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To the Chair and Transportation Committee Members,

Chair Willis, Vice Chair Daniels, Ranking Member Grim, and members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the importance of the proposed transportation budget for SFY 2026–2027. The State’s investment in transit and mobility options is critical to making Ohio a competitive state—one that fosters economic vitality, enhances public health, and promotes sustainable living for our communities.

My name is Andy Volenik, and I serve as the Executive Director of Delaware County Transit (DCT) in Delaware County, Ohio. Our county is home to approximately 225,000 residents and is one of the fastest-growing counties in the state. Delaware County boasts major economic centers, including the Polaris Shopping Center, the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, and the vital Route 23 Corridor.

As our county continues to grow, transportation remains at the heart of maintaining our community’s character and ensuring accessibility. How people get to work, shop at their favorite stores, or spend an afternoon at a matinee with their family matters. Public transit and mobility options play a crucial role in making these everyday activities possible.

With support from the Ohio Department of Transportation’s Office of Transit, Delaware County Transit has successfully expanded its on-demand microtransit service. As a result, our ridership has increased by over 100% since 2021, and we anticipate record-breaking ridership in 2025. Every day, DCT helps people reach their jobs, stores, and medical appointments—and with the proposed transportation budget, we can continue and expand these essential services.

Yet, transit is more than just numbers and data; it’s about people.

At a recent public meeting where I was presenting Delaware County Transit’s Strategic Plan to Berkshire Township Trustees, a community member stood up to ask a question. Expecting an operational concern or a service complaint, I was instead deeply moved by what I heard.

Mrs. Ebe, a member of our community, shared that she had been paying thousands of dollars each month for private transportation to get her husband—a Vietnam veteran with Alzheimer’s—to an adult day care facility. On a fixed income, she was eventually forced to discontinue this service. Then, she discovered Delaware County Transit.

Through DCT’s affordable transportation services, Mrs. Ebe was able to enroll her husband in another adult day care program. DCT not only helped her secure the care he needed but also gave her peace of mind and the ability to find moments of joy amid the challenges of his illness.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, your support of transit funding in this transportation bill is vital. It ensures that DCT and our peers across the state can continue to provide not just basic, low-grade service, but dignified, exemplary service—the kind of service a veteran with memory issues deserves,

the kind that supports individuals facing hardship, that helps people remain in their homes, that accelerates careers, and that moves Ohio forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your leadership and commitment to Ohio's transportation future.