



NORTH CENTRAL
AREA TRANSIT

3446 S. Twp. Rd 151 Tiffin, Ohio 44883

P: 419-448-7344 F: 419-448-8484

OHIO HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE HB54

Interested Party Testimony on Public Transportation

February 11, 2025

Chairman Willis, Vice Chair Daniels, Ranking Member Grim and members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Good Afternoon Chairman Willis. My name is Mary Habig and I am the Public Transportation Director for North Central Area Transit. I currently oversee public transportation in three rural counties in North Central Ohio, Seneca, Crawford and Huron. I come to you today to testify on behalf all the small urban and rural transit systems and the communities we serve in Ohio to respectfully request that you continue to fund public transit.

When you hear of "Public Transportation" many people think about the big gillig buses that stop here at the Statehouse, the big buses in Urban cities. But, public transportation is also mini vans going down gravel roads in Rural Ohio; Seneca, Crawford, Huron, Ottawa, Lancaster, Troy, Carroll, Washington, Monroe, Guernsey to name a few; taking your people to life's basic needs: Medical, (including mental and addiction treatment centers), education, employment, grocery shopping and yes, to the hair dresser.

Many who live in Rural Ohio, depend on public transit to get them to and from specialty care in Columbus, Cleveland, Toledo, Canton, etc. as specialty care isn't available in small hospitals. They 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 are able to continue their education, go to trade school and/or college, because they have access to public transit in Rural Ohio.

In Rural Ohio, public transit systems are the "ears and eyes" of the neighborhoods. We are in all the rural neighborhoods, with cameras on our vehicles.

Recently, one of our transit buses just happened to capture a child being physically abused in a parking lot. The abuser had no idea he was being recorded. With this video, there is one less child abuser off the streets. In another county, transit cameras captured video of a car theft. Again, they did not realize there were cameras on the bus. With the technology on our transit vehicles, our neighborhoods are safer as transit is out and about in almost all cities in Ohio.

As a wife of a Vietnam Veteran, I can honesty tell you, PTSD is real; Mental Illness is real. These soldiers have seen and done things the rest of us can even imagine.

In Rural Ohio, public transit agencies have partnered with the Veterans Agencies to ensure our veterans have access to health care, jobs and support service, which can help our veterans maintain house stability.

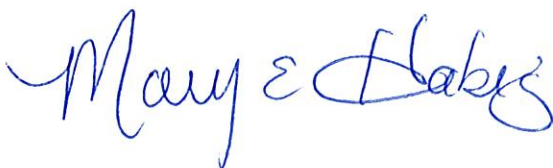
Public transit allows your people, of all walks of life, freedom; Freedom to go where they need to go, without feeling they are a burden to their families, neighbors and friends; Preserving their dignity.

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

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

- If public transit funds are cut, where will this leave your people in Ohio?
- How many of your people are going to lose their employment?
- How many lives will be lost, including unborn children?
- What's going to happen to your veterans, esp. those that suffer PTSD and Mental illness?
- What's going to happen to those that depend on public transit to get them to their much needed medical appointments, including addiction centers, counseling centers?
- Do we just let them back to the streets and alleys?
- Will the crime rate increase, as people will become desperate?
- What's going to happen to the children and many young adults that depend on public transit to get them to school, trade school, college, training, esp. those with disabilities?
- How are the low income people going to get to the grocery store and food banks?
- How are the seniors 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 Chairman Willis and Transportation Committee for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary E. Hake". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mary" being the most prominent part.