

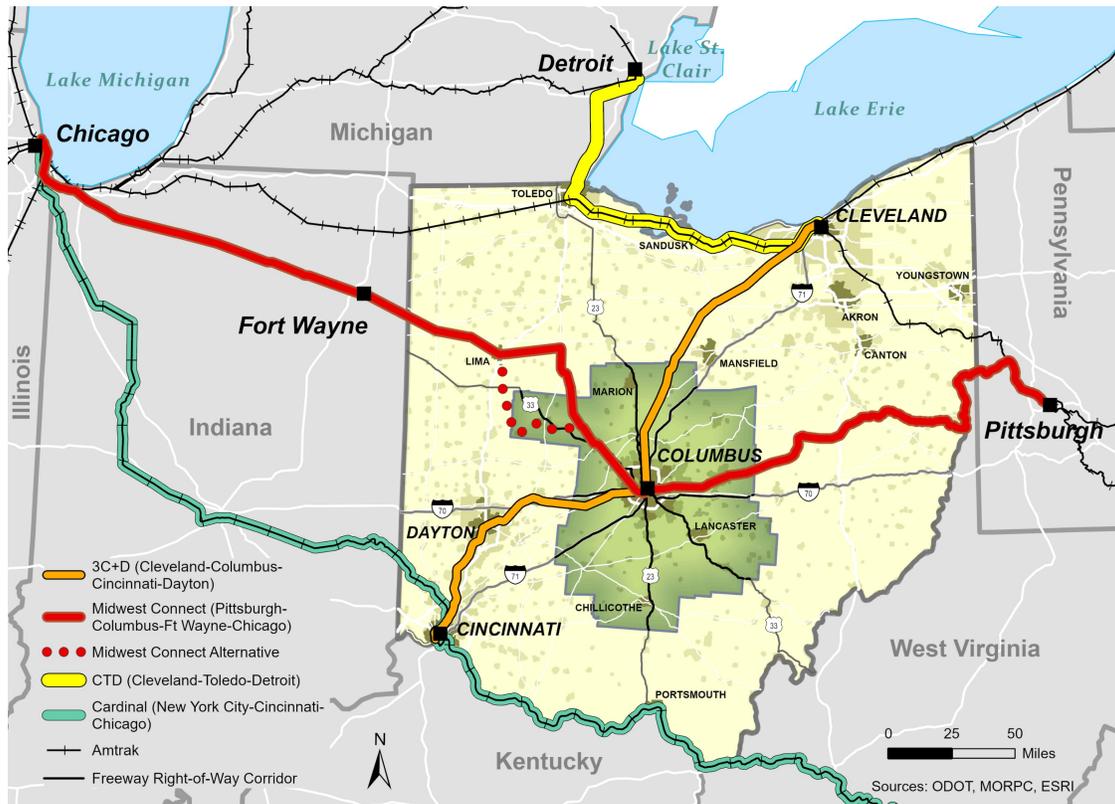
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February 2026

# RESTORING OUR RAILS NEWSLETTER

## NEWS



### Corridor Identification and Development Program Update

MORPC continues to lead a coordinated effort—alongside the business community and local governments—to advance passenger rail expansion. This includes both the 3C+D corridor (Cleveland–Columbus–Dayton–Cincinnati) and the Midwest Connect corridor (Chicago–Fort Wayne–Lima–Columbus–Pittsburgh), funded through the Federal Railroad

MORPC and project sponsors are actively working with the FRA to prepare materials for Step 2, or the Service Development Plan. Step 2 will begin to answer key questions about new passenger rail service, including identifying key station locations and service hours. MORPC anticipates Step 2 work to begin in early 2026.

[LEARN MORE.](#)



**HEARTLAND RAIL  
CONNECTIVITY INITIATIVE**

**FEDERAL STATE PARTNERSHIP FOR  
INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL**

## FRA Federal State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grant

MORPC and its partners plan to submit an application to the Federal Railroad Administration through the Federal-State Partnership program in February. This application, named the Heartland Rail Connectivity Initiative, will support additional passenger rail planning activities across Ohio, building momentum toward future service. Heartland Rail proposed project components including furthering station design efforts at the Greater Columbus Convention Center, studying new rail corridors, and collaborating with local communities to better prepare for passenger rail implementation and delivery.

## EVENTS



## Local Leaders Visit Brightline West

MORPC recently led a delegation of local leaders to Nevada to meet with Sarah Watterson, President of Brightline West. Brightline West is delivering a privately operated high-speed passenger rail system connecting Las Vegas and Los Angeles, with trains reaching speeds of up to 200 miles per hour—demonstrating how major intercity rail projects can move forward through strong public-private alignment.



## Central Ohio Passenger Rail Advisory Council

MORPC hosted the Central Ohio Passenger Rail Advisory Council in December 2025. This group of Franklin and Delaware County leaders guide Central Ohio's passenger rail planning efforts by supporting ongoing Corridor ID efforts and strategizing for future rail development opportunities.

briefing of Amtrak's 2025 progress from Patrick Higgins, Senior Project Manager, Planning & State Partnerships – Central at Amtrak, and discussions on strategy for MORPC's Federal State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail grant application.

MORPC also welcomed Matt Dutkevicz, Executive Director of Butler County Regional Transit Authority (BCRTA), to share more about BCRTA's Chestnut Street Station in Oxford, Ohio. Chestnut Street Station opened in 2025 and serves as a multimodal station for both BCRTA's bus service and Amtrak service. The Amtrak platform is still under construction and will serve the Cardinal Line in the future. Chestnut Street Station serves as a great example for Central Ohio communities to collaborate and thoughtfully plan multimodal stations that serve bus and passenger rail service while promoting active transportation connections and other community resources. [Learn more about Chestnut Street Station here](#)

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## RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT



### [All Aboard Ohio's Guide to Corridor ID Updates](#)

The Federal Railroad Administration announced changes to the Corridor ID program in December 2025. These changes include introducing two paths to completing the Step 2 Service Development Plan through the new Core and

important feasibility studies before moving into highly detailed technical analysis. All Aboard Ohio's overview of the new federal changes is a helpful guide to understanding next steps for Ohio's Corridor ID projects.

[Learn more here.](#)

## RECENT MEDIA



### What's Ahead for Amtrak in Central Ohio 2026:

Parag Agrawal, MORPC's Chief Mobility and Development Officer, joined Columbus Business First and John Esterly, All Aboard Ohio's Executive Director, to discuss Corridor ID progress for both 3C+D and Midwest Connect.

As Parag mentioned, "2026 will be a big, very exciting year and a very historic year for passenger rail in Central Ohio," with a major focus on Corridor ID Step 2.

[Learn more about Agrawal and Esterly's thoughts on passenger rail development here](#)

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