



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSIT SERVICES

Marvin Ranaldson, Transit Administrator
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Sandusky Transit System
Sandusky-Perkins Area Ride Connection (SPARC)

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Senator Frank LaRose
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square, 2nd Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Testimony March 8th 2017

Dear Senator LaRose:

Good morning Chairman LaRose, and members of the Committee. I am Marvin Ranaldson The Transit administrator for The City of Sandusky, the Rural Transit system for the 78,000 residents of Erie County, Ohio. I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to share the work we do to provide vital transportation to Erie County residents, like the 33 other rural systems in our state.

About Our System

The City of Sandusky Transit System (STS) has served the residents of Erie County, Ohio since 1992. During that time the Sandusky Transit system has provided over 2.5 million trips for our residents. Like all federally funded Transit systems our system provides transportation to everyone. Last year we provided a record 202,000 trips, from our \$2.6 million budget. In fact since 2009 our ridership has grown 165%, in 2016, the number one reason people used our system was to get to work, second was for shopping, and the third was for medical appointments. Although our ridership is a fraction of large systems like Cleveland's GCRTA, small systems like ours provide a valuable service to our community.

Economic Development

In Erie County we have found that quality public transportation is critical to our tourism economy, For Example last year we provided over 28,000 trips to or from the Kalahari Resort which is the 3rd largest employer in our county, and the largest hotel in the state, with 800 rooms. In 2016, 30% of our trips were getting workers to jobs in tourism. From talking with local employer's we have found that transportation is barrier to finding and retaining good workers, especially in the service sector where the wages are not always high enough for workers to be able to afford a reliable vehicle for transportation. For some of our most vulnerable residents transit is critical to their ability to work and provide for their families.

In Rural areas there is an economic benefit to Public Transit. Our system provides 39 good paying jobs with good benefits to people in our community. Every day we invest in our community, when we buy parts from local vendors, fuel from local fuel stations, or when we employ local small businesses maintain our facility. Over the last 18 months we have purchased over 1 million dollars in supplies and vehicles from vendors in Ohio.

Strong Partnerships

In the 25 years we have been in existence we have learned how important strong partnerships within community are. STS for the last 15 years has partnered with our local board of Developmental Disabilities to provide Transportation for their individuals taking them to work helping them stay engaged in our community. We also partner with our county agency on aging to provide transportation for seniors to work, the Doctor, the grocery Store, even to the hair salon. This partnership allows seniors in Erie County to use our service at a discounted rate, helping Erie County Seniors maintain their independence. We also provide transportation for our Local Jobs and Family services, Veterans Affairs and other community organizations. These partnerships provide the majority of the local revenue our system needs to operate and has been invaluable in maintaining support for public transit in our community.

This year, we partnered with the Sandusky City schools' Global Internship program to help students get to their internships. The Sandusky Global Internship program gives Sandusky High School seniors the opportunity to intern with local business, industries, college, non-profits, and the military in their career choice. They gain the experience needed to compete in the global job market of tomorrow. Students use public transit to move through their community, saving their families the burden of either providing a vehicle, a ride, or a driver's license for their teenager.

The story of transit in Erie County isn't unique there are small agencies throughout our state that work hard to provide transportation to those that are either unable or unwilling to drive.

Our Future

Over the next decade we expect demand for public transit to increase in Erie County as our population ages and our tourism economy grows, while our funding to remain flat. Our plan to accommodate these divergent needs is to focus on where our dollars go the furthest, collaborate with our neighbors where it is the most cost effective, and to continue to look more opportunities for additional revenue. In 2017 we are taking steps with the help of our partners at ODOT, to improve the technology we use to be more efficient and improve service. We are expanding our Fixed-route service to better accommodate future demand and reducing our reliance on costly Dial-a-ride service where possible. Like many systems the combination of growing expenses and flat funding has led us to increase fares and reduce service this year. We hope in the future to be able expand our service into areas currently out of reach and build stronger connections to jobs and opportunity in our region.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely, Marvin Ranaldson, Transit Administrator, City of Sandusky, Ohio.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marvin Ranaldson', with a stylized, flowing script.