



# THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of the CINCINNATI AREA

# THE VOTER

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*March 2011*

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The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization which encourages the informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Membership is open to all men and women over 18. For information call 513-281-8683, or write to the LWVCA office at 103 Wm H Taft Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45219, or email at info@lwvcincinnati.org.

### LWV DIVERSITY POLICY

The League of Women Voters recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision making.

The LWVCA affirms its commitment to actively seek diversity in its membership, leadership and programs.



## SUSAN B. ANTHONY LUNCHEON - 2011

On February 12th, over one hundred twenty five guests attended the LWVCA 2011 Susan B. Anthony luncheon celebrating 91 years of women's voting in the US. Guests were a diverse group in age, race, and gender and including League members and friends as well as newcomers to the League. We were pleased and proud that Cincinnati Public Schools Superintendent Mary Ronan, former mayor **Bobbie Sterne** and councilmember **Marian Spencer** attended the event, along with representatives of the Clermont LWV. **Marjorie Davies** and **Sherrie Heyse** chaired the luncheon and **Melissa Currence** was our MC. Sponsors included PNC Bank, KnowledgeWorks and Woman's City Club. The event was held at the beautiful Phoenix Club with pretty yellow decorations by **Lori Bissler** commemorating the yellow flowers worn by suffragists.



*LWVCA President Melissa Currence with UC President Gregory Williams (Photo by Jeff Davis)*

Keynote Speaker Dr. Gregory Williams, President of University of Cincinnati spoke on benchmarking UC as one of the premier research and teaching institutions in the country. He focused on the importance of international travel as an educational and professional tool and how he is working to make international study more available to UC students. Dr. Williams was also asked to report on GenOne House, which focuses on helping low-income students complete college. In three years it has helped retain 90% of these students—the first in their families to attend college.



*L - R: Lucia Hudson, Sherrie Heyse, Greg Williams, Don Hudson, Sara Williams (Photo by Gail Wick)*

The split the pot and silent auction, with baskets from individuals, units and committees will net over \$4000 for the LWV Education Fund. Thanks to event volunteers including **Marjorie Davies, Sherrie Heyse, Melissa Currence, Nancy Dawley, Jan Evans, Dot Christenson, Lucia and Don Hudson, Gail Wick, Joan Honeck, Mary Kay Gardner, Pinky Kocoshis, Lori Bissler** and **Dee Shaffer**.

## FEBRUARY 7, 2011

- **Linda Wihl**, interim ED, attended to discuss the upcoming board strategic planning meeting scheduled for February 19, and member survey results to date. Survey respondents so far are 9 online and 16 by hard copy. An e-mail blast to the LWVCA distribution list will be sent. Input from “friends” (interested non-League members) is also welcome.
- Housing Committee sent a letter to Metropolitan Housing Authority urging that the selection of MHA Board Members include as a criterion support of the CMHA board’s mission. The board approved a request from the Housing Committee for renewal of LWVCA membership in Affordable Housing Advocates (AHA) for dues of \$100.
- County Government Committee sent a letter to the editor of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, directed to the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners, expressing concern about the lack of openness and public involvement in the recent sudden termination of County Administrator Patrick Thompson.
- PDC feedback for state program planning was reviewed; PDC is also working on formulating topics for the upcoming year.
- Rookwood 5, a collaborative group of which LWVCA is a member, is planning a forum in the near future to discuss the City of Cincinnati’s budget process.
- The board voted to approve a letter directed to City Council, Mayor Mallory, City Manager Dohoney, and Larry Falkin of the Office of Environmental Quality, opposing re-ordination of the Environmental Justice Ordinance; re-ordination, as proposed by Council member Berding, would weaken resident notification requirements for polluting businesses. The late David Crowley was instrumental in passage of this important ordinance.
- Community Relations has been uploading weekly postings on Facebook. A videotape of Burt Roehr’s (Education Committee) recent presentation at Christ Church was posted.
- The Board voted to approve LWVCA as a cosponsor for a City Council candidate forum at Greenwich Tavern. This was done once before; it was well-planned and successful.
- Member Directory update is in process and will be released by mid-February.
- Current membership is 388.
- Unit Coordinator **Susan Lehman** reported that planning is underway for an April unit leader event at Marjorie P. Lee.
- TRU update is progressing; release anticipated about mid-March.
- **Melissa Currence** announced that the deadline has passed for applications for the ED position. 57 applications received; screening and selection are underway to prepare for interviews.
- Still seeking a chairperson for the Budget Committee.

### LWVCA 2010-11 Board of Directors

President: **Melissa Currence**

President Elect: **OPEN**

Treasurer: **Kim Thompson**

Secretary: **Glenda Bernstein**

Vice President, Program: **Nancy Dawley**

Vice President, Fund Development: **Marjorie Davies**

Vice President, Administration: **Pinky Kokoshis**

Vice President, Voter Service: **Susan Banoun**

Director, Public Relations: **Alice Schneider**

Director, Membership: **Mary Van Ausdall**

Director, Unit Coordinator: **Susan Lehman**

Director, Planned Giving: **Dee Shaffer**

Interim Director: **Linda Wihl**

## JANUARY 3, 2011

- **Linda Wihl** was hired as interim executive director. A new search committee will be created to fill the executive director position.
- Treasurer **Kim Thompson** reported total revenue for fiscal year-to-date of \$20,404 compared to a budgeted \$21,285.
- Current membership reported at 280. September 30 was renewal deadline. Follow up and analysis of membership numbers continues. LWVCA member directory is scheduled for revision soon.
- **Dee Shaffer** announced that activity related to planned giving has begun. The Martha B. Taft Society is LWVCA’s designation for individuals who include a League bequest in their wills.
- Voter Service is now working on the TRU update.
- **Nancy Dawley** reminded the board of national’s request for local Leagues to meet with and interview their Congressional representatives. LWVCA will identify members to meet with Steve Chabot and Jean Schmidt; reports to be submitted to national.
- Use of social media remains a focus for Community Relations. For the first time, this year invitations to the Susan B. Anthony luncheon will be sent primarily by E-vite. Also working on a 30-second video to promote LWVCA; creative people and ideas are being sought. See **Alice Schneider** if you wish to become involved.
- Woman’s City Club’s annual national speaker event this year will feature Naomi Tutu, daughter of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. LWVCA purchased 12 tickets for resale to our members. Cost is \$25.
- A chairperson for the budget committee is being sought for this open position. If interested, contact **Melissa Currence**.
- Hamilton County Board of Elections audit has not yet been scheduled.

(More Board Notes on page 3)

## LWVUS LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 2011

The LWVUS Board has adopted the following Legislative Priorities for 2011:

- Clean Air Defense
- Health Care Defense
- Money in Elections (campaign finance reform)
- Voter Registration and Election Administration

In addition to these proactive initiatives, the League has a Watch List, which means that if an opportunity arises on these issues and does not interfere with action on an advocacy priority, the LWVUS may take action if it appears we can make an impact. The Legislative Watch List is as follows: CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women); Climate Change; Ethics; Immigration; and Safe Drilling and Mining ("Fracking").

The Board discussed many issues and the responses from members suggesting Legislative Priorities. The decisions were made based on what issues are likely to come before the 112th Congress, the opportunities to make an impact, program decisions made at the 2010 Convention, member interest and resources available to manage these priorities effectively. The Board reviews these priorities throughout the year, making changes if warranted.

## SUNSHINE WEEK - MARCH 13-19, 2011

Sunshine Week is a national initiative to promote a dialogue about the importance of open government and freedom of information. Participants include news media, civic groups, libraries, nonprofits, schools and others interested in the public's right to know.

Sunshine Week is a nonpartisan, non-profit, national effort spearheaded by the American Society of News Editors. Though created by journalists, Sunshine Week is about the public's right to know what its government is doing, and why.

Sunshine Week seeks to enlighten and empower people to play an active role in their government at all levels, and to give them access to information that makes their lives better and their communities stronger.

Sunshine week is timed to celebrate the anniversary of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the birthday of James Madison father of our federal Constitution, who wrote that "consent of the governed" requires that the people be able to "arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."

The Sunshine week initiative includes specific examples of how local and national governments can use open meetings, freedom of information, transparency and internet access to documents to improve citizen access to vital information.

Is Sunshine Week making a difference? The coverage, commentaries and activities promoting open government during Sunshine Week have led to tangible, meaningful changes to people's lives and the laws that govern them. The Sunshine Week initiative is increasing public awareness, it's coming up more often in policy conversations, and the efforts of participants are being cited as real forces for moving the public away from simply accepting excessive and unwarranted government secrecy. People are learning what kinds of information they have a right to see, where to get it, how to get it and what to do if someone tries to keep it from them.



## DECEMBER 6, 2010 *(Board notes cont'd from page 2)*

- Guest Ann Mitchell, LWVCA SmartVoter coordinator discussed issues related to the SmartVoter process. Use of Vote411 (supported by national) compared with SmartVoter was considered.
- President **Melissa Currence** announced the unexpected resignation of recently-hired Executive Director (ED) **Beth Kochheiser**. The board agreed on the need for an interim ED until the position can be filled.
- **Mary VanAusdall** announced membership renewal remains a focus. Renewal deadline was Sept. 30; to date, a number of members have not renewed.
- **Marj Davies**, VP of Fund Development, reported that the Cincinnati Art Museum tours in November had 24 participants; Susan B. Anthony luncheon scheduled for Feb. 12 with UC President Dr. Gregory Williams as keynote speaker.
- **Susan Banoun**, Voter Services, discussed plans for the upcoming TRU update.
- **Nancy Dawley**, Program VP, reported that Mary Ronan, Superintendent of Cincinnati Public Schools, made a presentation to the Education Committee.
- **Alice Schneider**, Community Relations, continues work on use of social media to promote the League and its activities.
- LWVCA member **Ann Gilton** will assist with the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers upcoming contract vote.
- The board voted to renew the lease with Mt. Auburn Presbyterian Church. No rent increase this year.

## LWVO OPPOSES ELIMINATION OF ESTATE TAX

The Ohio legislature faces with a projected \$8-10 billion shortfall in state revenues for 2011-2013. One major challenge will be for both the state and local governments to continue to provide essential services and minimize the impact of budget cuts, such as those on police/safety/fire services, education, libraries, and mental health and drug and alcohol treatment programs. Any decision to reduce state revenues that support critical community services threatens to simply shift the tax burden downward.

In the face of this unprecedented fiscal crisis, the House of Representatives is considering House Bill 3, a proposal to eliminate the estate tax in Ohio – with no proposed means of replacing the lost funds. Twenty percent of the revenue generated by the tax is retained by the state, while 80% goes back to support the communities of origin. The estate tax is currently a significant source of funding for many municipalities. In FY 2009, the estate tax amounted to \$269.4 million in revenue to communities across Ohio, with another \$64.4 million for the state's General Revenue Fund.

At a time when local governments struggle to balance their budgets, doing away with the estate tax threatens real harm while contributing little to the immediate fiscal crisis. The League of Women Voters of Ohio's position on State Government Finance states that taxes should "provide adequate resources for government programs while allowing flexibility for financing future program changes." LWV-Ohio believes eliminating the estate tax without providing a means for communities to replace the lost revenue is a serious threat to communities' well being.

The League of Women Voters believes the Ohio legislature must address the budget shortfall in a way that protects vital community services and creates a long-term approach to Ohio's growth and prosperity. Once that's accomplished, a study of alternatives to the estate tax that protect the revenue stream of local governments could be undertaken.

## HAMILTON COUNTY CASE SPURS CALLS FOR CHANGE IN OHIO ELECTION LAW

*Source: LWVOhio*

The League of Women Voters of Ohio has advocated changes to Ohio's election law to address the problem of voters who cast their vote in the wrong precinct but in the correct polling place. This problem arises in polling places with multiple precincts when a poll worker gives a voter who is in the correct polling place the wrong ballot. The majority of races are likely to be the same in the different precincts, but there may be some races or issues that are in one precinct but not another. Current Ohio law requires that under these circumstances the entire ballot be invalidated – not just the votes for races or issues in a precinct other than the precinct in which the voter resides.

The Hamilton County Juvenile Court race discussed in last month's *Voter* (still unresolved as of mid February) brings in the question of equal protection. The dispute already has produced conflicting rulings from the Ohio Supreme Court and a federal court, calls into question issues of state, federal and local jurisdiction, and could require the U.S. Supreme Court to weigh in. Legal scholars say this case could have national implications for the 2012 race.

This problem often arises through poll worker error, in a qualified voter arriving at the right location but being directed to the wrong table and/or handed the wrong ballot. The Ohio Supreme Court has ruled that regardless of whose fault it is, no part of these ballots can be counted. LWVO believes that this unfairly disenfranchises Ohioans and could easily be addressed by changing the law to allow Boards of Elections to count the votes for all races and issues for which the voter was entitled to vote.

*The Voter* is the official monthly newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Cincinnati Area.  
 Editor: **Rina Saperstein.**  
 Office Staff: **Susan Gorman.**  
 Proofer: **Melissa Currence**  
 Layout and design:  
**Kit Berger.**

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM YOUR STATE LEAGUE: Mid-November, 2010 – Mid-January, 2011

Source: LWVO

Below is a snapshot of some of your state League's activities since the November general election. If you would like more information about any of these items, please call the LWVO/EF office (toll free) at 1-877-LWVO-OHIO or at 614-469-1505.

- Coordinated the 2010 Post-Election Audit Observation Pilot Project in which nearly 50 members from 15 Leagues assessed the compliance of 14 county boards of elections with Secretary of State Brunner's post-election audit requirements per the 2009 lawsuit settlement agreement. The pilot project is also intended to build Leagues' relationships with their election boards and provide a framework for a more comprehensive project in 2012, when the next audit is required.
- Collaborated with the Lawyers' Committee on Civil Rights Under Law to assess the quality of 32 county boards' election administration plans, with a full report due this spring. This is another activity designed to ensure the 2009 settlement terms of our historic 2005 election lawsuit are honored.
- Promoted a 2011 redistricting competition similar to the 2009 model cosponsored by the League with Secretary of State-elect Husted and strategized with redistricting reform partners regarding next steps.
- Engaged Joanna Helon as Interim Executive Director for LWVO / EF. Helon has more than 10 years non-profit leadership experience and over the next few months will help us chart our future course.
- Monitored the Ohio Budget Commission meetings; met with LWVO lobbyists to gain their perspective on the Ohio budget; and joined Advocates for Ohio's Future whose goal is to maintain vital public services at a level that meets people's basic needs and protects our state's most vulnerable populations.
- Determined where there was consensus among Ohio Leagues on the State Taxation and Finance Update Study and approved the updated position.
- Distributed 2011 LWVO Program Planning and Legislative Interview materials to local Leagues for member involvement.
- Determined not to recommend at this time that LWVO move to a 2-year budget cycle.



## LWVO STATEHOUSE DAY: APRIL 7, 2011

(Please note change of date.)

Join us in Columbus – and bring a friend! – April 7, 2011, as the League of

Women Voters of Ohio presents 2011 Statehouse Day. The theme of this year's event is Civil Discourse – and will be the subject discussed by our keynote speaker, Fred Anderle, a retired National Public Radio host from the central Ohio area whose radio program was

known for inspiring conversation.

Statehouse Day participants may attend workshops on critical state policy issues, i.e., healthcare, education, local advocacy tools and juvenile justice. Legislators will also be invited to attend the workshops and provide their input on where the state is heading as it relates to these and other issues. This year, attendees will have the option of requesting a meeting with their legislator through the LWVO office. If you would like to meet with your legislator while in Columbus, LWVO will schedule meetings during the afternoon session time. You will be accompanied by a member of the Lobby Corps and trained to discuss LWVO's advocacy agenda.

We look forward to having you join us for this invigorating, thought-provoking, and particularly League activity! And, save May 13-15<sup>th</sup> now for the **59<sup>th</sup> Annual LWVO State Convention: Sustaining Democracy through Sustainable Communities** at Maumee Bay State Park. For more information about both events, visit [www.lwvohio.org](http://www.lwvohio.org).

## WORST CASE HOUSING NEEDS

From *Elizabeth Brown, LWVCA Housing Committee and Affordable Housing Advocates*

A report was just released by HUD on worst case housing needs. “Worst case housing needs” are defined as low-income households who paid more than half their monthly income for rent, lived in severely substandard housing, or both. The report doesn’t provide data specifically for the Cincinnati metropolitan area, but has some interesting national and regional statistics. HUD’s report found:

- Worst case housing needs were 7.10 million in 2009 (41 percent of very low-income renters), up from 5.91 million (37 percent). This represents more than a 20 percent increase from the number of worst case needs in 2007.
- Every racial/ethnic group experienced increases in worst case housing needs during 2007-2009 with Hispanic households having the largest increase in incidence (8 percentage points).
- Higher income families are competing for a limited number of affordable rental units further driving down already-low vacancy rates for the lowest rent units. Only 36 of every 100 extremely low-income renters have affordable units available to them.
- Dramatic increases in worst case needs were caused by shrinking incomes as well as rent increases due to increased competition among low-income families for fewer affordable units.
- Worst case needs among renters with disabilities increased from 37.5 percent to 40.7 percent of all very low-income renters with disabilities.
- The availability of affordable rental housing varies across regions of the country with supply most scarce in the West, where only 53 units available per 100 very low-income renter households, compared with 65 in the South, 66 in the Northeast and 87 in the Midwest.

Government housing assistance programs, including those provided by HUD, significantly reduce worst case needs and homelessness but are not available for all those who need assistance. Nationwide, 25 percent of the very poor receive some form of rental assistance.

## PLANTING THE FUTURE: Art projects help youth plan Cincinnati’s future

PLAN Cincinnati is a road map for Cincinnati’s future. The outcomes from an ongoing series of community meetings and working groups will inform current and future decision makers in the City of Cincinnati about who we are, where we want to go, how we will get there and what resources are needed. Last fall, the City of Cincinnati’s Department of Planning and Buildings has reached out to Cincinnati Public School students to incorporate their ideas into the comprehensive plan.

“As we continue to reach out across a broad spectrum of Cincinnatians — from our youngest citizens to our most senior — we gain insights for the comprehensive plan that will energize the growth and development of our City,” says City Director of Planning and Buildings Charles Graves. “Our youth are the generation that will help implement the plan we are creating.”

Students participating in PLAN Cincinnati had four venues for expression to address the theme “How do we make Cincinnati a great City?” Interested students could:

- Write a letter to Mayor Mallory
- Prepare a multimedia presentation
- Create a visual art project
- Have their school art class paint their vision for Cincinnati on clay flower pots

First, second and third place prizes were awarded in three grade categories: Kindergarten through fifth grade, sixth through eighth grade and ninth through 12th grade. Winners in each category will be featured in a PLAN Cincinnati video and posted on City websites. Overall three winners who shared lunch with Mayor Mallory and toured the City Hall on December 03, 2010 were:

- Letter contest: Cheyenne Griffis-Greene, 10th grade, Hughes STEM High School
- Visual Art contest: Rikki Gilbert, 5th grade, Saylor Park School
- Flower pots contest: Alexis Gaines, 5th grade, Westwood Elementary School

## HAMILTON COUNTY BUDGET IN BRIEF

The 2011 Hamilton County Budget in Brief is available now for download from the county budget office webpage. This document provides an overview of the fiscal and policy issues facing Hamilton County. If you or your organization would like paper copies of the brief, email John P. Bruggen at [john.bruggen@hamilton-co.org](mailto:john.bruggen@hamilton-co.org). Click on the following link to download the Budget in Brief: <http://www.hamiltoncountyohio.gov/administrator/bsi/budget.asp>

## PLAN CINCINNATI:

**A Comprehensive Plan for the Future**  
**2011 Neighborhood Summit**  
**Cintas Center, Xavier University**  
**Saturday, April 2, 2011 7:30 am - 4:30 pm**

PLAN CINCINNATI is the road map for Cincinnati's future. It will inform current and future decision makers about where we are, where we want to go, how we will get there and who will help along the way.

Sessions at the **Neighborhood Summit** on April 2 will focus on housing and neighborhood development, urban design, transportation and transit, health, environment and open space, historic conservation, arts and culture, economic development and business retention. Join us to prioritize the Plan's goals, Strategies, and implementation techniques.

*Help shape the future of our city!* For more information: <http://www.plancincinnati.org> or 513-352-4845



**PLAN CINCINNATI**  
 a comprehensive plan for the future

## RETHINKING THE JUVENILE IN JUVENILE JUSTICE

**Monday, March 14 7:30-9 pm**  
**Wise Center, 8329 Ridge Road, Amberley Village**  
**Panel**

Dr. Drew Barzman, Founding Director of the Child and Adolescent Forensic Psychiatry Service, CHMC  
 Kim Brooks Tandy, Executive Director and Founder of the Children's Law Center, Inc.

Al Gerhardstein, Civil rights attorney, Gerhardstein and Branch law firm

Edward J. Latessa, Director of the School of Criminal Justice, U.C.

**Moderator:** Marianna Brown Bettman, Professor of Clinical Law, U.C. College of Law

This event is sponsored by Isaac M. Wise Temple Critical Topics Committee, and cosponsored by the LWVCA and a number of other community organizations. It is free and open to the public.

## MEDIA MOMENTS: SENDING ADVOCACY EMAILS

By Marcia Merrins, LWVUS

Perhaps I am opening a can of worms but here is the first of a new series of tips called Media Moments. I wonder if you will read it. Did I follow my own suggestions?

Did you know that before you read an email you scan it first to determine if you "want" to read it? In the blink of an eye, your members/recipients evaluate every email to meet two criteria:

1. Is the message important?
2. Will it be quick and easy to read?

Even if your information is important to members/recipients, if your emails don't produce a "yes" for criteria #2, they may be ignored or deleted right along with the spam.

To get your emails read and get a response, you must format your emails for scanning.

Here are some cues for writing emails that are quick and easy to read:

Keep your emails and articles short. Try to keep everyday emails to 150 words. If your emails go on and on, they immediately fail the scan test and you're toast. Restrict the majority of your paragraphs to three sentences or less. Long paragraphs trigger the subconscious mind of your recipients to demand, "next email!"

If you can't avoid writing a large paragraph, make it easier for the reader to scan.

Summarize the paragraph with a bolded title and structure the main points as a numbered or bulleted list. The result – instant "scannability!"

Don't bury your calls to action inside a paragraph. Whatever you're prompting your members/recipients to do, whether it be download a PDF, visit a webpage, register for a webinar, or answer a question, put it on a line by itself and bold it.

Try to end your emails with a dialogue opener, not a closer. Try "Thoughts?"; "What do you think?"; or "Eager for your reply." rather than writing "best wishes" or "warm regards" at the end. It translates to "have a nice life."

I think I'll try that!

## HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS

By *Gretchen Langdon, Chair*

The Health Care Committee is continuing to look at local medical issues especially the status and governance of public health in Cincinnati and Hamilton County. In light of the current tight county and city budgets, talk of county and city services mergers and/or privatization, as well as the tenuous passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, it is an exciting time when we can take action using our local, state and national positions. If you are interested in finding out more about how you can change the future of health care in our region and beyond, please join us on the third Monday of each month at 7PM at the League Office.

## REASONS TO “LIKE” US ON FACEBOOK

By *Mary Van Ausdall, Membership Director*



To date, we have 87 fans on our Facebook page. Here's the good news — most of them are not members. We need to let them know what LWVCA is involved in. In future weeks we plan to post information from all committees on our page as well as photos of League happenings.

If you are already a Facebook user, here are a few ways that “Like”ing us on Facebook can be helpful to LWV:

- your Facebook friends will see that you have liked the LWV;
- they, too, may be encouraged to “Like” the page
- they will learn about LWV events, position statements and advocacy actions

If you are not a Facebook user, you can view the fan page by going to our [lwcincinnati.org](http://lwcincinnati.org) home page and clicking the Facebook button in the right hand corner of our homepage.

Having Facebook fans know what LWVCA does is critical to our mission and to growing our membership.

## IN MEMORIAM

### *Remembering Bobbie Mystrom*

*August 4, 1925-January 20, 2011*

By *Nancy Forbriger*

During her 50 years as a Cincinnati area resident, Barbara (Bobbie) Mystrom's life demonstrated her unwavering commitment to the betterment of our community through her work with the League of Women Voters and in the Kennedy Heights neighborhood she loved.

Bobbie Mystrom served on the Ohio League Board for 6 years from 1971- 1977 and was LWVCA co- president 1995-1997. Bobbie's responsibilities in the Cincinnati League reached into all aspects of our organization from discussion unit leadership to voter service, program and fundraising; sometimes in titled positions on the board, but often behind the scenes in many hours of detailed committee work. She was willing to step in where ever there was an urgent need. In 1993 she was honored as recipient of our Martha B. Taft Service Award.

Bobbie's expertise was recognized many times: 1) she was twice asked to serve on coalitions to draft new charters for the county (1982 and 1991); she was appointed by Governor John J. Gilligan to the Ohio State Commission on Local Government Services (1972); she was appointed by the county commissioners to the Drake Hospital Board of Directors(1979).

Bobbie's two favorite places to retreat for recreation were her cabin in Michigan where she enjoyed canoeing and hiking, and Sanibel Island for the beach and bird-watching. Bobbie's dedication and persistence were an inspiration to all who knew and worked with her.



*Former LWVCA members:  
L - R: Betty Roosa, Bobbie Mystrom  
and Gloria Walker*

## MARCH UNITS:

### Diversifying Transportation

By *Chris Moran*, Chair Transportation Committee

Few ideas are as liberating or empowering as access to affordable, safe and conveniently available transportation. Many people have turned to the automobile to meet that need with unintended consequences. Streets and highways have become congested, and parking inconvenient; air quality is degraded and fuel is costly and available largely through imports that complicate our international relationships. Diversifying the modes of transportation could help to reduce the impacts and frustrations of an automobile-based system.

Over the past several months, the Transportation Committee has been exploring alternatives to automobile transportation. VOTER articles have been published with information about bike ways, complete streets, and a rail conference. The March unit discussion material focuses on the operation of bus and rail public transportation in the area.

Cities, states and regions throughout the country have proposed or launched major initiatives to make alternative transportation options available to the public. Cincinnati, the state of Ohio, and the Midwest region are part of this effort. Economic and community development and environmental benefits are the primary drivers for the initiatives.

Two LWV positions could be used to comment on local proposals related to transportation following sufficient League member discussion and assessment about them. *LWVCA supports a publicly owned transportation system for the Cincinnati Metropolitan Area; LWVUS believes energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation systems should afford better access to housing and jobs.*

Current League member ideas about transportation issues will be explored during March Unit meetings. Please come and share your thoughts.

## THE INNOCENCE PROJECT: MAKING JUSTICE PERSONAL

### Dinner with the League, March 28

Mark Godsey, Director and Co-Founder of the Ohio Innocence Project (OIP), will speak at the “Dinner with the League” on Monday, March 28, 2011. The dinner meeting, sponsored by the League of Women Voters of the Cincinnati Area, begins with registration at 5:30 pm and dinner at 6:00 at the Marriott Kingsgate Conference Center in the UC area.

Mr. Godsey will discuss “The Innocence Project: Making Justice Personal,” describing how this program seeks to identify and assist prison inmates who claim to be actually innocent of the crimes for which they were convicted. He will explain the types of investigation the OIP undertakes and the role of new evidence in its work.



In addition to his responsibilities with the Ohio Innocence Project, Mark Godsey is a professor of law at the University of Cincinnati College of Law and serves on the Board of Directors of the Innocence Network, the association of Innocence Projects, and similar organizations in the U.S. and abroad. He is an award-winning teacher and an internationally-recognized scholar and attorney in the field of wrongful convictions. On this subject, he has appeared regularly in the national press and television programs, and he has been an invited speaker across the U.S. and around the world.

The “Dinner with the League” series of monthly dinner meetings is designed to attract and inform both League members and prospective new members. The League encourages the public to attend and members to invite friends to accompany them to this enjoyable and informative evening. Reservations for “Dinner with the League” may be made by calling the League office at (513) 281-8683 or by going to [www.lwvcincinnati.org](http://www.lwvcincinnati.org).

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“An exorbitant amount of money is dedicated to incarcerating people. There are ways you can go about reducing the number of people incarcerated. The best way to help them successfully integrate into society and become independent, law-abiding citizens is to make sure they get a job.”

— *Nancy La Vigne, director of the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute, on state programs that help ex-convicts find jobs.*  
(Source: *The New York Times*)

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Carolyn B. Miller

*Carolyn is a member of Metro Day Unit, chairs the League's City Government Committee participates in the County Government and Transportation Committees, and serves as a League liaison to the Rookwood 5 and Citizen's Budget Committee. Carolyn has served as President of the League twice.*

*Q: Tell us a bit about you your job and family as introduction:*

A: I grew up in a large family with 11 siblings and parents who were educators and amateur musicians. We children all learned several instruments and were encouraged also to be active in sports and civic and cultural life wherever we lived. I have continued many of these interests into my adult life. My husband, Frank, is a retired attorney from Dinsmore & Shohl and we are regular attendees at CSO concerts as well as performances at CCM at UC and the Cincinnati Playhouse. Our two married sons have both ended up in the field of education and we have three teenage grandchildren whom we adore.

*Q: When, how and why did you become a league member?*

A: I became a League member in the late 1960s in the Clifton Unit when my sons were toddlers. I loved the stimulating discussions on a wide range of topics and the impressive women who did all the background research and led the discussions. I was sure I would never be so competent! But gradually I joined one of the study committees, tried leading a discussion, and my interest flourished. I went on to serve on the League Board in many capacities including twice as President.

*Q: What do you enjoy about league membership?*

A: I participate in the Metro Day Unit and enjoy the stimulating discussions we have on a variety of topics with our knowledgeable and passionate members. I love doing research on League topics, preparing material for unit discussions, and writing up issues for the *Who & What of Elections*. But most of all I enjoy the camaraderie of women and men who share the desire to encourage a more informed citizenry.

*Q: What community/neighborhood do you live in and what do you like about it?*

A: I have lived in the neighborhood of Clifton in Cincinnati for 50 years and love the vibrant walkable urban feel of our community. We have a strong and active community council, a thriving new cultural arts center, frequent bus service, an excellent elementary school, the Esquire Theatre (where we are frequent customers), unique restaurants and shops, and beautiful city parks. We are currently fighting to retain our full service grocery store.

*Q: What have you been reading lately?*

A: My husband and I are looking forward to our next trip to Russia (a river cruise between Moscow and St. Petersburg) in June. So, I'm reading "*Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*" in order to try to understand more about Russia's long and complex cultural and political history. I just finished a fascinating book - "*Cincinnati's Incomplete Subway: the Complete History*" - and was left with the lingering hope that we may yet still use those unfinished but well preserved subway tunnels for transportation in the future.




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## At the Susan B. Anthony Luncheon ...



*Marian Spencer  
and Bobbie Sterne*

*Silent Auction bidders*

*(Photos by Gail Wick)*



**CALENDAR: MARCH UNIT MEETINGS**

**Discussion Topic: Transportation Developments**

*Unit meetings are our grassroots discussions, located at different places and times so that there's always one convenient for YOU! This is your chance to get involved. All meetings are open. Come, and bring a friend! See the article on page 9.*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday 3/8/11**

College Hill: 11:30 am Home of Mary Kay Gardner  
 North Central: 12:00 noon, Friendship United Methodist Church, Springfield Pike & Fleming Rd  
 Warren County: 7:30 pm Mason United Methodist Church, 773 Mason-Montgomery Rd

**2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday 3/9/11**

Anderson: 7:00 pm Anderson Government Center, 7850 Five Mile Road  
 Central Evening: 7:15 pm League Office, 103 Wm H Taft

**2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday 3/10/11**

Eastern Day: 12:00 noon with brown bag lunch, Marjorie P. Lee Home, 3580 Shaw Ave

**2<sup>nd</sup> Monday 3/14/11**

Hilltop: 1:00 pm Home of Pat and Bob Early  
 Northeast Evening: 7:00 pm Madeira Public Library, Euclid and Miami Ave

**3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday, 3/16/11**

Metro Day: 12:00 noon League Office, 103 Wm H Taft

\*Note: College Hill meets in individual member homes. Please see your membership directory or call the office or your unit chair for these addresses.

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*The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Membership in the League is open to men and women of all ages.*

**CALL FOR NOMINATIONS!**

The League of Women Voters of the Cincinnati Area Nominating Committee is seeking candidates for open leadership positions and invites LWVCA members who may be interested in serving on the board to direct inquiries to Nominating Committee chair **Glenda Bernstein**. The deadline is March 15, 2011. LWVCA members possess a wealth of experience, skills, talent and ability. Please consider proposing yourself or a friend!

**Join the League of Women Voters**

**...where hands on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.**

All citizens, male and female, 18 years and older, are welcome. Take the opportunity now to support our work promoting democracy and civic engagement. Dues include Cincinnati, Ohio, and National membership, including newsletters from each.

- Individual - \$60.00
- Household - \$80.00
- Student - \$25.00

Dues pose a hardship. I can pay \_\_\_\_\_

Optional deductible contribution to LWVCA:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to LWVCA, 103 Wm. H. Taft,  
 Cincinnati, OH 45219



**League of Women Voters of the Cincinnati Area**  
 103 Wm. H. Taft Rd. Cincinnati, OH 45219  
 513-281-8683 Fax: 513-281-8714  
 info@lwvcincinnati www.lwvcincinnati.org

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**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



**MARCH MEETINGS**

*All meetings are open to the public and are held at the League Office, address above, unless otherwise noted.  
 Bring a friend!*

- Monday Mar 7 6:30 pm Board Meeting
- Thursday Mar 10 7:30 pm Woman’s City Club National Speaker Forum: Naomi Tutu, Millennium Hotel, \$25, call League office for tickets.
- Friday Mar 11 Voter copy for March due to Editor
- Monday Mar 14 7:30 pm Rethinking the Juvenile in Juvenile Justice, Wise Temple Critical Topics. 8329 Ridge Road, Amberley.
- Monday Mar 21 7:00 pm County Government Committee
- Monday Mar 21 7:00 pm Health Care Committee
- Wednesday Mar 23 5:30 pm Program Development Committee (PDC)
- Wednesday Mar 23 7:00 pm Discussion Leaders Briefing for April Topics
- Wednesday Mar 23 Reservation Deadline for Dinner with the League
- Thursday Mar 24 10:00 am Voter Collating, North Central, Warren County and College Hill in Charge
- Saturday Mar 26 1:00 pm Discussion Leaders Briefing for April Units
- Monday Mar 28 5:30 pm Dinner with the League Ohio Innocence Project. Kingsgate Marriot, \$25.

**LWVCA ANNUAL MEETING MAY 18 — SAVE THE DATE!**

The Annual Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 18, 2011 at the Marriott Kingsgate Conference Center, and we have a real treat in store for you. The new Editor and Vice President of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Carolyn Washburn, will be our guest speaker, and this promises to be a very informative evening. Watch your next VOTER for additional details, and SAVE THE DATE!

# TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

## INTRODUCTION

Current, largely automobile-based, transportation has raised a list of concerns. Some of these include: the cost and use of petroleum fuel, dependence on foreign oil, air pollution, sprawling overdevelopment, an aging population and health concerns such as diabetes and obesity. In response transportation and urban planners are proposing development of walkable communities, redevelopment of commercial areas, and new transportation choices.

The passage of the Interstate Highway Act of 1956 committed trillions of federal dollars to promote the automobile and suburban living for the remainder of the century. Population grew and jobs spread out from the urban centers. Bus ridership dropped from 61.1 million to 36.8 million trips between 1956 and 1964; rail travel declined also. There is now nearly 47,000 miles of Federal highway system.

Amidst discussions about sprawl, regionalism and federal funding for multimodal transportation, OKI, the regional transportation planning agency, engaged in corridor studies beginning in the mid 1990s. Studies of I-71, I-75, and the Eastern Corridor backed the development of a light rail system as a strategy for mass transit in the future. In 2002, a MetroMoves Plan was proposed for the tri-state region. It included expanded bus and rail service, transit hubs, community circulators, cross town service and a streetcar. While Hamilton County voters defeated the proposed 0.5% sales tax to help fund the plan, its components remain and can be implemented as funding becomes available.

Public transportation ridership in the U.S. grew 36% from 1995 through 2008, almost three times the growth rate of the U.S. population (14%) and substantially more than the growth for vehicle miles travel (VMT) on the nation's streets and highways (21%) over the same period. Nationwide the demand for public transportation is at historic levels and growing, but funding for the day-to-day operations of transit services is in crisis. Nearly 90 percent of transit systems have had to raise fares or cut service in the past year and

many have laid off workers to deal with shrinking budgets. These actions have affected severely the people who depend on regular, reliable service in order to access jobs, social services and education. Locally, funding for transit service has not kept pace with the demand. While several public transit systems currently provide bus service in the Cincinnati region, jobs are widely dispersed and many people can't access employment in areas not served by transit.

An adequate transportation system enables people and goods to move with the least delay. When transportation choices are available, people and businesses can choose to use one mode or another depending on congestion, schedules, and cost at a particular time. Transit supports the economy, contributes to environmental quality and connects jobs, communities and people.

What is happening now regarding transportation in the Tri-State region? How is bus service in the area? What is the status of the plans for a modern streetcar in Cincinnati? While a current proposal for intercity passenger rail in Ohio has been stopped, what about other rail plans in the midwest and nationally?

## BUS SERVICE

In the early 1970s, the privately owned Cincinnati Transit Company was experiencing declining ridership, increased fares and service cuts. Concern for preserving a transportation system for workers who depended on the bus and with potential federal aide, City Council pressed for public ownership. With the failure of a county wide property tax levy in 1971, City voters in 1972 approved a 0.3% earnings tax for public transit purposes. In 1973 Metro was created. In addition to fares and grants the same 0.3% earnings tax on wages of anyone who lives &/or works in the City of Cincinnati remains a major source of revenue for Metro. Metro is the only transit system in Ohio that does not have at least county wide funding. Many transit systems in the U.S. use sales tax revenue to finance public transit operations.

SORTA (Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority) operates Metro, a fixed route bus serv-

ice, and provides Access service. Access is a shared-ride transportation service for people whose disabilities prevent their riding Metro buses. By City – SORTA agreement and by funding source, most Metro service is within the City of Cincinnati. Metro’s primary transit center is Government Square in downtown Cincinnati, renovated in 2006 and now completely accessible to persons with disabilities. The Metro network is primarily radial, focusing on downtown Cincinnati. Metro also operates three east-west cross-town routes. While 80% of the service is within city limits, Metro’s service area covers a majority of Hamilton County and includes portions of Butler, Clermont and Warren counties.

Metro has a network of 23 park & ride locations throughout Greater Cincinnati, operates 333 Metro buses and offers 30 local service routes, 23 express routes and six Job Connection reverse-commute routes. Metro owns 53 Access vehicles and contracts with a provider to offer the service. Providing more than 19 million rides per year, Metro brings approximately 20% of downtown Cincinnati’s workforce into the city, approximately 15,000-20,000 people.

All Metro buses have wheelchair lifts or ramps. Metro’s fleet is 100% accessible to people with disabilities. Buses feature an automatic voice system to announce key stops, transfer points and other important information. There are bike racks on all Metro buses. A Metro bus seats up to 44 passengers.

**Current fares for Metro’s service are:**

- \$1.75 in Cincinnati and \$2.65 within Hamilton County.
- \$3 for the Rt. 82X Eastgate Express and Rt. 52X Harrison Express.
- \$3.50 for the Route 42X West Chester Express and 62X Fairfield Express.

Both Clermont County and Butler County pay for the operating costs associated with these services, under a contract with Metro. The fare for Rt.71X Kings Island Express and Rt. 72 Kings Island Job Connection is \$4.25. The cost of the bus routes to Warren County is funded by federal formula funds Metro receives based on Warren County’s urbanized population and square miles.

Information about these and other routes and about reduced fares and monthly passes is listed on the web: [www.go-metro.com](http://www.go-metro.com). The site includes

information about riding Metro, how to calculate trip savings and additional information about the transit service.

SORTA has an inter-local agreement with the Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky (TANK) for coordination of the two transit systems and an inter-local agreement with Butler County. SORTA works cooperatively with other area transit systems to form a transit network encompassing four Ohio counties, three Northern Kentucky counties and Southeast Indiana.

In addition to SORTA and TANK, other major public transit bus systems in the region are:

- Butler County Regional Transit Authority (BCRTA)
- Catch-A-Ride (formerly Southeast Indiana Transit or SEIT)
- Clermont County Transportation Connection (CTC)
- Middletown Transit System (MTS), and
- Warren County Transit System (WCTS).

BCRTA, CTC, MTS, SORTA and TANK provide fixed-route service. Fixed-route service operates with a predetermined schedule along prescribed routes with designated bus stops along each route. Catch-A-Ride service requires a rider to prearrange a trip by contacting the transit operator ahead of time with origin and destination information.

It is difficult to get from one area of the region to another via public transit. Travel by bus from areas in Newport, Kentucky, to Lebanon, Ohio, or between Batavia, Ohio, and Lawrenceburg, Indiana, is not readily available. The separate transportation services in the region are not connected in service routes and fare structure to accommodate transfers between providers.

**Challenges to Metro providing transit service**

The recession-related unemployment hovering around 9%, reductions of city and state transit funding, and a December 2009 12% service reduction resulted in loss of ridership and fare revenue. High unemployment has reduced the number of bus riders which has affected Metro’s revenue. Less employment has reduced the City’s earning tax revenue including the transit fund. Fuel, labor and health care costs have risen over the past decade. In 1999 Metro’s average price per gallon of fuel was \$.55; in 2008 it was \$2.40; and in 2010 it was \$2.18. Metro has entered into futures

contracts for fuel which have helped hold costs down. Incorporating fuel-efficient hybrid and articulated buses into Metro's fleet has helped hold down operating costs and attract riders.

State funding for Metro has gone down from \$3.73 million in 1999 to less than \$1 million in 2010. Federal funds cannot be used for operations and can be used only for capital expenses such as the purchase of new buses to replace ones that are at least 12 years old. This is the useful life of a bus after which breakdowns increase, repairs are more costly and service delays and disruptions occur. Recently with stimulus funds, hybrid buses have been included in replacement orders and the region's first articulated "accordion" buses have come into service to add capacity on the busiest routes. A standard bus costs about \$350,000, a hybrid bus adds an additional \$175,000 and an articulated bus with a seating capacity of 60 seats costs about \$611,000. Federal funds for capital expenses do require local matching funds.

### **Passenger Outreach**

To attract and retain riders, service improvements have been implemented.

University of Cincinnati students, faculty and staff currently can purchase a UC/Metro Fare Card quarterly. The card enables discounted rides on Metro buses. The program is a partnership of the University, UC Student Government and Metro. A new Cincinnati State/Metro discount card enables a valid card holder to ride anytime on any bus for \$1. The program is subsidized by Cincinnati State. Area employers may participate in Smart Commuter programs that enable employees to purchase pretax transit passes that reduce transportation costs.

The new One for Fun route connects Cincinnati arts and entertainment spots. This Rt. 1 begins at the Cincinnati Museum Center, travels through downtown venues to the Art Museum and on to the Zoo using a new, specially decorated smaller hybrid bus. The Rt.71X Kings Island Express is authorized to use the left shoulder lane from Kenwood to Kings Island under specified conditions during peak hours to bypass traffic congestion.

With federal funding, Metro is implementing real time information about arrival and departure of buses at Government Square and other key locations beginning in late 2011. The new communication system will make possible real time bus infor-

mation via smart phones and PDAs. The web site already provides riders with internet access information about delays on particular routes.

Everybody Rides Metro (ERM) is a unique 501(c)3 non-profit Foundation created by SORTA and the first of its kind in the country. It is a program which provides subsidized Metro bus tokens to about 100 agencies serving low-income clients. The tokens are used to provide job related trips. The foundation is funded through donations by corporations, other foundations, private individuals, and government aid directed to low-income individuals. Donations are used to purchase bus tokens and passes for the organizations serving low-income individuals. ERM increases bus ridership without increasing costs. More than 1 million tokens have been distributed to low income riders in the three years since the program was started.

### **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)**

Cincinnati City Council has begun a discussion about bus rapid transit as part of a multi-modal transit system. Such a system usually is *designed to serve large numbers of commuters* traveling five to 20 miles to large employment centers along major corridors. There is some evidence suggesting establishing a BRT system can be done more quickly and at less expense than a light rail system and Federal funding under the Small Starts program has been available.

BRT is a public transit option that can improve urban mobility. This permanent, integrated system uses buses or specialized vehicles on roadways or dedicated lanes to transport passengers to their destinations, while offering the flexibility to meet transit demand. In the U.S. BRT running ways are fully grade-separated transit-ways as in Pittsburgh or incorporated in a mixed flow arterial as in Kansas City. Some station designs have more amenities and use level boarding. Vehicles can vary from an agency's standard vehicle to ones that are specialized BRT vehicles such as used in Las Vegas. Exclusive runway systems generally have greater travel savings times compared to *local bus routes which make frequent stops*. The systems generally can expand capacity by adding vehicles, increasing frequency of service or both.

The benefits of a BRT system have been additional ridership, cost effectiveness and operating efficiencies. Also there have been increases in transit-supportive land development and environmental quality linked to the implementation of

BRT systems. Some transit systems have had ridership gains of between 5 and 25% along a particular route.

Cleveland's 9-mile bus rapid transit line, the HealthLine, began operation in 2008 and links the city's two major employment centers, Downtown and University Circle, which is also a cultural center. The area surrounding the line has seen approximately \$4.3 billion in new investment. Ridership on the HealthLine is 56% higher than ridership on the old Number 6 bus line, which ran the same route. The Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals partnered to buy the \$6 million naming rights for the system. The HealthLine cost about \$200 million, as opposed to the projected \$800 million cost for rail along the same route.

Cincinnati might investigate a multi-modal transit plan that integrates bus rapid transit along the city's major transportation corridors, including I-75, I-71, Queen City Avenue, Harrison Avenue, Vine Street, Reading Road, Madison Road and Martin Luther King Drive. Metro is working with the City in seeking grant funds for a study of BRT application in this region.

### **The STREETCAR Project**

It's about the economy, .... A streetcar was included in the 2002 MetroMoves Plan and would have connected Northern Kentucky and downtown Cincinnati. The county-wide revenue proposal to help fund the plan did not prevail at the general election that year. The City of Cincinnati took up the streetcar idea as a way to connect the region's two largest employment centers. The current Cincinnati Streetcar plan is designed to be an urban circulator connecting existing and future destinations, promoting walkable communities and creating a more livable environment.

The route extends from the Banks at the Ohio River through downtown to the Findlay Market area with a connection up the hill via Vine Street. Main and Walnut streets provide north south alignment in the business district and Race and Elm streets serve in Over-the-Rhine. The route around the uptown area is under study for a subsequent phase of development.

A 2007 Feasibility Study conducted for the City of Cincinnati identified an alignment that connects a maximum number of existing destinations and provides development potential. The study

was guided by goals for the system within the corridor and surrounding neighborhoods. The goals included:

- Improve mobility and connectivity
- Support development that will create a more livable, walkable environment
- Enhance transit
- An affordable transit investment.

To help determine if a streetcar is a worthwhile public investment, benefits were quantified. The benefits analyzed included the following:

- Mobility improvements for access to employment. According to 2000 census, 40% of people within the streetcar corridor do not own a car.
- Travel Cost Savings from reduced downtown Cincinnati traffic, vehicle operating costs and emission cost savings
- Economic Development Benefits as measured by premiums for commercial and residential property. Private investment will result in increases in property values and in the density of development.

A streetcar is a small train that runs on steel tracks in mixed traffic. Modern streetcars are electrically powered, and quiet. The streetcars are in the lane of traffic nearest to the sidewalk and at places where the streetcars stop, along the sidewalk, the curbs are bumped out so that passengers may step directly onto the cars.

A streetcar is a catalyst for economic development. The permanence of tracks encourages development all along its route. Not just the big cities, Portland and San Diego, but smaller ones too, Tampa, Little Rock, and Kenosha, have found success and development.

Portland has experienced \$2.8 billion dollars worth of economic development; Seattle's 3 yr. old streetcar has 1.3 miles of track and only 11 stops along the way but has surpassed projections and has seen \$56 million in economic development. Smaller locations like Kenosha, Wisconsin, have seen \$17 million of economic development along its track. League members who have visited Portland and San Diego and ridden their streetcars have seen how it stops at major attractions and brings development.

Transit access stimulates the demand for residential units located in the vicinity of transit stops and raises property market values primarily to those properties within 1/4 to 1/2 mile of a tran-

sit station. In addition transit development is expected to increase land use density in its vicinity.

In the Cincinnati streetcar corridor there are opportunities for redevelopment of over 1000 housing units and more than 90 acres of surface parking as well as more than 7 million square feet of new office and retail space. More people in more housing units will benefit the City by bringing in earnings taxes and additional property taxes which also benefits the school district. Job calculations include about 1,800 jobs in construction and another 9,000 in the long term.

About 90 percent of the total benefits of the streetcar stem from economic development. Total projected benefits greatly exceed costs.

#### *Ridership*

The streetcar is scheduled to begin operating in the spring of 2013 and projected to attract 6,640 riders in the first year. Primary beneficiaries of the project are area residents and/or workers and shoppers in the core who would benefit from expanded mobility choices. 20,000 people live within the planned route from downtown to uptown and tens of thousands of jobs are found there. University of Cincinnati and the whole medical complex is Cincinnati's biggest employer. Visitors to the area also will benefit.

#### *Funding*

Capital funds to build the \$128 million Phase 1 of the streetcar have been identified. Cincinnati City Council has authorized bonds from city capital funds, funds from the sale of the Blue Ash Airport and Tax Increment Finance Districts. TIF Districts are areas surrounding the route that will experience increased site value from the development of the streetcars. OKI has approved funds from Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funding, money which supports transportation projects that reduce mobile source emissions. The State of Ohio through the Ohio Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) allocated funds to the projects to promote growth of jobs and economic development.

Recently TRAC recommended a grant for construction funding for Phase 1 and a grant for Phase 2 to coordinate planning needed for the Uptown Circulator. The federal government has awarded grants to Cincinnati for the Streetcar Project from the U.S. Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Housing and Ur-

ban Development.

#### *Operating Plan*

The Cincinnati Streetcar Development Partners, a consortium of 12 companies, was chosen to work with the City to help develop a plan for design, construction, operation and maintenance of the streetcar including work on the operating and financing plans.

The City is working with SORTA on development of an Operating Plan to be completed in early 2011. SORTA will serve as the operator of the Cincinnati Streetcar when agreements with the City are finalized. SORTA and the City will coordinate streetcar service with existing Metro bus service to maximize the benefit of each and coordinate the co-location of stops for each mode of transportation.

Six modern cars will run on rail embedded within the surface of the roadway with traffic 18 hours a day, 365 days per year. Cars will seat 30-40 with a maximum occupancy of 130-140. Cars have large open spaces to accommodate strollers, bikes, and standing passengers. Travel time from the Banks to McMicken, about 1.9 miles, will be about 15 minutes with departures about every 10-20 minutes. There will be 3.9 miles of one-way track operating in downtown and OTR and 18 streetcar stops including platform and shelter for comfort and safety. The Uptown connector is 0.9 miles. Estimates project an operating and maintenance cost of about \$3 million annually. Fares are to be determined.

#### *Objection*

There is opposition to the streetcar plan. Opponents claim the amount of City capital funds to build the system could be used in some better way. There is a perception by some that the streetcar project is only wanted by the urban elite and that running the system could be a drain on the City's operating budget.

#### **PASSENGER RAIL**

In recognition of the important role of passenger rail transportation as a competitive alternative to automobile and airplane intercity travel, Ohio worked to establish a proposed "3C Quick Start Service." It was to provide new passenger rail service between Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Cincinnati and would provide additional mobility options and transportation choice for travelers.

The intent of the 2008 Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act was improving passenger rail service in the U.S. and required an updated state rail plan for any state seeking federal assistance for passenger or freight improvements. The May 2010 Ohio Statewide Rail Plan, developed by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC), fulfilled the required update. It formulated a state vision for rail in the future.

The Ohio Statewide Rail Plan contains, among reports on freight and rail safety, an exploration of the current passenger rail system operating in Ohio as well as financing options for passenger rail expansion. Currently, there are seven Amtrak passenger rail stations in use in Ohio. Of these, two are platforms, and one is a platform with a shelter house-type waiting area. The other four are depot buildings with seating areas. Cincinnati, Cleveland and Toledo currently have connections to intermodal transportation options from the passenger rail stations, which includes Metro in Cincinnati and the RTA in Cleveland.

In Ohio, ridership on the Amtrak system exceeded 120,000 passengers in FY 2008, an increase of 11% from FY 2007. There were 128,174 passengers in 2009. Current figures show 14% more Ohioans rode passenger trains in 2010; nearly 147,000 passengers got on or off trains in Ohio. Nationally, Amtrak set a new annual ridership record of 28.7 million passengers for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010. Since 2000 Amtrak national ridership is up nearly 37%.

Thirty-eight years of conventional and high speed rail planning studies initiated by governors or legislators from both major political parties have concluded that Ohio is one of the best candidates in the U.S. for developing a system of intercity passenger rail services. The most recent study, the 2002-2007 Ohio Hub Study, identified the Cleveland-Columbus-Cincinnati or 3C corridor as the starting point because *"In all network options, the 3C Corridor has the highest projected load factors on the largest trains with the greatest revenue potential."*

To keep capital costs down and develop a service that could be started relatively quickly, ORDC looked to develop a 79 mile per hour "Quick Start" service for the 3C Corridor. Amtrak worked on an operational plan to provide details of the proposed new service.

Following the Quick Start program, the next phase was to have been the implementation of high speed rail service to create an intrastate connection among 9 Midwest states (Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin). High speed rail is capable of traveling at 110 mph on primary routes and 80-90 mph on secondary routes.

Because Ohio's railroads are "vital" to the business and commerce of Ohio and because all of the tracks and right-of-way are the private property of the private freight railroad companies that own and maintain them, ORDC recognizes that any passenger rail use of private freight rail property must provide a benefit to the freight railroad and leave the host freight railroad with improved ability to move its freight after that passenger service is started.

Amtrak was willing to operate new intercity rail services if the state provided sufficient capital funding for infrastructure and an operating subsidy to cover the difference between revenue and expenses. This concept has been successfully implemented in a number of states including California, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Virginia, and North Carolina.

Federal stimulus dollars under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) had been set aside in 2009 for developing high speed rail systems nation-wide. A strategic plan identified high speed rail corridors as potential recipients of federal funding. The plan included the Mid-west Regional Rail Initiative centering on the Chicago Hub Network which included the 3C corridor. The recent \$400 million federal award to Ohio under ARRA for the 3C project provided an opportunity to establish a viable passenger rail service in Ohio. Decisions about whether to initiate service required consultation with the host freight railroads, and state and local officials. Ohio Governor John Kasich rejected the federal funding for the 3C rail project because of operation costs and projected ridership. The funds were distributed to other states, primarily California and Florida.

Two high speed rail demonstration projects are planned. Florida has been awarded a federal stimulus grant to develop a Tampa to Orlando high speed rail segment. The route would be built on public land reducing the steps needed for property acquisition. As of January 2011 Florida Governor Rick Scott was considering whether to

continue the project.

The Midwest High Speed Rail Association has proposed linking Chicago and St. Louis via 220 mph bullet trains. A wide, straight Chicago-Champaign railroad right-of-way offers an opportunity to build a demonstration segment quickly.

California has plans for 200 mph trains on dedicated tracks. In January 2011 the California High Speed Rail Authority moved forward in building a statewide system with the announcement that federal funds from a recent ARRA grant will be set aside for property acquisition and railway development in the Los Angeles area. A 2008 voter approved \$10 billion bond measure for the high-speed rail project would be a source of matching funds for the federal stimulus money.

Federal multi-year surface transportation authorization legislation is to be considered in the upcoming Congressional session. The outcome will affect both bus and passenger rail transportation.

*Transportation Committee members:* Christen Browne, Mary Kay Gardner, Helen Hunter, John Hunter, Carolyn Miller and Chris Moran, Chair.

## GLOSSARY AND REFERENCES

### GLOSSARY:

**Amtrak** - The National Railroad Passenger Corporation (better known as Amtrak) is a for-profit corporation that operates intercity passenger rail services in 46 States and the District of Columbia, in addition to serving as a contractor in various capacities for several commuter rail agencies.

**Capital Funds** – These are funds restricted by law for “permanent improvement” purposes. A permanent improvement is defined as an asset with a useful life of at least five years and a value of at least \$10,000. By law funds from the General Capital budget cannot be used to pay for operating expenses such as Police Officer salaries.

**Operating Funds** – These are unrestricted funds which account for ongoing costs.

**OKI** - The Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) engaged in long range transportation planning at the regional level. It determines how federal dollars for transportation are spent in the region. In addition to a multi-county geographic area, transportation planning responsibilities are multi-modal including freight and personal movement by motorized and non-motorized modes. HYPERLINK "<http://www.oki.com>" [www.oki.com](http://www.oki.com)

**SORTA** - The Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority, SORTA, is a special district, an independent political subdivision of the State of Ohio which provides facilities for transportation.

**Transit Hubs** – These are locations where several bus routes or transit lines converge. Hubs are generally locations with the highest level of transit service and can be a simple stop or a building that serves neighborhood community development.

**Vehicles Miles Traveled (VMT)** - The number of miles that residential vehicles are driven.

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“Building Community Through Mass Transit: Metro at 25”. Daniel Hurley. Reprinted from *Queen City Heritage*. Cincinnati Historical Society, Vol 56, Spring 1998.

California High-Speed Rail Authority – HYPERLINK "<http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov>" [www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov](http://www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov)

*Characteristics of Bus Rapid Transit for Decision-Making 2009*. The Center for National Bus Rapid Transit Institute. HYPERLINK "<http://www.nbrt.org>" [www.nbrt.org](http://www.nbrt.org)

HYPERLINK "<http://www.Cincystreetcar.com>" [www.Cincystreetcar.com](http://www.Cincystreetcar.com)

City of Cincinnati: HYPERLINK "<http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov>" [www.cincinnati-oh.gov](http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov) . Streetcar information and Council Motion #201001485. November 9, 2010. Motion re: Bus Rapid Transit.

Federal Railroad Administration – One of ten agencies within the U.S. Department of Transportation concerned with intermodal transportation. HYPERLINK "<http://www.fra.dot.gov>"  
[www.fra.dot.gov](http://www.fra.dot.gov)

Highspeed Passenger Rail – Information at American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials - AASHTO is a nonprofit, non-partisan association representing highway and transportation departments in 50 states fostering the development, operation, and maintenance of an integrated national transportation system. HYPERLINK "<http://www.highspeed-rail.org>"  
[www.highspeed-rail.org](http://www.highspeed-rail.org)

Midwest High Speed Rail Association - Member-supported, non-profit organization advocating for fast, frequent and dependable trains linking the entire Midwest. HYPERLINK "<http://www.midwesthsr.org>"  
[www.midwesthsr.org](http://www.midwesthsr.org)

National Association of Railroad Passengers - Works for a modern, customer-focused national passenger train network that provides a travel choice. HYPERLINK "<http://www.narprail.org>"  
[www.narprail.org](http://www.narprail.org)

U.S. Department of Transportation – HYPERLINK "<http://www.dot.gov>" [www.dot.gov](http://www.dot.gov)

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