



Ohio General Assembly

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Chairman Schaffer and Members of the Senate Agriculture Committee:

- Investing in better public transportation improves economies, supports communities, and changes lives.
- The team at Cincinnati Metro has been hard at work improving the service to our community; adding 24-hour bus routes for the first time in our history, adding cross-town bus service routes for shorter trip times, increasing the frequency of bus arrivals, and a whole host of other customer-oriented improvements - so that no matter what shift you work you now have greater access to better paying jobs. Parents can get their children to medical appointments. Senior citizens can have access to quality-of-life services. And students have robust options to get to and from class.
- Because of these improvements, an additional 93,000 jobs in Hamilton County are now accessible by public transportation; that's 740 more employers representing \$850M in wages that are now accessible by our region's public transit network.
- And without a doubt, the improvements are working. Ridership has grown steadily over the last three years and Cincinnati is one of the nation's leaders in post-pandemic ridership recovery. In the last quarter of 2024, the national average for post-pandemic ridership recovery was around 74%, while Cincinnati Metro's ridership was around 114% of pre-pandemic levels.
- When we provide good, frequent, reliable bus service to areas with jobs, services, healthcare, and education, ridership grows and everyone in our community and in our state benefits from this increased mobility and economic activity.

Supporting Transit Budget

- Cincinnati Metro would like to thank the General Assembly for allocating federal funds for public transportation in House Bill 54.
- Additionally, we ask for your continued support of GRF funding as appropriated by the Governor and the House. These funds allow agencies across Ohio to leverage outside funding sources to multiply the impact here in our local communities.
- We ask for support of the Workforce Mobility Partnership Program, Amendment (SC-01014). This program is already paying dividends in Southwest Ohio where Metro is leveraging technology to improve access to jobs.



Removing Public School Busing Language

- On the regulatory side of things, we urge you to remove the language that places further restrictions on public school districts' ability to use public transit as a means to connect students to school. (Am # TBD)
- There are a few significant concerns with the proposed language:
 - As written, it is unclear which systems and which transit hub locations would be subject to these new mandates.
 - Given the complexity and the geography of the impacted districts, it would be logistically impossible to legally meet the requirements of the amendment.
 - The amendment would also place transit drivers in legal jeopardy for not complying with the amendment. Public transit agencies are, by definition, open to the public and are legally prohibited from refusing service to individuals, including students.
 - Lastly, the proposed language, if not clarified, stands in contradiction with federal regulations regarding public transit's role in student transportation. Attempting to comply with this proposed legislation, as written, could place hundreds of millions of dollars of federal funds at risk in the State of Ohio.
- We urge the language to be removed, or at a minimum, delayed until important clarifications can be made.
- Thank you for all that you do in support of our transit systems, our communities, our economies, and the citizens of Ohio.

Thank you!

