



TRANSPORTATION,  
COMMERCE AND  
WORKFORCE  
COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date 3/11/2019

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(ATU 697)

Testifying on Bill Number: HB 62

Testimony:  Verbal  Written  Both

Testifying As:  Proponent  Opponent  Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist?  Yes  No

Special Requests: NA

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# *Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), Local 697*

## *Statement on House Bill 62*

On behalf of the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 697 (ATU), representing more than 200 transit workers in Toledo, I am pleased to provide our views on House Bill 62. The decisions that this committee makes will determine the fate of thousands of transit-dependent individuals in Toledo and the rest of our state.

### **Background**

ODOT's own 2014 study identified major infrastructure and fleet replacement needs for the state's transit systems. Of the 3,250 transit vehicles in use in the state, 32% need to be replaced - a \$300 million expenditure, according to the study. In Toledo, we are ahead of the curve in the worst possible way. 63% of our existing bus fleet is eligible for retirement. This includes both our mini busses used for transport of our paratransit riders and our full-size busses used for fixed line service.

Regional Transit Authorities are political subdivisions of the state. They were created this way to be less political in nature and to be responsive to the communities they serve. Since TARTA is funded by property tax, the agency is limited in its ability to modify of its membership. No one can come in or out with unanimous consent of all the member communities. This language makes it nearly impossible for any changes to be made. Its like Willy Wonka's factory, no one ever gets in, no one ever gets out.

### **Safety First**

While transit vehicles are built to last, there are limitations on what even the most skilled mechanics can do when the miles pile up. Potholes, weather conditions, and heavy usage take their toll on our buses quickly. When funds run dry, replacement parts come out of the scrap pile rather than the manufacturer. Corners get cut, and when it comes to critical safety features, lives are at stake. As you return home in your personal vehicles, think of the uneasy feeling you might have knowing that your mechanic used an inferior product when replacing your brakes. This is the plight of bus passengers and other vehicles and pedestrians in their wake on our roads if transit funding in Ohio is not immediately increased. Why are we waiting for a tragedy to occur before we do the right thing and provide our transit systems with the funding they need?

### **Local Government**

There is also language pertaining to Local Government in House Bill 62. Passage of this language will not cost the state any money. This language will provide an avenue to take transit in my community from a rolling hostage situation to a place where a majority of member communities can bring common sense initiatives forward for voters to have the final say.

### **Conclusion**

It is time for Ohio to invest not only in our transit infrastructure, but to take some of the politics out of transit and let voters have the choice in local issues. Without question, these are self-inflicted crises, and we have officially reached rock bottom. The good news is that there is still time to dig our way out. Rather than turning a blind eye, let's lend a hand to our neighbors, friends, and family members who rely on the bus. It will be one of the smartest, safest, and most compassionate decisions that we ever make.



# Existing Bus Fleet

<b>Bus Style</b>	<b># of Vehicles</b>	<b>% Eligible for Retirement</b>
Mini-bus	97	79%
Full Size	87	43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>63%</b>

Source: AASHTO Survey of State Funding for Public Transportation (2018)





