

# Ohio's Freight Rail Story

*How Railroads Help Ohio Prosper*

## OH-RAILcorp.

Ohi-Rail Corporation traces its roots back to the predecessors of the New York Central System who built the railroad to tap into the vast coal resources found in southeastern Ohio. Later known as Penn Central's Secondary Track, the 34 mile line stretches south from the City of Minerva through the coal rich counties of Carroll, Harrison and Jefferson to Hopedale in southeastern Ohio. Along with the 3.8 mile Wolf Run Branch, this railroad, commonly known as the "Piney Fork Line", cut a path through this coal rich region of Ohio.

The rail line thrived by transporting coal well into the late 1960's. With the last two mines ceasing regular operations in the late 1970s, Penn Central moved to abandon and remove the track. Looking to preserve the line, the Ohio Department of Transportation, Division of Rail Transportation Development, purchased the Piney Fork Line and associated track in July 1982 and began looking for an operator.

Ohi-Rail Corporation, a group of forward thinking rail investors and coal mining interests, stepped forward and signed an agreement with ODOT to operate and preserve the railroad. With little or no traffic on the line, 'preserved' is the best way to describe those early days. Always forward thinking, Ohi-Rail again stepped up again in 1993 when Conrail decided to abandon Ohi-Rail's northern connection in Minerva. Ohi-Rail not only purchased the threatened line from Conrail, but they also purchased the additional track from Bayard into Minerva, including the Minerva Yard.



Still with little traffic being generated on the railroad, Ohi-Rail made living storing rail cars in the Minerva Yard until rumors of a new natural resource boom began circulating around the communities

## Ohi-Rail Corporation



the railroad served. Suddenly, Utica Shale became the new life blood of the railroad as oil and gas wells, using the latest technology in directional drilling and fracking methods, began producing massive amounts of oil and natural gas liquids in the counties the railroad served. With the coming of the shale boom, so did the oil and gas drilling companies and their support industries. From pipe suppliers to frac sand distributors, to now oil and gas liquids themselves, the railroad's business opportunities seem endless.

Ohi-Rail moved quickly, and when a major frac sand distributor located on the railroad in Minerva, the railroad completely rebuilt the Minerva Yard to accommodate the increased traffic and more. Today, the main line is being completely rehabilitated from Minerva south to tap into the vast industrial property reserves along the line. Sand cars fill those new yard tracks. Also in the railyard, tank cars are being filled with natural gas liquids being trans-loaded from truck. The future is bright again as the once coal-focused railroad is transforming itself to serve the great energy development growth in eastern Ohio.



<i>Employees:</i>	<b>10 (full time and part time)</b>
<i>Route Miles:</i>	<b>43 miles</b>
<i>Major Commodities:</i>	<b>Sand, Condensate, Plastics, Aluminum</b>
<i>Headquarters:</i>	<b>Steubenville, Ohio</b>
<i>Significant Ohio Facilities:</i>	<b>Locomotive Shop in Minerva</b>