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Ohio Senate Transportation Committee

HB54

March 14, 2025

Mary E. Habig, Executive Director
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Chairman Patton, Vice Chair Schaeffer, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

My name is Mary Habig, I am the Director of North Central Area Transit. I currently oversee public transportation in three rural counties: Seneca, Crawford and Huron. I come to you today to testify on the amendment for HB 54, Workforce Mobility Partnership Program.

When I read the Workforce Mobility Partnership Program had been removed from Transit, I struggle to understand why this successful program would be completely removed. The House again included the funding at the same level (\$15M/year) for the program in HB54, but the Senate removed it.

The Workforce Mobility Partnership Program was created as a pilot in the last transportation budget, funded at \$15M/year federal flex. The program was a huge success as ODOT had tens of millions of dollars in more applications than available funds and did award all the money allocated for each fiscal year.

About 50% of the riders of public transportation are passengers getting to work, showing the huge need among Ohioans to have reliable transportation to work. We have seen numerous announcements since COVID of large expansions in Ohio from national companies like Amazon, Facebook, Intel, Honda, LG, etc. who have an unprecedented demand for workers.

While Ohio has capable and skilled workers to fill these new jobs, many have the barrier of transportation (or the lack thereof), preventing them from applying, working or retaining their job due to the lack of transportation, especially in rural Ohio.

Workforce Mobility Partnership Program is vital in connecting the dots between workers and employers, especially in the rural areas of the state. The purpose of this program was to fill gaps in workforce needs and the growing and expanding business in Ohio.

The money will be used to address this issue and ensure workers can get to their jobs safely and on time, via public transportation by increasing routes, connections and accessibility.

Thank you for your time, your attention in this matter and for allowing me to testify today. On behalf of the rural transit systems in Ohio, we appreciate the state's ongoing financial support for public transit and look forward to show this legislature how many more positive changes can occur with the proper funding behind us.



Mary E. Habig, Executive Director
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