



Statement of Amalgamated Transit Union Ohio Joint Conference Board
Before the Ohio Senate Transportation, Commerce, & Labor Committee
April 26, 2016

Contact:
Carly Allen
Financial Secretary-Treasurer-Business Agent
Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 697
2300 Ashland Avenue, Suite 223 A
Toledo, Ohio 43620

419-908-6292

Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) on S.B. 315

S.B. 315 provides the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) with additional appropriations for highway construction and transit projects available to Ohio as a result of three sources of revenue received, or anticipated to be received, by the Department. One source is the *Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act of 2015* (Pub. L No. 114.94), passed by the U.S. Congress at the end of 2015.

Leadership on both sides of the aisle in Washington put aside partisan politics to produce the best federal transit bill since 1998. Here's the good news: by 2020, the FAST Act will boost transit spending nationwide by nearly 20%. The bad news is that most transit systems in Ohio will not benefit from this unexpected generosity from D.C.

The reason for the low impact is that Ohio is currently at 1980 levels for state transit funding (\$7.3 million statewide). As far as state funding for public transit is concerned, we are near the bottom of the list in terms of overall dollars as well as the amount we spend per capita (around 65 cents). States that have virtually no transit even rank higher than us, including South Dakota, Arkansas, West Virginia, and Kansas. Even Wyoming, which may have more cows than people, invests more per person in transit than Ohio.

We have 60 transit systems (14 urban, 10 small urban, and 36 rural), and all must share a piece of the \$7 million. Since 2009, Ohio transit funding has dropped by more than 50%. The reason? Unlike other states, we have no dedicated source of funding (like gas taxes, lottery funds, vehicle registration fees, etc.). Therefore, Ohio relies solely on General Funds for transit, subject to the ups and downs of the budget process.

Since there is simply not enough state funding to spread around to all agencies in the state, over the last five years, ODOT has taken all \$7.3 million of its state funding and given it to the smaller systems in the state. The states' "Large Urban" transit systems, including RTA in Cleveland, SORTA in Cincinnati, COTA in Columbus and TARTA in Toledo receive "flexible" federal highway dollars (like CMAQ and STP) to keep them afloat in lieu of state funding. That money can be used for transit, and some of it can be turned into operating aid (with limitations).

But as far as state funding for operations is concerned, we simply have none. This cripples the larger systems, as federal rules severely restrict the amount of funds that can be used to keep the doors open. FAST Act money is mostly for capital projects only. The federal government has left it up to the states and local governments to come up with the money to pay for day-to-day expenses. For years, Ohio has simply ignored this. As a result, we have to continually raise fares and cut back services on people who cannot afford to dig deeper into their wallets to get to work.

Therefore, while we are glad that S.B. 315 allows new federal funds to flow, the committee should know that due to the lack of resources coming from Columbus, the impact on the streets is minimal. ATU calls on the legislature to increase state funding for transit so that all of our citizens, no matter where they live, can fully benefit from the new federal transportation bill.

ATU represents more than 3,500 transit workers throughout Ohio, including the cities of Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dayton, Steubenville, Toledo, and Youngstown.