

Honorable Ryan Smith, Chairman of the Ohio House Finance Committee  
Riffe Center, 17th Floor, 77 South High Street  
Columbus, OH 43215

cc: Vice Chairman Scott Ryan  
Ranking Member Jack Cera  
Members of the Ohio House Finance Committee

February 15, 2017

**RE: Ohio Transportation Equity Coalition**

Dear Chairman Ryan Smith:

We the undersigned advocacy organizations, collaboratives, agencies and communities write to introduce our coalition and to express our interest in working with you throughout the upcoming biennial budget process and beyond, to increase Ohio's investment in accessible, affordable and sustainable transportation options. We are a diverse coalition, hailing from Ohio's urban, suburban and rural areas, and with representation from a wide variety of stakeholders who are particularly concerned about Ohio's public transit systems – including people with disabilities, older adults, environmental groups, bicycling organizations, human service providers, business and faith leaders.

As you know, according to the 2015 Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Transit Needs study, the state of Ohio needs \$192.4 million in capital and \$96.7 million in operating funds just to meet existing demand for public transportation services. An additional \$273.5 million in one-time funding is also needed to address system backlog and bring Ohio's transit fleet to a state of good repair.

Ohio's under-investments in public transit, over the past several decades, have left the state of Ohio's public transit system lacking. Lack of widespread public transportation limits low-income worker's ability to reach a diversity of jobs with living wages and their ability to support themselves and their families. It also leaves too many people with disabilities as well as those who are aging essentially homebound, making it difficult for them to access the grocery store, the doctor's office, and to meet their other needs with dignity.

Ohio currently allocates little more than one percent (1%) of its entire transportation budget towards public transit; unfortunately, that meager investment ranks Ohio 47th out of all other states for its commitment to public transportation. **This coalition recommends Ohio invest at least ten percent (10%) of its transportation budget in public transit as well as safe bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure and education, and stands ready to work with you to act upon ODOT's Transit Needs Study findings.** Ohio needs a 21st century transportation system made up not only of roads and highways but also a complete network of affordable, accessible, and environmentally-friendly transportation options, including public transit, passenger and freight rail, streetcars, hybrid buses, electric vehicles, and walk-able, bike-able streets.

For low-income Ohioans, the cost of driving is often prohibitively expensive, and for the elderly and persons with disabilities, driving may not be an option at all. Indeed, data indicates that 8.4% of Ohio households have no access to an automobile. Transportation also accounts for roughly 25% of all emissions in Ohio and half of the \$51.4 billion we spend on energy each year in Ohio (nearly all of which is imported from out of state).

Going forward, the state of Ohio should invest in more public transportation options to reduce our vulnerability to oil price spikes, create a more economically sustainable and accessible transportation system, give firms and workers low-cost and accessible commuting options, and reduce health-threatening emissions. Investments in accessible public transit options will also spur economic

development, increase employment opportunities, reduce urban sprawl and congestion, and create more livable communities for all Ohioans.

A greater investment in public transportation would yield significant positive outcomes not only for many Ohioans but also to help sustain the state's economic recovery. According to the American Public Transit Association, every dollar invested in public transit generates six dollars in economic returns, and investments in public transportation projects create nearly 20% more jobs than equal investments in new roads and highways.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter, and we look forward to working with you during the budget process. If you have questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Kathy Foley of Services for Independent Living of Ohio at 216-731-1529.

Respectfully,



## **Alphabetical list of signers:**

Ability Center of Greater Toledo Access  
Center for Independent Living  
Advocates for Ohio's Future  
All Aboard Ohio  
Amalgamated Transit Union Local 627 (Cincinnati)  
Amalgamated Transit Union Local 268 (Cleveland)  
American Council of the Blind of Ohio  
Americans for Transit  
Area Agency on Aging 3 (7 county region in NW Ohio)  
Bike Cleveland  
Catholic Social Services  
The Center for Disability Empowerment  
Center for Independent Living Options  
The City of Lorain  
Clevelanders for Public Transit  
Disability Rights of Ohio  
Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority  
Greater Dayton RTA  
Innovation Ohio  
Joy Machines Bike Shop  
Kirwan Institute  
Mid-Ohio Board of Independent Living Environments (MOBILE)  
MOVE Lorain County  
Motorcars Mobility  
National Church Residences – Center for Senior Health  
Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality (NOBLE)  
Nuns on the Bus Ohio  
Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging (o4a)  
Ohio Bicycle Federation  
Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council  
Ohio Environmental Council  
Ohio Olmstead Task Force  
Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council  
Policy Matters Ohio  
Senior Transportation Connection  
Services for Independent Living, Inc.  
SEIU, Local 1  
Sierra Club, Ohio Chapter  
Southeastern Ohio Center for Independent Living (SOCIL)  
Transit Columbus  
UH Bikes  
The University of Cincinnati, University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities  
Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging  
Western Reserve Independent Living Center  
Women Empowered, Educated, Employed (WE3 Collaborative)