



NOTE TO EDITOR: The public soon will see and read familiar news stories about the number of car and air travelers, fluctuating gas prices, and car crashes and traffic deaths from this holiday travel weekend. Here is an opportunity for your listeners and readers to learn about a different story—a little known story—that exists, right here in Ohio.

News flash: Ohioans are taking the train in record numbers—this weekend + all yearlong

Sold-out trains belie myth that no one will ride 3C train

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(Columbus, OH)—Like most of America, the Buckeye State is bracing for a weekend of treacherous and uncomfortable travel this holiday weekend:

- Highways jam-packed with white-knuckled drivers, inching along in bumper-to-bumper traffic, dodging rising gas prices and fellow, road-weary travelers.
- Airport terminals clogged with cranky passengers, waiting their turn to be x-rayed or patted down before wedging into their seats and gulping down a pack of peanuts.

But another, less familiar and less frenzied travel scene also is unfolding in Ohio this week: Train stations full of people patiently waiting to board their train and take a large, comfortable seat with big windows, hot meals, restrooms, and even electrical outlets for their laptops and phones—and for those who booked a private berth, a bed and a shower.

While debate rages about whether to reconnect Ohio's four largest metro areas (Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus and Dayton) with passenger rail service, flying below radar is a little-known fact: Many Ohioans prefer to travel by train. According to Amtrak:

- Tickets are sold out this Thanksgiving for trains serving Ohio's seven Amtrak stations in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Toledo, Sandusky, Elyria, Bryan and Alliance.
- Ohio's statewide Amtrak ridership growth of 14.6% last year is more than double the nationwide increase of 5.7%. That helped push Amtrak's ridership to another record high in the company's 39-year history. There were 146,861 passengers whose train ride began or ended at an Ohio train station in Amtrak's 2009 fiscal year, which ended on Sept. 30, 2010.

Ohioans' rising demand for train service is remarkable, given the fact that nearly all of Amtrak's scheduled stops in Ohio are in the dark of night, mostly between midnight and sunrise.

More underreported information exists suggesting that many Ohioans would enthusiastically embrace the option to travel by train and connect to the Midwest and nation through expanded train service along the 3C (Cleveland-Columbus-Dayton-Cincinnati) corridor:

SPEED: According to the latest analysis, the 3C train will top out at 79 MPH, averaging 50 MPH from end to end and 61 MPH from suburban Cleveland to Columbus. Local transit buses or light rail along with taxis and rental car services already exist or are planned or expected at station stops to help enable travelers to reach their final destination.

COST: The 3C train is estimated to cost \$17M per year in operating support—less than 1% of Ohio's \$2.85B annual transportation budget. By comparison, ODOT spends \$12M each year mowing the grass along Ohio's Interstate highways. While preliminary studies indicate there may be a subsidy required, there may be other opportunities to help fund annual operations without tapping state general revenue funds. ODOT has identified the following potential sources: federal CMAQ funds; lease, rental, and naming rights fees from concessions, advertising, and stations; and state transportation budget funds.

JOBS + ECONOMIC BENEFITS: The 3C is projected to: Spur 255 construction jobs and 8,000 indirect and spin-off jobs in Ohio. Add \$1.2B to Ohio's economy. Create opportunities to revitalize vibrant urban cores. Help grow Ohio's rail suppliers, which currently support 2,600 rail-related jobs in Ohio. Generate \$3 in economic benefit for every \$1 invested in rail.

RIDERSHIP: The 3C corridor is the 8th most traveled by car in America (3.7M travel trips/year) and one of the most densely populated corridors not served by passenger train service (more than 6M people live within 15 miles of the 3C corridor). Early estimates project nearly half a million riders in the 3C train's first year of operation.

AFFORDABLE TRAVEL: Based on current ticket prices, a one-way ticket from Cleveland to Columbus would average about \$20; from Cincinnati to Columbus, \$18. Fares between Midwest cities on Amtrak are typically 14 cents per mile. By comparison, it costs about 55 cents a mile to operate a car, according to the IRS.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS: The 3C is projected to: Save 5.7M million gallons of fuel per year. Removes nearly 320,000 Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) per day. Reduce hydrocarbon emissions by 95% (train vs. car emissions). Reduce Ohio's dependence on oil.

PUBLIC SUPPORT: According to a March 2009 Quinnipiac University statewide poll, more than 60% of Ohioans support passenger rail and the reestablishment of 3C service in Ohio.

BOTTOM LINE: **More and more Ohioans are discovering a safe, convenient and productive travel choice—the train. In fact, many Ohioans prefer to ride the train, and they're turning to in increasing numbers—on this holiday weekend and throughout the year. It's a fact, and you can look it up. And the facts suggest the 3C should be a winner.**

STORY IDEAS:

- Pictures of traffic snaking along Interstate highways + people rushing in and out of airports.
- Interview travelers at highway rest stops, airports, and train stations and ask them about their traveling experience.
- Take a camera or tape recorder onboard a train and record travelers relaxing, dining, and napping in spacious, quiet and comfortable train cars.
- Interview college students making plans to travel home for this and future holidays and ask them what travel choice they'd prefer.
- Ask economic experts, How will Ohioans stay mobile, and how will Ohio stay attractive to residents when the largest population group in US history (Gen. Y) is driving half as much as the preceding, smaller generation and the second-largest group, the Baby Boomers, starts turning 65 years old next year?