

# Ohio takes another step toward backing passenger rail

By **Jessie Balmert**  
**Cincinnati Enquirer**

Ohio lawmakers took another step toward backing passenger rail Wednesday.

Included in the [state's \\$61 billion, two-year budget](#) was \$25,000 to join the [Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission](#), a group of state leaders that advocates for passenger rail improvements.

All Aboard Ohio, which supports public transportation and passenger rail in the Buckeye State, pushed for Ohio's reinstatement into the multi-state commission. Without being a member, Ohio is missing out on important conversations about passenger rail, Mitch Radakovich, board chair of All Aboard Ohio, [told lawmakers](#).

"Without a seat at the table, we risk missing critical funding opportunities and making costly missteps as we work through the planning process," Radakovich said.

Ohio left the commission in 2013 during Ohio Gov. John Kasich's administration. The Republican governor turned down \$400 million in federal money to help [pay for a Cleveland-to-Cincinnati passenger train](#).

The change isn't final yet. Lawmakers in the Ohio Senate will make changes to the state's two-year budget and lawmakers will hash out those differences before sending the bill to Gov. Mike DeWine. The deadline for a balanced budget is June 30.

The politics of passenger rail have changed over time depending on who is in power. [Former President Joe Biden was bullish on expanding Amtrak](#) across the country.

During his administration, [Amtrak announced several Ohio cities could be included](#) in its next passenger rail expansion, which is still years away. In December 2023, Amtrak allotted \$500,000 to plan for each of these four corridors:

- Cincinnati-Dayton-Columbus-Cleveland
- Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit
- Chicago-Fort Wayne-Columbus-Pittsburgh with connector service via Lima, Kenton, Marysville, Newark, Cochocton, Newcomerstown, Uhrichsville and Steubenville.
- Increasing Amtrak's current route frequency to Cincinnati from New York, Washington, D.C., and Chicago.

Last month, [billionaire Elon Musk](#), who is advising President Donald Trump on shrinking U.S. government, said Amtrak should be privatized. Shortly after, [Amtrak CEO Stephen Gardner resigned](#).