



---

**Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA)**

2000 Summit Rd. Kent, OH 44240

(330) 678-7745 PH

(330) 676-6310 FAX

[www.partaonline.org](http://www.partaonline.org)

[Amrhein.c16@partaonline.org](mailto:Amrhein.c16@partaonline.org)

**Proponent Testimony on HB 54 – Senate Transportation Committee – March 4, 2025**

**Claudia B. Amrhein, GM/CEO, PARTA**

Chairman Patton, Vice Chair Schaeffer, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the state transportation budget for state fiscal years 2026 and 2027. My name is Claudia Amrhein. I am the GM/CEO of Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority in Portage County, Ohio.

Public transportation is a vital link for millions of Ohioans to access jobs, healthcare, education, social activities, and basic daily needs like housing and fresh food. Public transit also is an essential tool for economic development and growth across our state. Businesses small and large cite worker transportation as an obstacle to filling essential employment vacancies. And as Ohio continues to attract historic investment, like Intel, Ford, and Honda, the need to fill jobs is increasing.

We are pleased and appreciate that \$15 million annual funding for the Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership program is back in the budget. Transit authorities across the state are focused on developing service and capital investment plans to support the growing need for workforce transportation. For example, at PARTA we'll be using FY25 workforce mobility funding to study and develop plans for addressing commercial and employment center developments built over the past decade. Locations are far from where potential workers live and are not accessible to traditional fixed route services, creating a transportation barrier.

We also urge you to increase funding for public transit annually to \$80M by increasing general revenue funding. State GRF are essential for many rural communities who lack dedicated local funding to use as local match for federal grant opportunities. This leaves available federal funding for Ohio on the table, funding that could be used to replace vehicles, equipment, and technology to link people with essential community resources.

Folks aging in place in rural areas rely on public transit where available, and the need is growing. In Portage County, we've seen an influx of registrations for door-to-door service for riders over 70 who are unable to drive. PARTA completes about 250 trips per day, for 3,200 active registered riders, about 1/3 of whom are over 65; over 500 are in outlying, 2-day/week service areas.

They need rides to reach dialysis, grocery stores, medical centers and in growing numbers, a wound care center in Streetsboro in northern Portage, where patients receive treatment up to 3 times per week to save limbs. Riders like Charlotte, 91, who lives in Deerfield, 23 miles from Streetsboro. And Claude, a 78-year-old wheelchair bound veteran, who travels to the wound care center twice per week. In addition, we have 30 regular dialysis clients riding 3x per week to 4 different locations.

These are just a few real-life examples how funding for public transit supports a common thread – that what links us all, in every community, is that people need access to resources to live and thrive. Today

one's access may be a car but tomorrow may be different. And public transit investment is essential to ensure access for people across Ohio.

Finally, we ask you to remove the local law enforcement requirement for security at transit hubs with six or more lines. This broad and costly provision would force small transits such as PARTA to hire officers to patrol our hub in downtown Kent, which is located just two blocks from Kent PD with few problems. And we encourage you to support enhanced transit operator assault language to further deter attacks on our public transit workers.

Chairman Patton, thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of transit investment in the transportation budget. I appreciate your attention and consideration and am happy to answer any questions you or members of the committee may have.