

Testimony before the Ohio House Transportation Committee
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COTA is the Columbus region's mobility solutions provider, driven each day to connect people to prosperity through innovation, dedication and teamwork. We serve a region of more than 1.4 million people and provide fixed-route, paratransit and micro transit service. At COTA, we act as an extension of the region's economic development arm, providing access to jobs, healthcare and education for our customers daily.

We know the Columbus Region is estimated to grow by one million people by 2050. In recognition of the growth in our region and recent economic development announcements, we respectfully request that the transportation budget recognize public transit's pivotal role in serving Ohio's growing economy and increase funding to \$85 million.

The public transit agencies of today are innovative and forward-thinking. Public transit is also a tool for workforce development and economic mobility. As Ohio continues to attract historic investment to our state, with announcements like Intel, Ford, Honda, and most recently Anduril, we must ensure our public transit providers are adequately funded to meet the needs of the growing workforce. We must be able to connect workers to these jobs because these announcements are all only buildings without the workforce.

One challenge we face regarding these workforce connections is that COTA is restricted in the use of our sales tax revenues within our designated service area. With many of these economic development announcements in more rural settings, we need to develop creative and seamless solutions to meet the workforce transportation demands. That is why we respectfully ask for the reinstatement of the Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership Program, with \$15 million per fiscal year to address these transit gaps. This program will provide a dedicated source of funds for rural and large urban transit systems to proactively collaborate on workforce transportation to support growing job centers and economic development investments.

COTA has been a grateful beneficiary of these grant funds during the past biennium, winning dollars to construct our Mobility Center at Rickenbacker, complete workforce transportation analysis from Dublin to Newark and enhance transit stop amenities near employment centers.





I want to quickly go back to our Mobility Center at Rickenbacker. Located less than 2 miles from the Rickenbacker Airport, this innovative mobility center will provide greater access to public transit, allowing for critical workforce connections from various regional shuttles, including the Groveport Rickenbacker Employee Access Transit (GREAT) shuttle and transit services in Fairfield and Pickaway counties to COTA fixed route lines.

Ohio's public transit authorities and the Ohio communities we serve – rural, suburban, and urban – are united in the realization that we have an important role to play in advancing economic opportunity and providing essential services to our most vulnerable populations including veterans, seniors and those with developmental disabilities.

We respectfully ask to increase transit funding to \$85 million and for the reauthorization of the \$30 million Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership Program.

