

# **RAPID SPEED TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE**

## ***EXISTING CONDITIONS & MARKET ANALYSIS***



MID-OHIO REGIONAL  
**MORPC**  
PLANNING COMMISSION



# WHAT IS THE RAPID SPEED TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE?

Through the Rapid Speed Transportation Initiative (RSTI), the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) and its partners are pursuing more transportation options and better, faster connections between Columbus and the cities of Chicago and Pittsburgh.

## TWO STUDIES WERE COMPLETED IN 2019 AS PART OF THE RSTI:

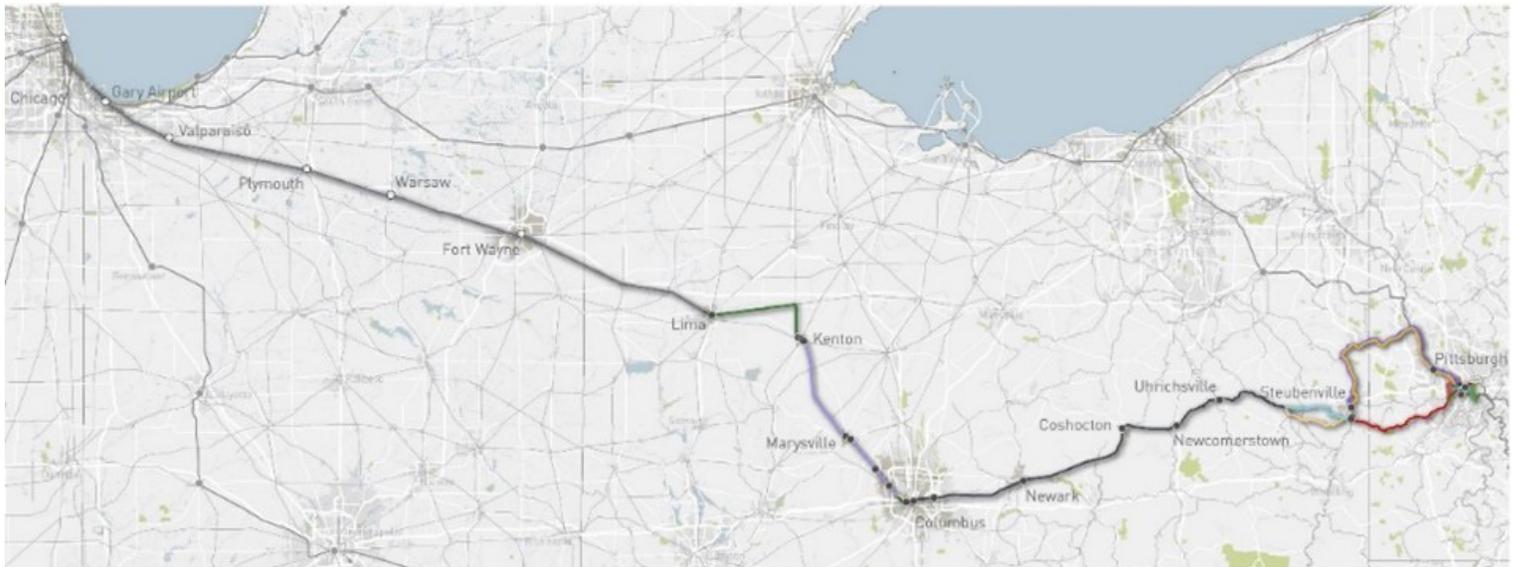
- **Midwest Connect Hyperloop Feasibility Study**
- **Environmental study that included the first components of a Tier I environmental impact statement (EIS):** An existing conditions analysis to examine if there is a need for passenger rail service along the proposed route, and a route alternatives analysis along the existing rail corridors to establish baseline information for a future, complete Tier I EIS.

*The main takeaway from these completed studies is that communities along this route have the population, market and need for more mass transportation options, including passenger rail service, connecting the corridor communities to the U.S. passenger rail network.*



# WHAT IS THE PROPOSED PASSENGER RAIL ROUTE?

The proposed route connects Chicago and Columbus with stations in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and the cities of Lima, Kenton, Marysville and Dublin in Ohio. The route then connects Columbus to Pittsburgh via the Panhandle rail line partially owned by the State of Ohio.



### Lima - Pittsburgh Alternative Rail Segments & Stations

- Potential station locations
- Lima to Dunkirk to Kenton
- Kenton to Marysville to Columbus
- Columbus - North
- Columbus - South
- Columbus to Mingo Junction
- Mingo Junction - North
- Mingo Junction - South
- Mingo Junction to Pittsburgh - North A
- Mingo Junction to Pittsburgh - South
- Pittsburgh - Downtown
- Pittsburgh - Downtown to Carnegie Mellon
- Pittsburgh - Ohio River West Lower
- Pittsburgh - Ohio River West Upper
- Kinwan Heights to Dawn
- Kinwan Heights to Ohio Connecting Bridge

### Chicago - Lima Rail Corridor

- Chicago - Lima Rail Corridor and stations

### Other Map Features

- Other rail lines
- Amtrak routes & stations
- ⊕ Interstate highway
- ⊕ US highway
- ⊕ State road

- Parks
- Rivers, streams, and waterbodies
- Census designated urbanized areas (CUA)
- Census places (incorporated areas)



## BACKGROUND – WHY THIS ROUTE?

MORPC began working on a Columbus to Chicago passenger rail project in 2013, when a feasibility study was completed in collaboration with the Northeast Indiana Passenger Rail Association and the City of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Passenger rail service along this corridor has been supported for decades in state and federal long-range planning studies. The RSTI incorporates the results of the 2016 Northern Indiana Passenger Rail Corridor Project study, which includes a route between Tolleston, Indiana, and Lima, Ohio, as well as the “South of Lake” study that includes a route between Chicago and Tolleston.

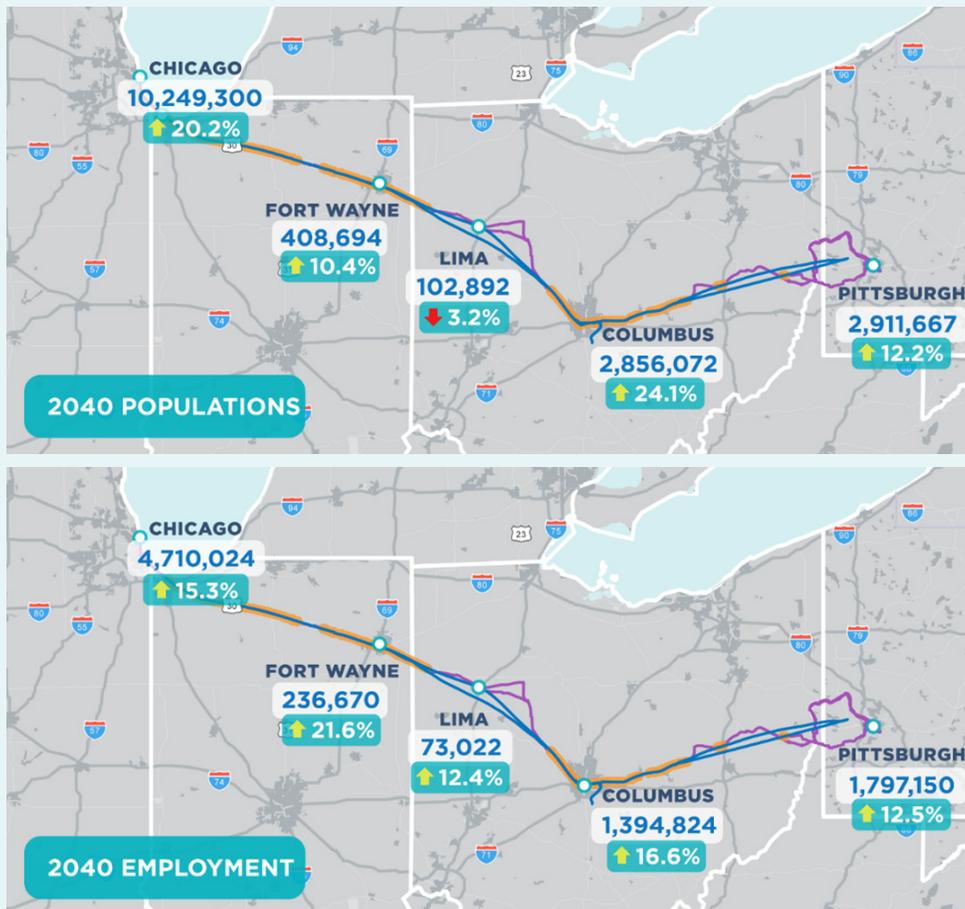
## IS THERE A MARKET FOR PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE?

The Chicago-Columbus-Pittsburgh passenger rail corridor has remained in multi-state planning studies because it has an adequate population and strong employment numbers (i.e., “users” of the proposed service).

Part of the federal approvals for a new passenger rail route include showing that the communities being serviced by the route have a market for it. This is measured by the number of people and jobs currently along the route and their expected growth.

### BY THE YEAR 2040:

- Nearly 3 million more people expected to live along the serviced route by the year 2040.
- Over 1 million new jobs expected by the year 2040.



Given the growth expected in the ridership market, the RSTI environmental study found that passenger rail service and other mass transit modes (such as hyperloop) will have “users,” because there will be an increase in travel demand between the cities across the corridor.

## ACCESSIBILITY & AFFORDABILITY

Serving the most people possible is a goal of publicly-funded transportation projects, and affordable transportation options such as passenger rail would be financially accessible to lower income families. In addition, passenger rail service would benefit people unable to drive or fly, such as some seniors and people with disabilities.

### STUDY FINDINGS:

- *While median household income is higher than national average in certain communities, it is below the national average of \$55,322 for the route as a whole.*
- *The number of older adults will be greater by 2040.*

These findings support the need of passenger rail service or other mass low-cost/affordable fares.

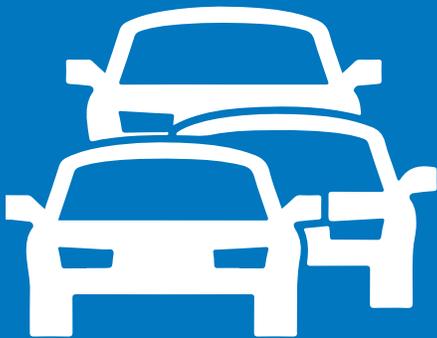
### EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES, MORE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS



Today, the preferred way to travel between Columbus and Pittsburgh is by individual auto travel, whereas air travel predominates between Chicago and Columbus as well as Chicago and Pittsburgh. While this is adequate for people that are able to drive their own vehicles, it poses a limitation to people who are unable to drive due to health conditions and to those who do not own a vehicle or cannot afford the cost of driving (such as low income families and students).

There are also issues with having air travel be the predominant mode, including cost (airfare is inaccessible to those unable to afford it). In addition, air travel is a limitation for people not able to fly due to health conditions. Lastly, air travel is not available to less than half of the communities that would be served by a passenger rail route. Chicago has direct flights to all corridor markets, but only Ft. Wayne, Columbus and Pittsburgh have direct flights from/to Chicago. Since air travel can be cost-competitive with single-occupant auto travel, both of these modes pose limitations to low-income people.

### SAFETY



Auto travel is the least safe mode of travel and has a higher incidence of crashes than other modes. Other factors such as highway congestion, weather delays, and air polluting emissions are also associated with auto travel. Lastly, auto travel times between Columbus and Chicago can vary by more than one hour depending on time of day. While there is Greyhound bus service between the corridor communities, this study found that it is not the preferred mode of travel. Direct bus service is time consuming and departure times are limited. Passenger rail would provide a reliable, predictable option for affordable travel that offers more frequent departure times.

## HOW WILL THIS WORK WITH EXISTING FREIGHT RAIL?

In 1979, this corridor had passenger rail service with a Columbus station that was demolished to construct the current Columbus Convention Center. Until then, freight and passenger rail coexisted along the existing rail corridor.



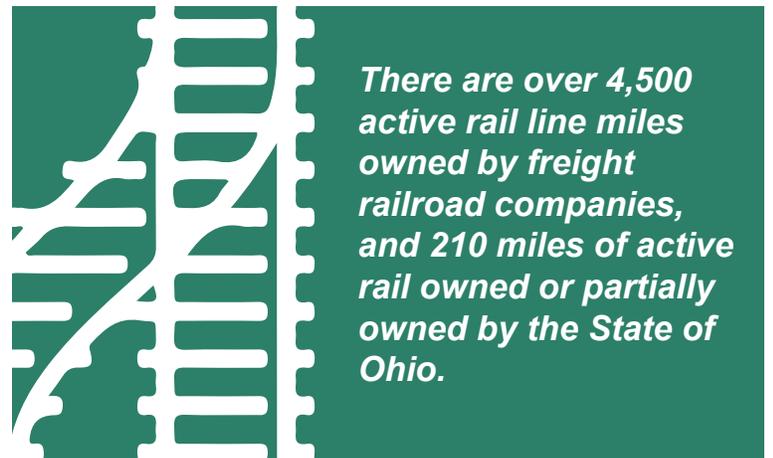
Columbus Union Station



Greater Columbus Convention Center

While Columbus no longer has passenger rail service, Pittsburgh and Chicago do through a northern rail route via Cleveland. This study found that Columbus is the second-largest metropolitan area in the United States that does not have access to the U.S. passenger rail network.

When this passenger rail project enters into the detailed design phase, partnerships with the State of Ohio and the companies owning the preferred rail corridor will be crucial to creating a future corridor that has both freight and passenger rail service.



Significant improvements to the existing rail corridors would be necessary to accommodate freight and passenger rail. Most rail lines in the proposed corridor are single-track and currently have low average train travel speeds across most of the corridor. Railroad owners such as CSX, Norfolk Southern and Wheeling & Lake Erie carry significant amounts of freight in the existing rail lines, even though on average less than twenty trains per day travel across this corridor.

## HOW WILL THIS PROJECT IMPACT THE ENVIRONMENT?

Since a combined passenger and freight rail corridor is proposed within existing rail lines, this environmental study did not consider the impacts that may occur outside the existing corridor's right-of-way.

However, a robust analysis was conducted for social and environmental factors, including environmental justice populations, noise and vibration, and habitat considerations as required for federal environmental project approvals.

## NEXT STEPS

- *Engage with communities between Columbus and Pittsburgh, with the goal to expand the partners in Ohio*
- *Secure funding for a Service Alternatives Report, Infrastructure Investment Report, and additional public involvement (as required by the Federal Railroad Administration to approve and potentially fund the implementation of this service route)*
- *Continue to look for opportunities to leverage this passenger rail project with other local, regional, and state corridor projects, as appropriate*



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