

Testimony before the Ohio Senate 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.

We know that 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 \$80 million.

At COTA, we act as an extension of the region's economic development arm, providing daily access to jobs, healthcare and education for our customers. We believe that public transit is a tool for workforce development and economic mobility, in fact, 77% of COTA riders are employed either full or part time, however, 62% of COTA riders do not have access to a vehicle.

So, as Ohio continues to attract historic investment to our state, with announcements like Intel 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.

COTA is also grateful for the inclusion of the Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership program in the current version of the bill. This program provides essential funding across the state that helps transit agencies address the unique workforce transportation challenges in our communities.

I will conclude by noting Ohio's public transit authorities and the 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.

