CHAPTER 3: PASSENGER RAIL

This chapter highlights past and present Amtrak operations, tourist/excursion rail lines, and recent or ongoing passenger related studies.

I. AMTRAK

Amtrak currently serves over 500 communities in 46 states and the District of Columbia. **Figure 3-1** shows Amtrak's national system. In addition to its intercity service, Amtrak is the nation's largest provider of contract-commuter service for state and regional authorities. Originally created in 1970 as a for-profit government corporation, it officially began service on May 1, 1971 with 184 trains serving 314 destinations. Amtrak was granted a monopoly to provide intercity rail transportation. In 1971 its monthly ridership was 1,239,402. In 2001 its monthly ridership had grown to approximately 1,960,000.

Amtrak currently serves more than 500 communities across the United States.

Amtrak has requested $1.2 billion dollars in federal aid for fiscal year 2003. If this is not received, service along 18 long distance routes may need to be discontinued. Research from several of the websites listed below indicate that, most likely, funding for the upcoming fiscal year will not reach the requested level, although Congress has submitted varying proposals, some fairly ambitious.

With as many differing opinions as proposed actions, the future of Amtrak and rail passenger service in general is uncertain. For further or up-to-date information, the following sources are available:

- http://thomas.loc.gov - searchable legislative information
- http://www.amtrak.com - Amtrak website
- http://www.amtrakreformcouncil.gov - Amtrak Reform Council website
- http://www.narprail.org - National Association of Railroad Passengers website
- national or local media providers – media sources regularly provide rail passenger related articles.

Figure 3-1

2001 Amtrak National System

2002 Kentucky Statewide Rail Plan

II. KENTUCKY AMTRAK SERVICE

Amtrak trains serve five cities in Kentucky. The *Cardinal* serves the cities of Maysville, South Portsmouth, and Ashland and runs from Chicago, Illinois to Washington, D.C. The *Cardinal* runs three trains per week offering both sleeper and diner cars. The *City of New Orleans* provides service from Chicago to New Orleans, Louisiana, passing through Fulton. The City of New Orleans offers daily service and offers sleeper and dining cars. No connecting services are provided at Maysville, South Portsmouth, Ashland, or Fulton. Louisville is served by the *Kentucky Cardinal*, which connects Chicago and Indianapolis to Jeffersonville, Indiana, and Louisville. The *Kentucky Cardinal* offers daily service between Louisville and Chicago, providing an alternative to the *Cardinal's* non-daily service. **Figure 3-2** depicts passenger routes and stations serving the Kentucky market.

Amtrak records for the state of Kentucky were obtained for the years FY 1994 through FY 2001 and are summarized in **Table 3-1** below. As can be seen, ridership serving Kentucky held steady or steadily decreased from FY 1994 to FY 1998. In FY 1999, ridership dramatically increased, but decreased again in FY 2000 and FY 2001.

Table 3-1

Amtrak Ridership for Seleted Years and Cities

City	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Kentucky Stations								
Ashland	--	--	--	--	1,391	2,833	2,778	2,631
Catlettsburg	2,273	2,461	2,133	2,574	--	--	--	--
Fulton	3,759	3,163	2,454	2,362	2,470	2,721	2,645	2,309
Maysville	1,101	1,017	1,248	1,345	1,723	3,360	1,731	1,646
S. Portsmouth	1,337	1,755	1,495	1,620	1,337	1,357	1,223	1,483
Louisville	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Kentucky Total	***8,470***	***8,396***	***7,330***	***7,901***	***6,921***	***10,271***	***8,377***	***8,069***
Regional Stations								
Cincinnati, OH	15,803	13,976	13,066	16,095	16,928	17,930	14,298	19,084
Jeffersonville, IN	--	--	--	--	--	--	6,309	5,551
Regional Total	***24,273***	***22,372***	***20,396***	***23,996***	***23,849***	***28,201***	***28,984***	***32,704***

Notes: The Catlettsburg Amtrak station was moved to Ashland in 1997. Service to Louisville began December 2001 and service to Jeffersonville, IN began in 1999.

Legend

- Amtrak Station/Stop
- Existing Amtrak Route
- Proposed Amtrak Route
- Interstate Highway
- Parkway

Kentucky Amtrak Stations

Ashland
99 Fifteenth St.
Ashland, KY 41101

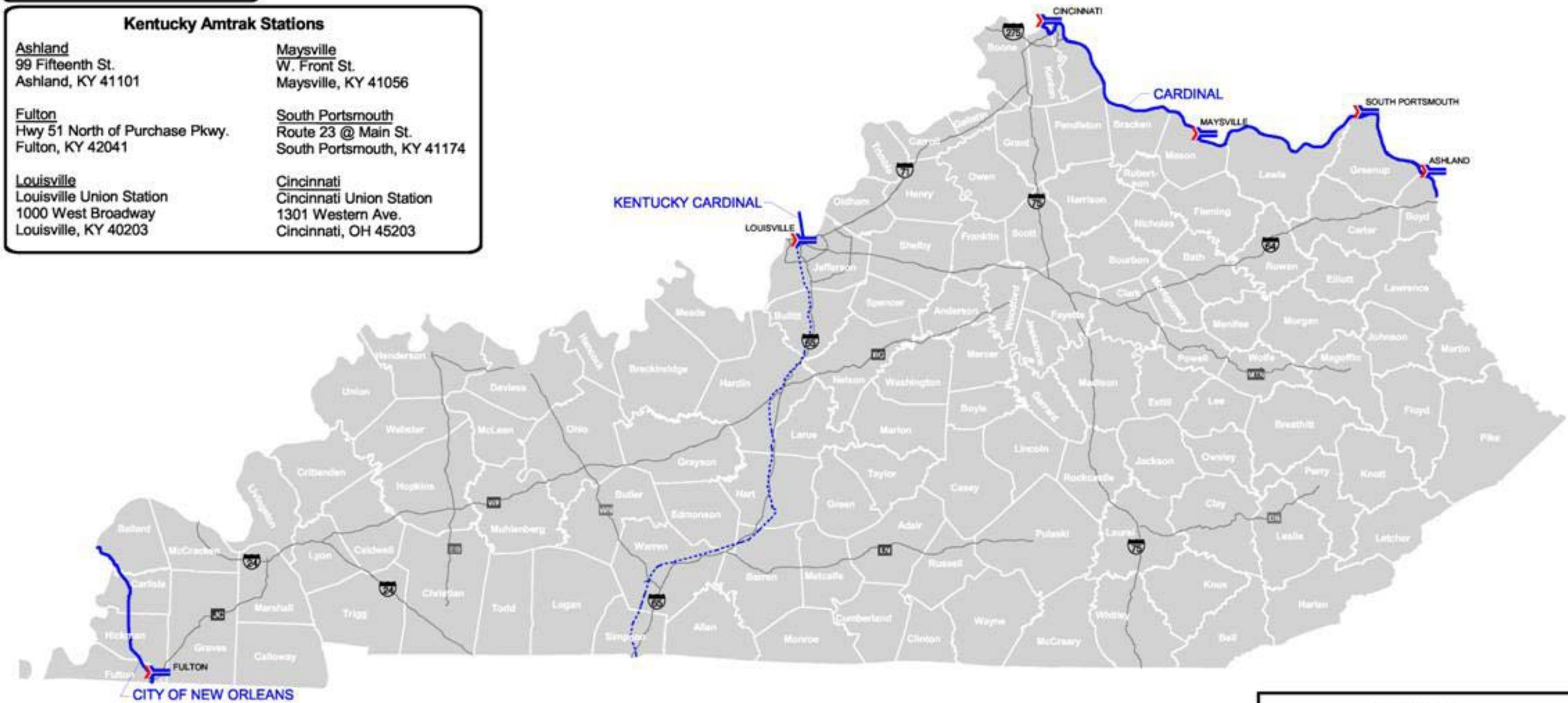
Fulton
Hwy 51 North of Purchase Pkwy.
Fulton, KY 42041

Louisville
Louisville Union Station
1000 West Broadway
Louisville, KY 40203

Maysville
W. Front St.
Maysville, KY 41056

South Portsmouth
Route 23 @ Main St.
South Portsmouth, KY 41174

Cincinnati
Cincinnati Union Station
1301 Western Ave.
Cincinnati, OH 45203



Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics: 2001 National Transportation Atlas Database

Figure 3-2

2002 Existing Kentucky Amtrak Routes

2002 Kentucky Statewide Rail Plan

III. CONNECTING PASSENGER SERVICE

Thruway bus service is a passenger option providing connections between Amtrak and cities not currently served by Amtrak. Guaranteed connection to an Amtrak train station, through fares and common ticketing are provided in most cases. A Thruway motorcoach connection is provided at Louisville, connecting Louisville and Indianapolis and continuing to Chicago. Also serving Kentucky passengers is a station in Cincinnati. This station is served by the *Cardinal* and a Thruway motorcoach connection. The Thruway motorcoach connection out of Cincinnati provides a more direct link to Columbus, Ohio, Cleveland, Ohio, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as apposed to traveling by Amtrak train via Chicago.

IV. TOURIST/EXCURSION RAIL LINES

As previously mentioned, five tourist or excursion trains operate in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. These are described below and displayed in **Figure 3-3**.

A. Hardin Southern Railroad (HSRR)

Designated a Kentucky landmark, this short line currently operates eleven miles in the western portion of the state. It runs from Hardin to North Murray in Calloway and Marshall Counties. Volunteers conduct train service and are also working to establish a railroad museum.

B. Big South Fork Scenic Railway

Located in Stearns, Kentucky, the Big South Fork Scenic Railway is a recreational railroad that takes its passengers on a twelve-mile tour. It operates on track that is owned by the Kentucky & Tennessee Railroad. A tunnel, a restored mining camp, walking paths, an abandoned mine, and a gift shop are features available to the patrons. The train is in operation from May to October.

Big South Fork Scenic Railway train awaiting departure

C. My Old Kentucky Dinner Train

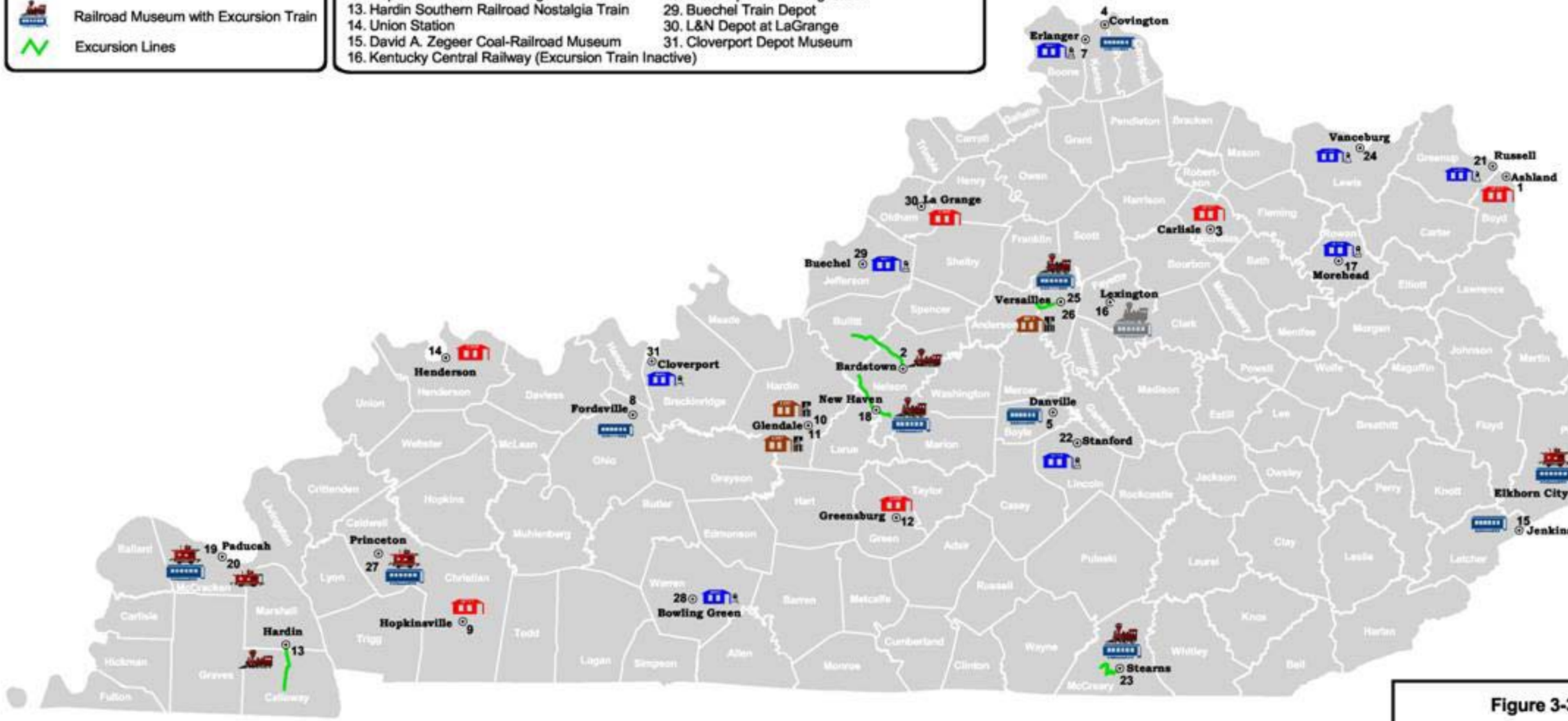
My Old Kentucky Dinner Train is located in Bardstown, Kentucky, and began its operation in 1988. Originally constructed by the Bardstown and Louisville Railroad in 1860, the branch was purchased by the R. J. Corman Company in 1987 from CSXT. The two-hour train ride operates year-round.

Legend

- Depot
- Museum in Depot
- Restaurant in Depot
- Railroad Museum
- Railroad Static Display
- Excursion Train
- Railroad Museum with Static Display
- Railroad Museum with Excursion Train
- Excursion Lines

Attractions

1. Ashland Depot
2. My Old Kentucky Dinner Train
3. Carlisle Passenger Depot
4. Railway Exposition Museum
5. Danville Model Train Museum
6. Elkhorn City Railroad Museum
7. Southern Railroad Depot
8. Fordsville Depot Museum
9. L&N Railroad Passenger Station
10. The Depot
11. Whistle Stop Restaurant
12. Depot and Pedestrian Bridge
13. Hardin Southern Railroad Nostalgia Train
14. Union Station
15. David A. Zegeer Coal-Railroad Museum
16. Kentucky Central Railway (Excursion Train Inactive)
17. Morehead Depot
18. Kentucky Railway Museum
19. Paducah Railroad Museum
20. Steam Locomotive No. 1518
21. Russell CSX Depot
22. Depot Railroad Museum
23. Big South Fork Scenic Railway
24. Vanceburg Depot Museum
25. Nostalgia Station
26. Bluegrass Scenic Railroad
27. Caldwell County Railroad Museum & Caboose
28. L&N Depot at Bowling Green
29. Buechel Train Depot
30. L&N Depot at LaGrange
31. Cloverport Depot Museum



Source: The Great Rail Trail, West Kentucky Corporation. Verified by Project Stakeholders.

Figure 3-3

2002 Kentucky Rail Attractions

2002 Kentucky Statewide Rail Plan

D. Kentucky Railway Museum

The Kentucky Railway Museum is located in New Haven, Kentucky. It operates over 17 miles of track that was formerly part of the Louisville & Nashville (a CSXT predecessor) Lebanon branch. A passenger boarding area is found in Boston, Kentucky. A scenic tour, a collection of artifacts and memorabilia, and a gift store are features that are offered at the Kentucky Railway Museum.

Kentucky Railway Museum in New Haven, Kentucky

E. Bluegrass Railroad Museum

Located 1.5 miles from downtown Versailles, the Bluegrass Railroad Museum offers a short tour within the Bluegrass Region of Kentucky. Visitors are able to travel down the former mainline of the Louisville Southern Railroad. Other features include a display car and museum exhibits.

F. Additional Attractions

In addition to the tourist/excursion lines noted above, there are several attractions throughout Kentucky that focus on the past and present rail industry. These attractions include railroad depots, rail museums, restaurants in former depots, railroad static displays, or some combination of these. In addition to tourist/excursion trains, **Figure 3-3** displays a number of other rail attractions. **Table 3-2** provides additional information for each.

V. FUTURE PASSENGER SERVICE

Several studies are underway to explore and potentially expand the availability of passenger rail in Kentucky. Some of these studies are described below.

A. Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI)

The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative was formed in 1996 in an effort to improve and expand passenger rail service in the Midwest. Participants in the MWRRI include the states of Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin and Amtrak and the Federal Railroad Administration. The Commonwealth of Kentucky is not currently participating in the MWRRI because there is presently no funding available for development of the proposed Midwest Regional Rail System (MWRRS). The KYTC reserves the right to reconsider its position if funding were to become available.

Table 3-2
Kentucky Rail Attractions

1	Ashland Depot Ashland, Kentucky (606) 327-2057	2	My Old Kentucky Dinner Train Bardstown, Kentucky (502) 348-7500
3	Carlisle Passenger Depot Carlisle, Kentucky (606) 289-5174	4	Railway Exposition Museum Covington, Kentucky (859) 491-7245
5	Danville Model Train Museum Danville, Kentucky (859) 236-8090	6	Elkhorn City Railroad Museum Elkhorn City, Kentucky (606) 754-4554
7	Southern Railroad Depot Erlanger, Kentucky (606) 727-7955	8	Fordsville Depot Museum Fordsville, Kentucky (270) 683-3636
9	L&N Railroad Passenger Station Hopkinsville, Kentucky (270) 885-9096	10	The Depot Glendale, Kentucky
11	Whistle Stop Restaurant Glendale, Kentucky (270) 369-6000	12	Depot and Pedestrian Bridge Greensburg, Kentucky (270) 932-4298
13	Hardin Southern Railroad Nostalgia Train Hardin, Kentucky (270) 437-4555	14	Union Station Henderson, Kentucky (270) 831-1200
15	David A. Zegeer Coal-RR Museum Jenkins, Kentucky (606) 832-4676	16	Kentucky Central Railway Lexington, Kentucky (859) 293-0807 (Call First)
17	Morehead Depot Morehead, Kentucky (606) 784-6221	18	Kentucky Railway Museum New Haven, Kentucky (800) 272-0152
19	Paducah Railroad Museum Paducah, Kentucky (270) 442-4032	20	Steam Locomotive No. 1518 Paducah, Kentucky (800) PADUCAH
21	Russell CSX Depot Russell, Kentucky (606) 836-9666	22	Depot Railroad Museum Stanford, Kentucky (606) 365-0207
23	Big South Fork Scenic Railway Stearns, Kentucky (800) 462-5664	24	Vanceburg Depot Museum Vanceburg, Kentucky
25	Nostalgia Station Versailles, Kentucky (859) 873-2497	26	Bluegrass Scenic Railroad Versailles, Kentucky (800) 755-2476
27	Caldwell County Railroad Museum & Caboose Princeton, Kentucky (270) 365-0582	28	L&N Depot at Bowling Green Bowling Green, Kentucky
29	Buechel Train Depot Buechel, Kentucky	30	L&N Depot at LaGrange LaGrange, Kentucky
31	Cloverport Depot Museum Cloverport, Kentucky		

The objectives of the MWRRI are increased operating speeds, train frequencies, system connectivity, and high service reliability. The Initiative has developed the proposed MWRRS to improve the level and quality of regional passenger rail service. This, in turn, will improve mobility and stimulate economic development. The proposed MWRRS network is comprised of nine corridors consisting of 3,000 miles of track. The majority of the system is owned by freight railroads, and the remainder is owned by Amtrak and Metra (Chicago's commuter rail operator). The rail system will have a station located in Cincinnati and Louisville with feeder bus service from Lexington to Cincinnati. Feeder bus service will also connect Paducah and Carbondale, Illinois. The implementation of the plan is expected to take place over a 10-year phasing program.

There are five major plan elements. These elements are as follows:

- The use of 3,000 miles of existing rail rights-of-way to connect rural, small urban, and metropolitan areas;
- The operation of a passenger rail system providing through-service in Chicago to locations throughout the Midwest;
- The introduction of modern train equipment operating at speeds up to 110 mph;
- The provision of multi-modal connections to improve system access; and
- Improvement in reliability and on-time performance.

Based on the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative Executive Report[1], the capital costs of MWRRS include two components. These components are rolling stock and infrastructure. The total capital investment is projected to be $4.1 billion. The rolling stock costs are expected to be approximately $652 million, while infrastructure costs are estimated to be $3.4 billion. Infrastructure costs include the implementation of a state-of-the-art positive train-control signaling system, improvement of highway/railroad grade crossings, and construction or renovation of passenger stations. As stated above, the costs were provided as part of the Executive Report. It is anticipated that the above costs will increase as the study is further refined.

An economic analysis of the plan by the Federal Railroad Administration established that a Midwest rail passenger system would offer the highest level of economic benefit associated with rail investment anywhere in the United States, with the exception of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor. Resource savings will be evident in automobile operating costs, relief of airport and highway congestion, and reduced exhaust emissions and energy usage. Other benefits of the proposed MWRRS include the enhancement of the Midwest region's existing transportation system, its practicability as a public and private investment, and

[1] *Midwest Regional Rail System, A Transportation Network for the 21st Century Executive Report.* Prepared by Transportation Economics and Management System, Inc. Prepared for Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin Departments of Transportation, Nebraska Department of Roads, Ohio Rail Development Commission, and Amtrak. February 2000.

spin-off benefits such as freight and commuter rail improvements, community development, and job creation.

For up-to-date information on the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative and the proposed Midwest Regional Rail System, the following websites can be referenced:

- www.midwesthsr.org – Midwest High Speed Rail Coalition's website
- http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/projects/state/docs/railmidwest.pdf - Executive Report
- www.amtrak.com – Amtrak's website
- www.fra.dot.gov – Federal Railroad Administration's website

B. *Examination of I-75, I-64, and I-71 High Speed Rail Corridors*, 1999[2]

A review of high-speed rail services, proposals, and a preliminary assessment of the potential for high-speed ground transportation between the Kentucky cities of Lexington, Louisville, and Covington was performed for the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. The three metropolitan areas in the study area had a combined population of 3.1 million in 1997.

A rail ridership forecast was designed to produce an initial estimate of potential patronage. Additional ridership could be derived from air connect passengers and a Cincinnati connection with the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative. The revenues of a high-speed rail corridor would be generated solely from patronage using fares competitive with other land transport means. The estimated cost to construct the system is $5.48 billion.

It has been concluded that two major factors work against the proposal. First, the system suffers from highway-competitive travel times. In addition, the trips are not long enough to compete for airline traffic, the target of many high-speed rail proposals. However, it may be desirable to re-examine the proposal if the Cincinnati-Chicago leg of the Midwest Rail Initiative becomes a reality and proves successful.

C. Louisville Transportation Tomorrow Light Rail Project

The Louisville Transportation Tomorrow Light Rail Study is a project that investigates the possibility of the addition of a light rail system in Louisville, Kentucky, that would connect downtown Louisville with the University of Louisville, Louisville International Airport, the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center, and the United Parcel Service (UPS) air hub. As defined by the Transit Authority of River City, the group performing the study, light rail is an electrified train system that can run at street level and is powered by overhead electrical lines.

There are two phases involved in the Light Rail Study. Phase I took place in 1997 and 1998 and examined the benefits a light rail system would bring to

[2] Examination of I-75, I-64 and I-71 High Speed Rail Corridors. Prepared by Wilbur Smith Associates. Prepared for the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. May 1999.

Louisville. These benefits include improved mobility, the support of development and redevelopment of certain neighborhoods, reduced air pollution, and the easing of congestion on I-65. Alternatives to a light rail system included doing nothing, enhancing bus service, improving roadways, and adding bus-ways and high occupancy vehicle lanes. In Phase II (1998-2000), community advisory groups determined that light rail was the preferred alternative and chose a general route for the system.

The expected users of the light rail system are car commuters, commuters utilizing bus connections, and downtown and neighborhood residents. The expected cost is $551 million, with $25 million being used to enhance the current bus system.

For up-to-date information on the Louisville Transportation Tomorrow Light Rail Project, the following website is the official project website and can be referenced: http://www.t-2.org/index.html.

D. Ohio Kentucky Indiana Light Rail Project

The Ohio Kentucky Indiana (OKI) Light Rail Project, also known as the I-71 Corridor Study, is a current study to determine the best way to fight rising congestion along a stretch of I-71 in northern Kentucky and Cincinnati. Presently, traffic congestion in Cincinnati is creating economic costs of $500 million per year. This congestion, which is projected to increase under current conditions, will cause increased fuel consumption, increased pollution levels, and increased economic costs.

To fight the increasing congestion problems, three alternatives were considered for the I-71 corridor. The first option was to add bus routes; the second was to construct a light rail system while simultaneously improving the current bus system; and the third option was to construct one additional travel lane on I-71 in each direction. Ultimately, the light rail option was chosen because of the following benefits: congestion would be relieved, mobility would become more affordable, and light rail would lead to improved land use and more community development. The proposed light rail system would be composed of nineteen miles in the I-71 corridor with twenty-one stations.

For up-to-date information on light rail developments in the Greater Cincinnati area, the Ohio Kentucky Indiana Regional Council of Governments website (www.oki.org) can be used as a point of reference.