

Light Rail (Excerpt: note from Jerry Wicks, Professor Emeritus, BGSU)

...I'm interested primarily in light rail - linking Bowling Green to Toledo, Ohio's north coast and on north to Ann Arbor and Detroit. I'm all for high speed trains but I'm more interested in seeing things move quickly toward interurban light rail - something along the lines of what Ottawa, Ontario initiated in 2001.

...**Ottawa's O-Train**... Below are a number of links regarding that Canadian project. Ottawa's experience is particularly informative and could help guide certain local efforts and planning. As noted in several of the links, the response to the O-Train pilot project was overwhelmingly positive, with ridership numbers exceeding projections. One of the factors leading to the effort's initial success was the train's link to Carleton University. Student ridership propelled that project. I believe a system linking regional universities could similarly help propel a pilot project involving, at a minimum, BGSU, Owens and UT.

What I find so appealing about the Bombardier diesel-powered O-Train solution is its low start-up cost, reliance on an internal power source - not on the power grid and the expense of electrifying the system, and Diesel Light Rail's proven reliability. The O-Train, or something like it, seems to be the perfect blend of light rail and the larger trains AMTRAK runs. And what makes it especially exciting for me is the realization that something like this could be put in place without costly additions to the rail infrastructure. It's almost as though we could "drop" a few of these on the tracks **between BG and Toledo**, build five low cost temporary stations and a pilot project linking cities in the region could up and running in no time - and all of this could be accomplished for what seems like a pittance compared to the figures being discussed for other projects. A pilot project should not be seen as competing with other plans in the state or region - just the opposite. Rather than competing, I suspect this project will help move the state's entire rail agenda forward since it would allow many Ohioans to see and experience light rail up close for the first time in their life.

Overview of Canada's O-Train

<http://www.tc.gc.ca/programs/Environment/utsp/otrainlightrailproject.htm>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/O-Train>

Evaluation of the pilot program

<http://www.transport2000.ca/ontario/nl200701otrain.html>

<http://www.friendsoftheotrain.org/?q=node/6>

Links to the promotional material developed for the O-Train

http://www.friendsoftheotrain.org/?q=system/files/imce_images/OTrainintro1_hires.jpg

http://www.friendsoftheotrain.org/?q=system/files/imce_images/OTrainintro2_hires.jpg