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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **MORPC, Cities of Columbus, Marysville Join Ohio & Indiana Cities To Pursue Environmental Evaluation of Rail Corridor**

**(Columbus - August 7, 2014)** The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) and the cities of Columbus and Marysville are ready for the next phase of due diligence to continue exploration of a proposed Columbus to Chicago High-Speed Passenger Rail Corridor.

"Today's announcement represents a significant milestone in the planning and evaluation of the proposed rail corridor from Columbus to Chicago," said MORPC Executive Director William Murdock. "With the leadership of the cities along the proposed route in Ohio and Indiana, the [Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\)](#) formalizes already significant collaboration across states to diligently review this new transportation corridor. The MOA is a practical, yet critical next step to pursue the next phase of analyses, the Tier One Environmental Impact Study and the Service Development Plan."

A coalition of Ohio and Indiana municipalities, planning agencies and businesses partnered to fund a feasibility study and business plan, for a regional, eleven-city, 300-mile passenger rail corridor between Columbus, Ohio and Chicago, Illinois through Fort Wayne, Indiana. Marysville, Kenton and Lima, Ohio would be the additional Ohio stops on the route. The study, released in 2013, was completed by Transportation Economics & Management Systems (TEMS). The next step in the process is to undertake a Tier One EIS as required by the Federal Railroad Administration. The participating jurisdictions along the route have agreed to execute a MOA to formalize their cooperation moving forward, including identifying shared public and private funding for the EIS.

Echoing the need for continued due diligence, **Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman** said the TEMS feasibility study and business plan showed great promise. "Creating another transportation link from Columbus to Chicago is important for our region's economic future. Chicago is the largest economic center of the Midwest, which represents a nearly \$3 trillion annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) shared among the 9 states in the original Midwestern Regional Rail Initiative. The greater Columbus market, totaling over 1.8 million people, is the largest metropolitan city without high-speed passenger rail service."

**Marysville Mayor John Gore** said, "This type of long-term planning simply makes good economic sense. As we strategically plan for future economic development in Marysville and Union County, a high-speed passenger rail service that provides regular service to Port Columbus and to Chicago mean ongoing opportunities for existing business growth through retention, expansion and recruitment. And that's huge for our community, the region and the entire state of Ohio."

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*Working to Build a Better Region*

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“Support for passenger rail is strong in Lima and the Greater Lima area,” said **Lima Mayor David Berger**. “We have a large base of potential passengers among our business people, students and everyday citizens who want and need an alternative option to driving to Chicago or Columbus. Having access to fast, frequent trains also would send a strong message to investors and others who are looking for development opportunities in Lima, as well as assist our existing businesses in recruiting new talent.”

Business and civic leaders also support undertaking the Tier One EIS.

**Eric Phillips, Union County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director**, said “If the Tier-1 Environmental Study shows this passenger rail corridor can be built and operated as planned, we see this service creating a significant economic development boost for Marysville and Union County by greatly enhancing our transportation portfolio. Selection and development of a station site alone could be a magnet for growth.”

“Passenger rail will have a high impact on our region,” says **Ohio Northern University President Daniel DiBiasio**. “It would significantly improve access for residents of Lima and Northwest Ohio to Columbus and Chicago. By broadening travel options for students, we can dramatically enhance their ability to benefit from the incredible opportunities these great cities provide, including commuting to internship sites and back home during breaks. Faculty, who now drive to campus from Columbus, would have a faster, safer, more eco-friendly commute. In fact, passenger rail will enhance faculty and student recruitment, making Ada, Ohio much more accessible.”

According to a 2013 feasibility study by Transportation Economics Management Systems, the proposed service of 12 trains a day with at least 4 express trains would:

- Directly connect the Greater Columbus market, totaling over 1.8 million people, with the largest center of commerce in the Midwest: Chicago;
- Provide the same fast, frequent connections and benefits to Ohio cities like Marysville, Kenton and Lima;
- Feature Chicago to Columbus travel times ranging from 3 hours and 45 minutes express service to 4 hours local service;
- Attract an estimated 2.1 million riders in 2020 and will increase to over 3.3 million riders by 2040;
- Generate a positive operating cost ratio of an estimated \$5 million once the system ramps up in 2020 and rise to \$64 million by 2040, operated by a private franchise operator. The business plan indicates that private operation of the system would be possible without annual government subsidies;
- Generate an estimated 12,000 temporary jobs during construction and 26,800 permanent jobs over the 30-year project; and
- Provide an estimated \$6 billion of increased output for the region’s businesses.

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*The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is a voluntary association of local governments and regional organizations which envisions and embraces innovative directions in economic prosperity, energy, the environment, housing, land use, and transportation. Our transformative programming, services and innovative public policy are designed to promote and support the vitality and growth in the region.*