



Senate Transportation Committee

March 14, 2025

Testimony of Mitch Radakovich, Board Chair of All Aboard Ohio

Chair Patton, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Ohio Senate Transportation Committee - my name is Mitch Radakovich, a young professional from Cincinnati, Ohio, and the board chair of All Aboard Ohio - the largest transportation advocacy organization in the state with over fifty years of history. Thank you so much for welcoming me here today. I speak on behalf of our more than 2000 members from across the state to ask that this body fund Ohio's membership in the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC). MIPRC 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 lawmakers, 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 presented 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 of potential future routes. Other partner states have enjoyed the benefits of membership: during the annual meeting, Republican Kansas State Senator Carolyn McGinn stated "one of the best things Kansas did was join MIPRC."

At MIPRC events, decisions are made that directly affect passenger rail service through Ohio. The commission is responsible for developing and maintaining a strategic plan for passenger rail in the Midwest. In the current plan, Ohio only has one station with "daylight" service - Bryan, Ohio, at 7:20 AM, which really is only daytime if you are a morning person. By rejoining MIPRC we gain the opportunity to advocate for expanded, daily, daytime service - at no additional cost to Ohio.

House Bill 54, the Transportation Budget in the house, with an amendment to reinstate MIPRC, passed unanimously in both the House Transportation Committee and the House Floor the last week of February. The support from a wide portion of House membership was bipartisan and exciting. Most notable were the members who commented on how their views towards passenger rail have changed. For instance, Vice Chair Daniels of the House Transportation committee commented "10 years ago, this was seen as a dead-on-arrival idea. It seemed illogical. 10 years ago, I felt the same way ... post Covid,



our lives are so much mobile. With Wi-Fi and mobile phones, sitting on the train for a trip now makes sense as you can use that time for productivity.” While Ohio decided in 2013 to end membership in MIPRC, now, in 2025, we are in a new era of support and interest in transportation alternatives from many parties, including the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, and many of the millions of Ohio residents who live near proposed and existing passenger rail corridors across the state.

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.

By including this language and rejoining MIPRC, this body can **position Ohio for a more connected, competitive, and forward-looking future**. Mr. Chairman, and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for your time - I am happy to answer any questions.