



February 15, 2017

**Rep. Ryan Smith, Chair**  
**Finance Committee**  
**Ohio House of Representatives**

**RE: Testimony of Nathan G. Alley, Transportation Policy Coordinator, Sierra Club Ohio Chapter, Regarding HB 26, Proposed FY 2018-2019 Transportation Budget**

Hello, and thank you, Chair Smith and members of the Committee, for this opportunity to provide testimony as an interested party regarding the biennial Transportation Budget, House Bill 26.

My name is Nathan Alley, I live in Clermont County with my wife and daughter, and I am a Planning Commissioner in the Village of New Richmond, but today I am speaking as the Transportation Policy Coordinator for the Ohio Chapter of the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club represents nearly 20,000 paid members in the State of Ohio, and we stand united with many more organizations and thousands of individuals who need and want environmentally sustainable, efficient and equitable transportation to jobs, education, healthcare, places of worship and more.

More than 650 of our members commented on the Transit Needs Study that was released by the Ohio Department of Transportation more than two years ago. As the Transit Needs Study illustrates, Ohio has a transportation spending problem. Nearly a third of our counties have no transit services, nearly a tenth of our residents don't have access to a car, and the transportation sector spews out approximately one quarter of our State's air pollution. But we sit near the bottom of a list of states ranked by transit expenditures. ODOT's Transit Needs Study identifies a gap of more than \$192 million in capital and \$96 million in operating funds that are needed annually just to meet existing demand for public transportation services. And we desperately need to *improve* the system. For example, in our Greater Cincinnati region, less than 22 percent of jobs are accessible by a commute of 90 minutes or less on public transportation.

You can help the State of Ohio move forward into a cleaner, brighter and more prosperous future. We are asking you to reallocate no less than ten percent of the Transportation Budget away from new roadway construction and towards public transportation and Complete Streets that are accessible for people regardless of age or ability and regardless of whether they are walking, riding a bike, bus or train, or are driving. Since the Transportation Budget is borne on the backs of all taxpayers, expenditures should benefit all people and all modalities.

As I am sure that you've heard, the American Public Transit Association estimates that every dollar invested in transit generates six dollars in economic returns and helps create nearly 20 percent more jobs than equal investments in new roadways. There is a great and growing demand for transit and other car-

free transportation alternatives. For example, residents of Hamilton and Clermont Counties recently rejected the proposed new Eastern Corridor highway in favor of better transit services and a series of localized pedestrian, bicycle and intersection improvements. Sensible transportation projects can and should benefit the environment, create opportunities for sustainable economic development, and provide equity and accessibility to all users, regardless of age, income or ability.

We appreciate the allocation of additional flex funding to transit in this proposed Budget, but even with that allocation, it is our understanding that transit would still be left with a \$20 million deficit because of anticipated changes to our state sales tax structure. Please do all that you can in this Budget cycle to ensure that we achieve economic development, increase employment opportunities, reduce urban sprawl and congestion, and create more livable communities for *all* Ohioans.

In addition, we hope that Ohio continues to pursue a Fix-it-First approach toward roadway maintenance. Let's fix the Brent Spence Bridge before we consider any new highways.

The State of Ohio should invest in more transportation options to protect the environment, improve the economy and increase accessibility. Two years ago, the Transit Study found that: "Trends show there is a definite rise in the need for convenient, affordable public transportation to jobs, medical appointments, shopping and recreational activities. Our transit agencies are struggling to fund this existing service, let alone meet the increased demand." Please reallocate no less than ten percent of the Transportation Budget away from new roadway construction and towards public transportation and Complete Streets.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony today.

Sincerely,

Nathan G. Alley