



OHIO HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Interested Party Testimony on Public Transportation

March 8, 2023

Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Good afternoon Chairwoman Kunze. My name is Mary Habig and I am the Director for Seneca-Crawford Area Transportation. I come to you today to testify on behalf of my public transit agency, my communities, and to represent the other rural transit systems in Ohio to respectfully request that you continue to fund public transit.

Many people think of public transit as the big gillig buses that stop here at the State House, the big buses in the Urban cities. But, public transit is also mini vans going down the gravel roads in Rural Ohio; Seneca, Crawford, Ottawa, Knox, Monroe, Guernsey, to name a few; taking your people to life's basic needs: Medical, Education, Employment, Grocery Shopping and yes to the Hair Dressers.

Many of your people who live in Rural Ohio, depend on public transit to get them to specialty care in Columbus, Cleveland, Toledo, etc. as specialty care isn't available in the smaller hospitals. They have to travel two hours to see specialists.

The elderly and those with disabilities depend on public transit. Many folks with disabilities are able to obtain employment, because of public transit. They also are able to continue their education to trade school and or college, because they have access to public transit.

It was once said, "All men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that amount these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Let me give you a sample of people who use public transit in my service area:

Leonard: Elderly man who had been very active, or as he says, "We were always on the go". until he had serious health issues this past year, and now uses a wheelchair. His wife, Evelyn is in a nursing facility. Leonard uses public transit to go visit his wife of 46 years every day. Public transit gives him the freedom to stay at home and visit his wife.

Brandon: Early 30's, former Marine and a recovering drug addict. Brandon uses public transit to get him to his much needed recovery programs. Brandon recently became employed and uses public transit to get to and from his job. Brandon has been given a second chance at life. He is gaining confidence and becoming a productive citizen. His parents and family are so proud of his progress.

Jessica: 20-year-old who has Asperger's. She is socially awkward and doesn't get out much. Her parents both work and grandparents are getting up in age. Jessica uses public transit to get her to a trade school where she inspires to be a chef someday. Jessica is gaining her independence as she is calling to make her own reservations.

Rita: 40-year-old woman who recently started having seizures. She is no longer permitted to drive. She depends on public transit to take her to and from work. Because of public transportation, Rita can continue to be employed and has access to affordable transportation.

Rose: 76 years old widow. Rose uses public transit to go the medical, dentist, shopping, out to eat and to get her hair done. Rose has never had a driver's license as her husband drove where ever they needed to go. After her husband passed away, her adult children, who live in Columbus, did not want her to get a driver's license. They contacted public transit and asked how public transit worked. Rose goes to the beauty shop every Friday, never misses. Rose has the freedom to go where she wants, when she wants.

Finally, Christie: Christie is young mother of 1 child. She is 6 months pregnant and is considered a high risk pregnancy as she lost a child 2 years prior. She has to travel an hour to Toledo for specialty care. Her husband works a minimum wage job and is unable to take her to her appointments. Because she has access to affordable and reliable public transit, her and her unborn child are getting the care they need for a successful and healthy birth.

In closing, I ask you to think about these questions:

If public transit funds are cut, where will this leave your people in rural Ohio?

How many lives will be lost, including unborn children and our Veterans?

What is going to happen to those that depend on public transit to get them to their much needed Addiction Centers, Counseling Centers? Do we just let them go back on the streets and alleys?

What's going to happen to the many young adults and children that depend on public transit to get them to school, college, training, esp. those with disabilities?

How many people are going to lose their employment?

How are the low income people going to get the grocery stores and food banks?

How are senior citizens going to get to the senior centers?

And, yes, let's not forget, how many elderly ladies are going to have "Bad Hair Days".

Thank you Chairwoman Kunze and Transportation Committee for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary DeBis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.