Dakota, and Kansas. These states are making real progress in expanding and improving their passenger rail systems. Through these discussions, I gained insights that I have since shared with our membership and Ohio's local and state transportation partners - insights that are applicable to any of the proposed routes in our state.

Unfortunately, while I was able to attend as an observer **Ohio was absent from the official discussions** because we are no longer a member. When the Federal Railroad Administration spoke about projects in member states, **Ohio's projects were not even mentioned**. When Amtrak shared plans for shared equipment strategies that could reduce costs, **Ohio was not part of the conversation**. Without a seat at the table, we risk missing critical funding opportunities and making costly missteps as we work through the planning process. During the annual meeting, Republican Kansas State Senator Carolyn McGinn stated "one of the best things Kansas did was join MIPRC."

The cost of membership? **Just \$25,000 per year** - less than the cost of a slightly used Honda Accord. The return on investment will be immense, ensuring Ohio is plugged into federal and regional discussions that will shape the future of passenger rail. Rejoining MIPRC benefits Ohio, even if no additional routes are constructed. A presence in MIPRC gives Ohio the ability to advocate for daily and daylight service along our three existing routes makes rail transportation a much more viable choice for our residents.

By passing this amendment and rejoining MIPRC, Ohio's legislature can **position Ohio for a more connected, competitive, and forward-looking future**. Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, thank you for your time - I am happy to answer any questions.