



For Immediate Release
March 5, 2009

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OEC lauds “green” transportation budget OK’d by Ohio House of Representatives

Passenger rail, energy efficiency, diesel clean up emphasized

Columbus, OH – The Ohio Environmental Council is praising the Ohio House of Representatives for approving a “green” state transportation budget.

In an historic vote today, the Ohio House approved the Strickland administration’s plan to:

- reestablish passenger train service along the “3-C” corridor, linking Cleveland, Columbus, Springfield, Dayton, and Cincinnati
- establish a Division of Multi-Modal Planning within the Ohio Department of Transportation to coordinate more efficient movement of people and freight by rail, public transit, maritime, and other modes of transportation
- clean up and replace public transit buses with cleaner, more fuel-efficient equipment

Ohio House Democrats further “greened up” the bill, adding provisions to:

- invest nearly \$5 million in clean diesel technologies for public and private fleets
- consider ways to reduce diesel emissions in the construction, maintenance, improvement, repair, and operation of Ohio Turnpike Commission facilities
- collect fees on the shipment of radioactive material through Ohio
- establish an Energy Star Rebate Program to provide rebates to consumers for household appliances and devices carrying the federal Energy Star Label
- strengthen state energy building codes for residential and commercial buildings

“This is the first ever state transportation budget with green vision,” said Jack Shaner, Deputy Director of the Ohio Environmental Council.

“This plan will help Ohio travelers and shippers save energy, reduce harmful emissions, and grow new jobs and investment. We hope the Ohio Senate will get on board with this smart, green roadmap.”

For public transportation advocates, restoring passenger rail service to the 3-C corridor is long overdue. The plan would unite Ohio’s four largest metro areas with 79 MPH trains.

The 3-C corridor is part of the Ohio Hub plan, a regional proposal to link 44 Ohio towns and cities with one another and the Midwest through a series of high-speed trains and feeder buses.

According to an independent economic analysis prepared for the Ohio Rail Development Commission, when fully built, the Ohio Hub system is projected to:

- yield a benefit/cost ratio of at least 1.8:1
- create 16,700 permanent jobs
- generate more than \$3 billion in development activity near stations
- create an annual \$80 million impact on state tourism by generating 320,000 overnight trips
- create a potential benefit for freight operations in the range of \$3 billion to \$6 billion
- generate an annual fuel savings of approximately 9.4 million gallons of fuel

The two-year transportation budget (Ohio House Bill 2) now moves to the Ohio Senate and must be approved by March 31.

“We salute all those who voted to give a green light to start passenger trains rolling again along the 3-C corridor,” said Shaner. “We especially want to thank the following leaders for their stalwart leadership: Governor Ted Strickland, ODOT Director Jolene Molitoris, State Representative Peter Ujvagi (D-Toledo), State Representative Michael Skindell (D-Lakewood), and State Representative Ross McGregor (R-Springfield).”

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The mission of the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) is to secure healthy air, land, and water for all who call Ohio home. The OEC is Ohio’s leading advocate for fresh air, clean water, and sustainable land use. The OEC has a 40-year history of innovation, pragmatism, and success. Using legislative initiatives, legal action, scientific principles, and statewide partnerships, the OEC secures a healthier environment for Ohio’s families and communities. For more information, visit www.theOEC.org.