



**Proponent Statement: Jarrod Hampshire, Chief Operating Officer – METRO RTA HB No. 54**

**Ohio Senate Transportation Committee March 13<sup>th</sup> 2025**

**Chair Patton, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Transportation Committee:**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding funding for public transportation. My name is Jarrod Hampshire, and I serve as the Chief Operating Officer of the METRO Regional Transit Authority in Akron, however my transit career began 20 years ago this year as a Bus Operator for The Ohio State University.

Across the state, public transportation supports over 100 million trips annually, contributing to local economies and enhancing community connections. In Summit County, METRO RTA provided over 5 million of those trips in 2024, serving riders for many reasons, but one thing remains clear: every trip has value. One of our fastest-growing rider demographics includes students from the University of Akron and Akron Public Schools Career and College Academy, who rely on our services for workforce development opportunities, including getting to school, work, internships, and mentorships.

Governor DeWine's budget emphasizes Ohio's technology-driven economy, workforce development, and support for seniors, families, and children. Public transportation is a key tool to advance these goals by ensuring Ohioans can fully participate in our state's economy. Transit is not just an urban or rural issue; it is a statewide priority for job creation, workforce development, providing independence for individuals with disabilities, and allowing seniors to remain in their homes. When done right, infrastructure doesn't just move people—it fuels economic development, strengthens local businesses, and ensures Ohio remains competitive for years to come.

Specifically, today I want to thank you for your consideration of an amendment that includes a request for additional funding for the workforce mobility program. We are requesting funded be reinstated at the \$15M/Year level in the form of federal flex funding for the program as included in the house version of the bill. This program provides funding for agencies to support a lot of what I mentioned at the start of this testimony. For METRO specifically it supported enhanced dispatch software and bus shelters for high ridership areas.

I would also like to thank the committee for removing language that requires policing of a transit hub. Cleveland and Akron already have a large safety and security prescience in the form of Transit Police, while others have contractual relationships with local law enforcement agencies that already aid in the safety and security of our systems.

I want to thank you for your past leadership and support for public transportation. I encourage you to continue making the strategic investments necessary to maintain Ohio's economic strength, keep businesses thriving, and ensure our workforce stays connected to opportunities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.