

Ohio House of Representatives  
Finance Committee

Representative Scott Oelslager, Chair

February 17, 2021

Testimony Given by:  
Mark Donaghy, Chief Executive Officer  
Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority  
Dayton, Ohio

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

My name is Mark Donaghy, Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority (RTA). RTA is the regional public transportation provider for the Dayton Region including Montgomery and western Greene Counties. RTA provides fixed-route bus service as well as demand responsive services for people with mobility impairments across the region. As is the case with most urban transit systems in Ohio, 2/3rds of RTA passengers are riding the bus to access a job, often entry level in retail, logistics or the various medical fields. Without our services these customers would lose their jobs and regional employers would face shortages of manpower that would be devastating. Even during the pandemic our system has carried 2/3rds of our pre-pandemic customers, a rate nearly twice the national average for 2020.

I am here today to testify in favor of maintaining funding levels in the next biennium budget at the current biennium levels. Without adequate funding, Ohio's transit systems will be unable to meet the needs of our communities by keeping citizens employed and healthy. In the Dayton Region, thousands of people use RTA services to get to work in essential jobs in healthcare, retail and logistics fields every single day. They are the backbone of the workforce who are keeping the economy moving and supporting all Ohioans needs while trying to provide for their families.

Many others rely on our services each day for life-saving medical treatments such as dialysis and have no other options to access this critical care. We are seeing inequities for communities of color, especially in the COVID vaccination process as these families lag far behind their counterparts in gaining access. Further, we understand that lack of transportation is the most common reason stated for eligible persons being unable to get the vaccine. Our goal is to insure every person has the access they need.

In 2014, ODOT commissioned a Transit Needs Study which concluded that \$180 million in annual appropriations was needed to provide an adequate level of service to Ohio citizens. Today we are at 1/3<sup>rd</sup> that amount and the current

proposal is to reduce that to \$7.3 million annually in discretionary funding. The current needs are so pressing that ODOT received more than \$200 million in funding requests making the program oversubscribed by a 3-1 margin.


As you can see in the tables below, RTA used the funds awarded to maintain services and leverage federal investment, bringing home \$4 in new federal funds for each state dollar used as match:

## Impact of SFY 2020 Funds Received by RTA

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ohio Urban Transit Program (UTP)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>\$2,093,160 Formula Award</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTA used these funds to leverage and access \$8.4 million in additional federal funds. This brought in a total of \$10.5 million dollars which we used as follows:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased efforts in the maintenance of our bus fleet and facilities to ensure they remain in a state of good repair.</li> <li>• Community improvement projects; including the removal of old poles and equipment throughout the service area which was no longer in use and contributed to perceptions of blight, as well as sidewalk replacement projects and other projects to benefit the communities RTA serves.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ohio Transit Preservation Partnership Program (OTPP)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>\$4,001,000 Competitive Awards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTA used these funds to leverage and access over \$16 million in additional federal funds which we used as follows:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion of our Downtown Employment Shuttle, which has become one of our most used services.</li> <li>• Technology updates to allow customers to pay using their smartphones.</li> <li>• Updates to our electric bus power system, keeping local contractors working.</li> <li>• Purchase of 12 Electric/Battery buses and 7 circulator buses.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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**Leverage – Each State Dollar Brought in Four New Federal Dollars**

\$6.1 million in State GRF Funds were used as match to bring in \$24.4 million in additional federal funds. This resulted in a \$30.5 million dollar economic impact.




## Impact of SFY 2021 Funds Received by RTA

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ohio Urban Transit Program (UTP)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>\$2,079,684 Formula Award</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTA used these funds to leverage and access \$8.3 million in additional federal funds. This brought in a total of \$10.4 million dollars which we used as follows:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintained full employment in our repair shops to support the efforts to maintain of our bus fleet and facilities as well as major increases in our efforts to keep our vehicles and buildings sanitized and safe during the prolonged national health crisis</li> <li>• Continued community improvement projects.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ohio Transit Preservation Partnership Program (OTPP)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>\$1,380,967 Competitive Awards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTA used these funds to leverage and access over \$5.5 million in additional federal funds which we used as follows:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced technology updates to allow customers to pay using their smartphones. This project became even more critical with the national health crisis as it allows for contactless payment.</li> <li>• Purchase of 9 Electric/Battery buses which allowed us to fully retire our 22 year old fleet of worn out trolley buses.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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**Leverage – Each State Dollar Brought in Four New Federal Dollars**

\$3.5 million in State GRF Funds were used as match to bring in \$13.8 million in additional federal funds. This resulted in a \$17.3 million dollar economic impact.



A reduction in funding will have devastating impacts on Ohio's communities. The unintended consequence in this case may well be slowing Ohio's progress toward rebuilding a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy that our children and theirs desperately need.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Mark Donaghy  
Chief Executive Officer  
Greater Dayton RTA  
4 South Main Street  
Dayton, Ohio 45402  
(937) 425-8390  
[mdonaghy@greaterdaytonrta.org](mailto:mdonaghy@greaterdaytonrta.org)