



**Statement of
Amalgamated Transit Union Ohio Joint Conference
Board
Before the House Finance Committee**

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Contact:

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Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today to talk about the importance of public transit funding in the state of Ohio.

My name is Troy Miller and I am the President of Local 627 of the Amalgamated Transit Union and also serve as President of the Amalgamated Transit Union Ohio Joint Conference Board. ATU's Ohio Joint Conference board represents nearly 3,000 members which include bus & rail operators, maintenance workers and Greyhound members. Collectively, we are responsible for the safe transit of most Ohioans who use transit on a daily basis. On average we serve over 300,000 riders a day statewide with ridership continuing to grow rapidly each year. It is an awesome responsibility that we take very seriously. While the good news is that there's an increase in customer use of public transit statewide - the down side is public transit in Ohio is severely underfunded.

Ohio provides among the least amount of funding per capita than any state in America, ranking behind much smaller rural states such as South Dakota, North Dakota, and West Virginia. Ohio is 14th in the nation in public transit ridership, it ranks 28th in state investments in public transit; as funding has dropped from \$43 million in 2000 to \$7.3 million in 2014 from the General Revenue Fund. Currently only 16% of public transit funding comes from the Federal government with 1% from the state. Under these terms, public transportation will not be able to continue to provide the current levels of service at these existing funding levels.

We all know that public transportation is critical in providing access to jobs, schools, doctor visits and economic opportunities. With the lack of investment in public transportation, our members see first-hand the impact of some of the steepest fare increases and deepest service cuts on those who depend on transit most and simply can no longer get to work because their ride is gone. Generally, when routes get cut, transit systems tend to look towards those with low ridership -- early morning, late night, and weekend service. People who work non-traditional hours, typically minorities who have no other means of transportation, are disproportionately affected. We see these devastating affects happening around the country, some places have totally shut down their transit system, leaving elderly and disabled people scrambling for a way to buy food and get to the doctor. This is a mobility crisis. In 2010, Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA) announced it would cut as many as 219 jobs and take 80 buses off the road - making the commute for suburban riders much more complicated. In Nov. 2009, the

Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA) in Cincinnati announced its first-ever layoff - affecting more than 130 employees. In Toledo, TARTA board recently announces a possibility of a fare increase to take effect later this year.

According to the Ohio Department of Transportation, funding cuts by the legislature were due to the recession and emphasis on other budget priorities. Nevertheless, funding public transit should be on the top of that list of priorities. Every \$1 billion of investment in public transportation operations annually results in an average of 41,000 jobs supported for that year. These include drivers, schedulers, dispatchers, mechanics, and management staff.

There are demographic trends arguing in favor of greater transit investment with Millennials showing less interest in car purchases and seniors becoming more dependent on transit as Ohioans are getting older and poorer, especially in rural areas as noted by ODOT's Ohio Transit Needs Study this year. Lastly, while the state's population growth is slow, it is receiving an additional influx of foreign-born residents who are accustomed to transit access.

ATU is now engaged in an effort to build coalitions with the millions of people who rely on transit each day in an effort to expand and improve transit options. ATU believes that immediate steps must be taken to insure more state investments be made to public transportation. We are working closely with our members, riders, OPTA and other advocacy groups on this issue. We look forward to working with you. I thank the committee for allowing us to share our views on the need for more public transportation funding.