

Testimony of Brian Gibbons 19510 Lorain Rd, Fairview Park OH Senate District 24,
House District 17

Chair, Senator Huffman, Ranking member Senator Antonio, members of the
committee.

I am Brian Gibbons a resident of Fairview Park Ohio in the 24th Senate District and
17th House District. I am a member of Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation
Equality, <https://organizeohio.org/noble.html>.

Unable to come to the meeting today I am providing this statement regarding
public transportation appropriations and the role that public transportation plays
in improving the well-being of all community members whether regular riders,
occasional riders or non-riders.

Ohio's budget for public transportation is a very small portion of the state's
biennial budget. If my figures are correct, \$74M biennial appropriation for public
transit is approximately \$6.36 annually for Buckeye taxpayers or \$3.14 annually
for all Ohio residents.

As I understand the 2024-25 biennial budget submitted by Governor DeWine is
\$202B. \$74M is three thousandths of a percent of the biennial budget.

I assume the funding Ohio allocates for public transportation is principally seen as
providing a subsidy for public transit operations and infrastructure to get person
from point A to point B. The social benefits of public transportation go further
than the sample point A to point B trip.

Governor DeWine's budget memo concludes "We will move forward together... to
focus on our vibrant future and continue to plant the seeds of long-term success."
Adequately funding public transit so users, communities and non-users alike can
benefit from it will also "plant the seeds of long-term success" of all Ohioans.

Governor DeWine desires that all Ohioans will move forward together. In Ohio a
role of state government is to make investments in infrastructures and operations
that provide a means for Ohioans to move forward including business
development and economic opportunity, education, health, and public safety. All
four are areas that contribute to the opportunity to thrive in Ohio. However,

investments are more necessary for those with less resources or other burdens that may inhibit their opportunity to thrive.

Funding public transit to provide clean, efficient, reliable and sustainable services is consistent with the other areas I just listed. It contributes to local economies, transports riders to providers of education and health services, and contributes to a safer environment in which all live.

Investing in public transit is an investment in Ohioans health and safety. The investment leverages opportunities and a vibrant community for all residents.

Though public transit may be seen simply as a transportation service it delivers much more.

As an opportunity vehicle

Per research by economists Raj Chetty and Nathaniel Hendren of Opportunity Insights <https://opportunityinsights.org/> at Harvard University.

“The relationship between transportation and social mobility is stronger than that between social mobility and several other factors, like crime, elementary-school test scores or the percentage of two-parent families in a community.”

[https://shelterforce.org/2015/05/27/transportation more important than schools crime in escaping poverty/](https://shelterforce.org/2015/05/27/transportation-more-important-than-schools-crime-in-escaping-poverty/)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/07/upshot/transportation-emerges-as-crucial-to-escaping-poverty.html>

As a smart budget vehicle

Per the American Public Transit Association <https://www.apta.com/>

“The average household spends 16 cents of every dollar on transportation, and 93% of this goes to buying, maintaining, and operating cars, the largest expenditure after housing.”

“A household can save nearly \$10,000 by taking public transportation and living with one less car.”

<https://www.apta.com/news-publications/public-transportation-facts/>

As a better health vehicle

As Doctors Syed, Gerber, and Sharp wrote in *Transportation Barriers to Healthcare Access*

“Overall, the evidence supports that transportation barriers are an important barrier to healthcare access, particularly for those with lower incomes or the under/uninsured.”

[Traveling Towards Disease: Transportation Barriers to Health Care Access | SpringerLink](#)

As just quoted, transportation in general and public transportation in particular contributes to more life opportunities, reallocate a family’s limited budget dollars to cover the costs of food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, travel, education and other necessities and “plant the seeds of long-term success” as Governor DeWine desires for all Ohioans.

The above describe the benefits of public transportation to those with less and rely on public transportation services.

Investments in public transportation benefit everyone

Everyone in Ohio benefits from investments in public transit whether riders or not.

Lessens Traffic Congestion

Passengers riding on buses means fewer car drivers, lessening the number of vehicles to clog up streets and freeways.

Helps the Economy

Nationally, for every ten million dollars of transit investment made, business sales increase by thirty million dollars. During the 2006 to 2011 period, residential property was an average of 42% more valuable if located near high-frequency transit service, which means cities reap greater tax revenues. Transit agencies and organizations employ many people and create many times more private-sector jobs.

Public Transit is a Safe and Equitable Transportation Mode

When transit options exist, fewer cars are driven, reducing their harmful effects on society, which include the loss of 30,000 people and the maiming of many more every year in road crashes. Public transit is safer than individual vehicles.

<https://transportation.ucla.edu/blog/how-riding-bus-benefits-everyone>

<https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/ex/sustainablecitiescollective/top-10-benefits-public-transportation/1063096/>

https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/Resources/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/greenhouse_brochure.pdf

Everyone shares in the environmental benefits

Less Pollution and Clearer Skies

Compared with driving alone, taking public transportation reduces CO2 emissions by 45%, decreasing pollutants in the atmosphere and improving air quality. Buses keep the air cleaner.

Healthier Communities

Improved air quality in a community means greater health benefits for the people who live there with fewer cases of respiratory ailments such as asthma and cancer. Walking to and from the bus stop helps with physical health, and taking transit instead of driving reduces stress. People are more prone to get out and exercise when the air quality is better.

Harmful Chemicals Are Reduced

Emissions from burning fuel, oil, antifreeze and brake fluids are not the only pollutants from vehicles. Micro-plastics are an increasing concern and tires on all vehicles is a major source. Taking sustainable transportation instead of driving cuts down on all of them.

Fewer Cars Can Reduce Overall Spending on Roads

More cars means more roads and the water run-off that contributes to ground and water pollution. Fewer cars can improve the service life for existing roads and

lessen the need for new roads. Those funds can be allocated for other needs or services.

Noise Pollution

Noise pollution is reduced with fewer vehicles on our roads. Less driving will make neighborhoods quieter to everyone's benefit.

Automobiles degrade our environment, contribute to global warming, and limit significant amounts of land for driving and storing (parking) them.

<https://transportation.ucla.edu/blog/5-environmental-benefits-sustainable-transportation>
[Wear and Tear of Tyres: A Stealthy Source of Microplastics in the Environment - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)
[Microplastics from car tires are choking out life in freshwater ecosystems | Salon.com](#)

Finally

I understand that ODOT's Office of Transit is to conduct a study and evaluate the use of private transit vouchers for low-income individuals. The private transit voucher is for ride sharing, transportation networks company (Uber Lyft etc.), cabs, or similar for hire arrangements.

The study to evaluate both:

- (1) whether the use of private transit vouchers would benefit low-income individuals in maintaining effective access to transportation services; and
- (2) whether the distribution of private transit vouchers is a cost-effective option to eliminate public transit routes with low ridership.

While not stated as such the use of private transit vouchers is in effect a micro-transit study or more accurately a flexible transit study given that the public transit routes are nearly all fixed routes.

Diverting public transit funding to for-hire transportation options diminishes public transportation services and the benefits public transportation provides to entire community whether riders or not as explained above. It basically is adding more cars, more traffic, more noise, more pollution and adding to the risk of more vehicular crashes, injury and death all of which public transit reduces.

The research and literature is readily available to weigh and evaluate the merits and liabilities of vouchers and flexible transit options and as legislators you would be well served to have informed presentations provided you and committee staff, whether this committee or other appropriate committees.

One such researcher is Jarrett Walker <https://jarrettwalker.com/> who experience includes recent advising and re-designing transit systems for Cuyahoga County's GCRTA and Greater Columbus' COTA.

<https://humantransit.org/2019/08/what-is-microtransit-for.html>

<https://humantransit.org/2018/02/microtransit-what-i-think-we-know.html>

<https://humantransit.org/2018/02/is-microtransit-a-sensible-transit-investment.html>

<https://humantransit.org/2018/02/does-it-matter-if-microtransit-is-a-new-idea.html>

Flexible transit or micro-transit programs can leverage the value of fixed route public transit service. An example is the newly initiated the ConnectWorks project of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority and the cities of Maple Heights, Solon and the support of Senator Matt Dolan

[Connectworks Mobility Solution Ribbon Cutting Ceremony | Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority \(riderta.com\)](#)

And <https://www.ideastream.org/environment-energy/2023-02-17/workers-without-cars-can-face-long-walks-from-the-bus-stop-to-the-job-solon-pilots-a-fix-for-that>

The economic, social and environmental benefits of increasing public transit funding cannot be understated. The growing metropolitan areas in the US including Phoenix, Dallas, Houston, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, northern Virginia continue to invest in public transit to serve residents, businesses and communities and meet environment and sustainability goals that are derived from smartly growing a community. <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/about-smart-growth#smartgrowth>

It is in the interest of everyone in the state of Ohio's and consistent with Governor DeWine's desire to "...move forward together... to focus on our vibrant future and continue to plant the seeds of long-term success." for adequate investment in public transit to bring a vibrant future and long-term success to all Ohioans. Doubling the current appropriation by the state of Ohio is an appropriate start.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today

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