



**Testimony before the Ohio Senate
Mindy Justis, Vice Chair, Transit Columbus
March 13, 2019**

Good Morning, Chair McColley and members of the Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 62, the Fiscal Year 2020/2021 transportation budget. I'm here on behalf of Transit Columbus, a group that advocates for a better-connected Columbus region.

It is important to share that Transit Columbus is supportive of the need to increase the motor fuel tax to repair and maintain the state's roads and bridges. Our infrastructure is an essential part of a larger, multimodal equation.

Additionally, Transit Columbus concurs with COTA that the proposed funding levels for public transit fall well short of the necessary investment in the 61 transit organizations who provide vital services that support economic and workforce development, access to healthcare and education, and mobility to millions of Ohioans annually. The state currently funds transit at the lowest amount it has since 2000; and, Ohio currently spends less on transit per capita than the state of South Dakota. ODOT itself highlighted the growing need for greater investment by the state in mobility, recommending in a 2014 Transit Needs Study that state funding for public transit by 2025 should equal \$185 million annually, 10% of the anticipated combined spending by Ohio's transit agencies (\$1.84B).

We're growing, and here in the Columbus region we are a geographically diverse – urban, suburban, and rural. We know that we have to continue to invest to maintain our strong position in driving Ohio's economy. Investments in our infrastructure to move people and goods – highways, roads, bridges, sidewalks, bike lanes, bus lanes, smart mobility technology and more – are essential ingredients for the economic success of Ohio's capital city and Ohioans statewide.

Public transit is a critical component. Like roads, transit is a lifeline connecting workers to jobs and vulnerable populations to the services they need. Employers in our region have insisted on high-quality, well-maintained infrastructure like interchanges, bike paths, and bus routes to ensure they can recruit workers. In our region we've found that in order to ensure our workforce has access to jobs we must have well maintained roads and efficient public transit running on those roads.

The funding needs are great. We concur with FOR Ohio and other advocates in support of additional transportation funding.