

Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee  
Testimony presented by Donna Prease, March 2017  
Self-Advocate working with Linking Employment, Abilities & Potential (LEAP),  
A Center for Independent Living in Cleveland, Ohio

Good morning Chairman LaRose and members of the Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee. My name is Donna Prease, I am a self-advocate and a person with a physical disability. I received my Associate Degree in Business Management from Cuyahoga Community College. I worked for the Dean of Student Life as an assistant to the secretary. While working in the Dean's office, I met a young lady who referred me to LEAP.

I am advocating on behalf of myself and for people with disabilities on the importance of Public Transportation. I am very fortunate to have a full-time job as a Grassroots Advocate and Peer Mentor for Linking Employment, Abilities and Potential (LEAP), I am unable to drive to work, so public transportation is vital to my everyday living. People with disabilities enjoy being a part of their community. Going to work, shopping, visiting family and friends, and medical appointments happens with public transportation. When routes are eliminated or services hours are cut back, operators are laid off etc., due to lack of funding for public transportation, the general public and especially people with disabilities are hit very hard. I cannot physically walk to work or carpool to work. The majority of people with disabilities cannot drive, or if we can, we cannot afford a car,

I would now like to share my personal story. I have friends who can take me, by car, shopping, and to my doctor appointment, but that takes away my independence from using my power chair, which cannot be put in a car. My friends/family would need to push me around, in a manual wheelchair, to shop or wait with me at my appointment. That is an inconvenience to both of us. Taking public transportation, I can take my power chair and move around independently and not feel like I am a burden. I am so proud to say I work for a living, and that is due to the availability of public transportation. I take Paratransit, a door to door service, everywhere I go. When route are eliminated or hours cut, that affects my ability to travel. Paratransit travels the same routes that the mainline/fixed routes do. If there is no bus route in the area you live in or to the area where you want to go, Paratransit will not take you. During the winter, I am unable to travel to a bus stop because the sidewalks and curb cuts are covered with snow.

It is costly to rent a van, and pay a driver. Due to the nature of my job; I need to travel to and from Columbus to talk to you about issues that impact people with disabilities. But I don't get this opportunity very often. Since Paratransit does not cross County lines, paying private van companies are very costly. \$523 roundtrip is the going rate. That is a lot for a non-profit organization like LEAP and so my travel is limited

In closing, I would like to say **it is vital to make Public Transit Funding a Priority. Public Transportation must be reliable, getting people where they need to go when they need to get there, accessible, safe and affordable.** Thank you