



**Transportation Budget Testimony (Sub. HB62)**  
**House Finance Committee**  
**Interested Party Testimony | Jason Warner, Greater Ohio Policy Center**  
**March 5, 2019**

Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee, I want to thank you for providing me further opportunity to address the substitute version of House Bill 62, outlining further changes to the state transportation budget.

Public transportation is a vital link for millions of Ohioans. In 2016, Ohio's 61 public transit systems provided more than 117 million trips in 83 of Ohio's 88 counties. Still, that leaves 5 Ohio counties, mostly located in rural areas where the population is aging and becoming less reliant on personal transportation, underserved. While ridership on public transportation systems across the state continue to increase, rising nearly 2% between 2013 to 2016, state-level funding for public transportation has been reduced to levels not seen in more than 30 years.

The transportation budget, as presented to this committee, continued a commitment the state began more than a decade ago, by providing for a continuation of the use of Federal Highway Administration 'flex' funding for public transportation. Currently the largest source of funding for transit systems in Ohio (apart from locally generated tax revenue), flex funding is generally used for capital costs. HB62, as proposed by ODOT, intends to 'flex' \$40 million per year towards public transportation, an increase of \$7 million per year over the current budget.

The continued commitment on the part of ODOT to expand the use of flex funding towards transit is commendable. This funding ensures Ohio maintain a robust and effective public transit fleet. Yet in spite of this funding, 32% of Ohio's public transit fleet is estimated to be beyond its useful life and are in need of replacement. In 2015, it was estimated that Ohio needed capital funding investment of \$273.5 million just to bring Ohio's transit fleet to a state of good repair. A further \$192.4 million was identified as needed to invest in the vehicles and infrastructure needed to expand transit service to meet then current, unmet needs.

The budget, as proposed, continues to underfund the capital needs of transit systems across Ohio to the tune of \$232.4 million.

**It is imperative that Ohio begin to make the necessary investments in transit now, and an increase on average of \$2 million per year will not get us to where we need to go.**

As I noted in my testimony to this committee on February 21, investment in public transportation must be considered alongside the important investment that is needed in maintaining and upgrading our transportation infrastructure to meet the needs of market demand and modern economic realities. Investing in both our infrastructure and a robust and comprehensive public

transportation system can be a win-win: increased transportation options with less congestion and less wear and tear on Ohio’s roadways. These paired investments are vital for Ohio’s future.

GOPC recommends that, at a minimum, the state should double the amount of funds that are currently being flexed to public transit each year. Providing an additional \$33 million per year would provide needed funding to Ohio’s large urban transit agencies and help institute innovations that could increase services and reduce costs, as well as reduce the number of vehicles on the road that are beyond their useful life.

The investment of an additional \$26 million per year versus what has been proposed by ODOT does continue to fall short of the estimated needs as outlined just 5 years ago, but it will represent a good faith effort on the part of the State of Ohio that public transportation is both important and vital to the citizens of Ohio. Furthermore, setting aside a total of \$66 million per year of flex funding would represent a total of one cent of the proposed MFT increase – for the entire 2020-21 biennium, based on information presented to this committee that 1 cent of MFT generates \$67 million in revenue.

Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on the issue of public transportation and why it is critical that Ohio recommit itself to investing in public transit, thus ensuring all Ohioans have access to safe and reliable methods of transportation.

**FHWA Flex Funding in Ohio FY2012 – FY2021**

State Fiscal Year	Federal Funds “Flexed”	Total Federal Funding	Percentage “Flexed”
FY2012	\$20,000,000	\$1,387,758,129	1.44%
FY2013	\$20,000,000	\$1,404,383,163	1.42%
FY2014	\$20,000,000	\$1,296,533,589	1.54%
FY2015	\$20,000,000	\$1,168,315,271	1.71%
FY2016	\$23,000,000	\$1,176,824,518	1.95%
FY2017	\$23,000,000	\$1,241,252,129	1.85%
FY2018	\$33,000,000	\$1,175,107,315	2.81%
FY2019	\$33,000,000	\$1,728,390,405	1.91%
<i>FY2020</i>	<i>\$40,000,000</i>	<i>\$1,217,078,291</i>	<i>3.29%</i>
<i>FY2021</i>	<i>\$40,000,000</i>	<i>\$1,232,839,103</i>	<i>3.24%</i>