



MID-OHIO REGIONAL  
**MORPC**  
PLANNING COMMISSION

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**House Bill 96  
Interested Party Testimony  
May 7, 2025**

**Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee  
William Murdock, Executive Director, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission**

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee: thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is William Murdock, and I serve as Executive Director of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC). We represent 90 local governments across a 15-county region of Central Ohio, including rural townships, growing suburbs, and major cities.

Our mission is grounded in practical, locally driven solutions that support job creation, infrastructure development, and economic competitiveness. Today, I want to highlight three targeted opportunities where your leadership can make a measurable difference for Ohio taxpayers and communities alike: advancing passenger rail with private sector backing, continuing to leverage brownfield remediation, and preserving community-driven trail infrastructure.

**Advancing Passenger Rail with Private Sector Partnership**

This General Assembly has a timely, low-risk opportunity to unlock major federal and private investment by advancing a planning phase for expanded passenger rail service in Ohio. This isn't about reliving the past—this is a fundamentally different opportunity.

The Federal Railroad Administration has already selected four Ohio corridors for investment, including the 3C+D line (Cleveland–Columbus–Dayton–Cincinnati) and the Midwest Connect line (Chicago–Lima–Columbus–Pittsburgh). MORPC is partnering with the City of Lima, Fort Wayne, and others to advance planning for the Midwest Connect line. These routes support long-term workforce mobility, business travel, and tourism—all using existing rail infrastructure in ways that protect and enhance Ohio's freight and logistics sectors.


We're requesting \$750,000 in this budget to fulfill Ohio's share of the cost for Step 2 of the FRA's Corridor ID program for the Midwest Connect corridor—an in-depth service development plan that asks essential questions like: What are the best station locations? How often will trains run? What are the ridership projections? And what are the benefits for northwest, central, and eastern Ohio communities and businesses?

**William Murdock, AICP**  
*Executive Director*

**Chris Amorose Groomes**  
*Chair*

**Michelle Crandall**  
*Vice Chair*

**Ben Kessler**  
*Secretary*



Importantly, this commitment does not obligate the state to fund future phases. Instead, it positions Ohio to compete for federal funding and possibly private investment with strong support from the private sector—and with bipartisan leadership behind it.

This opportunity enjoys broad bipartisan momentum. Both Vice President JD Vance and Congresswoman Joyce Beatty have expressed support for expanding passenger rail in Ohio. That kind of cross-party alignment—combined with local initiative and business backing—reflects just how practical and unifying this investment has become.

This is a smarter, more accountable approach than what was proposed 15 years ago—and here's why:

1. **There is No Long-Term Obligation** – The modest state match unlocks a detailed analysis but leaves future decisions entirely in Ohio's hands. And it could attract future private investment.
2. **Private Sector Support** – The business community is now at the table, recognizing rail's role in workforce access and economic expansion. The Ohio Chamber of Commerce, Columbus Partnership, and local chambers across the state have publicly endorsed this step.
3. **Rural Community Support** – Central Ohio communities, large and small, have already committed \$350,000 in local match funding. Cities like Lima, Springfield, Marysville, and Delaware are actively planning around future rail access.
4. **Strong ROI** – A recent study projects that the 3C+D corridor alone could generate up to \$47 million annually in GDP and support 1,200 jobs. This would extend to this corridor as well, since national data suggests every \$1 in rail investment returns \$4 in economic benefits.


For just \$750,000, we can ensure that these federal dollars are being invested in local communities across the Buckeye State—guided by business, embraced by bipartisan leadership, and driven by local need—not federal mandates or bureaucracy.


### **Continuing Brownfield Remediation for Economic Redevelopment**

One of the most cost-effective state investments in recent years has been the Brownfield Remediation Program. Since 2021, this initiative has helped clean up over 600 sites across Ohio—sites that would otherwise sit vacant and underused, dragging down property values and local tax revenues.

While progress has been made, the need remains significant. Nearly half of the funded projects to date have been limited to site assessments—not cleanups—and there are still over 9,000 documented brownfield sites statewide. In Central Ohio, MORPC has helped local governments assess 13 sites through federal funding, and with state support, some have already moved into active remediation and redevelopment.

Redeveloping brownfields has a direct return: it lowers barriers for private investment, preserves greenfields and farmland, and accelerates job growth in areas that already have infrastructure in place.





This is the kind of fiscally responsible economic development policy that aligns with conservative values: local control, cleanup of existing assets, and private-sector follow-through.

We respectfully urge this committee to support the House-passed funding of \$125 million per year over the biennium to continue this proven program.

### **Preserving Trail Infrastructure and Local Planning Authority**


Lastly, I want to express concern over language in the House version of the bill that removes recreational trails from the definition of “public use” in Ohio’s eminent domain law.

At MORPC, we understand the importance of local discretion and property rights. However, this proposed change could unintentionally hinder community-led transportation planning efforts—particularly those that help children walk and bike to school and those aimed at improving safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

The Central Ohio Greenways network connects neighborhoods, parks, and job centers across our region. These trails are not just recreational amenities; they are also a critical safety asset, providing a less dangerous alternative for commuting cyclists. Stripping these projects of “public use” recognition could complicate planning, discourage investment, and delay projects that have broad local support.

We urge the Senate to remove this provision and preserve communities’ ability to plan responsibly for the future.

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Committee thank you for the opportunity to testify. These initiatives represent real, measurable returns for Ohio taxpayers—fueled by local commitment, bipartisan backing, and private-sector support. Thank you again for your leadership, and I welcome any questions you may have.



# ***FRA Corridor Identification and Development Program***

**Initial Federal Award: \$500,000 per route; no match required**

The Corridor ID Program coordinates planning and development activities for potential new or enhanced passenger rail service across the nation. It has three steps to usher a passenger rail corridor towards implementation:



**Once a grantee is in the program, they no longer compete for subsequent Steps.**

Step 2 and Step 3 funding is awarded following satisfactory completion of the previous step (as determined by FRA). Corridors which complete Step 3 will have their capital projects placed in a project pipeline, which establishes the Federal priority for funding construction and implementation. Other, existing FRA and USDOT programs are available to assist in construction and service introduction.

## **Corridors in Central Ohio:**

### **Cincinnati-Dayton-Columbus-Cleveland (3C&D)**

- Led by the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC)
- Current CID Program Step: 1

### **Chicago-Fort Wayne-Columbus-Pittsburgh (Midwest Connect)**

- Led by the City of Fort Wayne, IN with MORPC as a co-sponsor
- Current CID Program Step: 1

## Corridor ID Program Passenger Rail Awards in Ohio



### 3C&D Corridor ORDC

- Nearly \$130 million estimated annual economic impact
- 400,000-800,000 annual ridership (3-5 daily round trips)
- One of the best ridership-to-cost ratios in Amtrak ConnectsUS plan

### Midwest Connect MORPC/Ft Wayne

- 200,000-400,000 annual ridership (six daily round trips)
- Initial planning under Rapid Speed Transportation Initiative (RSTI)

### Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit ORDC

- Direct service from Cleveland to Detroit via Toledo
- Connections with existing routes in Michigan and Ontario

### Daily Cardinal Service Amtrak

- Improved long-distance service along existing Amtrak route
- Increased frequency to daily service along entire Chicago-NYC corridor





## Ohio General Assembly Districts with Proposed Passenger Rail

- 3C&D
- Midwest Connect
- Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit
- + + Existing Amtrak
- Daily Cardinal Service



The information shown on this map is compiled from various sources available to us which we believe to be reliable.  
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# Ohio General Assembly Districts with Proposed Passenger Rail

## Ohio Senate

### 3C&D

District	Name
3	Michele Reynolds
4	George Lang
5	Stephen Huffman
6	Willis Blackshear
7	Steve Wilson
8	Louis Blessing
9	Catherine Ingram
10	Kyle Koehler
13	Nathan Manning
15	Hearcel Craig
16	Beth Liston
19	Andrew Brenner
22	Mark Romanchuk
23	Nicki Antonio
24	Tom Patton
25	Bill DeMora
26	Bill Reineke

### Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit

District	Name
2	Theresa Gavarone
11	Paula Hlcks-Hudson
13	Nathan Manning
23	Nicki Antonio
24	Tom Patton

### Daily Cardinal Service

District	Name
4	George Lang
7	Steve Wilson
8	Louis Blessing
9	Catherine Ingram

### Midwest Connect

District	Name
1	Rob McColley
3	Michele Reynolds
12	Susan Manchester
15	Hearcel Craig
16	Beth Liston
19	Andrew Brenner
20	Tim Schaffer
25	Bill DeMora
26	Bill Reineke
30	Brian Chavez
31	Al Landis
33	Al Cutrona

### Existing Amtrak

District	Name
1	Rob McColley
2	Theresa Gavarone
4	George Lang
7	Steve Wilson
8	Louis Blessing
9	Catherine Ingram
11	Paula Hlcks-Hudson
13	Nathan Manning
18	Jerry Cirino
21	Kent Smith
23	Nicki Antonio
24	Tom Patton
27	Kristina Roegner
28	Casey Weinstein
29	Jane Timken
32	Sandra O'Brien
33	Al Cutrona

## Ohio House

### 3C&D

District	Name
1	Dontavius Jarrells
3	Ismail Mohamed
6	Christine Cockley
7	Allison Russo
8	Anita Somani
9	Munira Abdullahi
12	Brian Stewart
13	Tristan Rader
15	Chris Glassburn
16	Bride Rose Sweeney
17	Mike Dovilla
20	Terrence Upchurch
24	Dani Isaacsohn
25	Cecil Thomas
27	Rachel Baker
28	Karen Brownlee
36	Andrea White
37	Tom Young
38	Desiree Tims
40	Rodney Creech
45	Jennifer Gross
46	Thomas Hall
54	Kellie Deeter
55	Michelle Teska
60	Brian Lorenz
61	Beth Lear
70	Brian Lampton
71	Levi Dean
74	Bernard Willis
76	Marilyn John
87	Riordan McClain

### Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit

District	Name
13	Tristan Rader
15	Chris Glassburn
16	Bride Rose Sweeney
17	Mike Dovilla
20	Terrence Upchurch
42	Elgin Rogers
43	Michele Grim
44	Josh Williams
52	Gayle Manning
53	Joe Miller
54	Kellie Deeter
75	Haraz Ghanbari
89	D.J. Swearingen

### Daily Cardinal Service

District	Name
24	Dani Isaacsohn
25	Cecil Thomas
27	Rachel Baker
28	Karen Brownlee
29	Cindy Abrams
45	Jennifer Gross
47	Diane Mullins

### Midwest Connect

District	Name
1	Dontavius Jarrells
2	Latyna Humphrey
4	Beryl Brown Piccolantonio
6	Christine Cockley
7	Allison Russo
11	Crystal Lett
12	Brian Stewart
51	Jodi Salvo
68	Thad Claggett
69	Kevin Miller
78	Matt Huffman
79	Monica Robb Blasdel
82	Roy Klopfenstein
83	Ty Mathews
85	Tim Barhorst
86	Tracy Richardson
95	Don Jones
96	Ron Ferguson
97	Adam Holmes
98	Mark Hiner

### Existing Amtrak

District	Name
13	Tristan Rader
15	Chris Glassburn
16	Bride Rose Sweeney
17	Mike Dovilla
19	Phillip Robinson
20	Terrence Upchurch
21	Eric Synenberg
22	Darnell Brewer
23	Daniel Troy
24	Dani Isaacsohn
25	Cecil Thomas
27	Rachel Baker
28	Karen Brownlee
29	Cindy Abrams
34	Derrick Hall
35	Steve Demetriou
41	Erika White
42	Elgin Rogers
43	Michele Grim
44	Josh Williams
45	Jennifer Gross
47	Diane Mullins
48	Scott Oelslager
52	Gayle Manning
53	Joe Miller
54	Kellie Deeter
57	Jamie Callender
59	Tex Fischer
65	David Thomas
72	Heidi Workman
75	Haraz Ghanbari
79	Monica Robb Blasdel
81	James Hoops
89	D.J. Swearingen
99	Sarah Fowler Arthur



**MORPC**

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