

Chairman, members of the committee – my name is Kirt Conrad. I am President of the Ohio Public Transit Association and CEO of the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority in Canton. I have worked in public transportation in Ohio for over 20 years. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the state budget.

Our Association represents transit systems in 61 of Ohio's 88 counties. Ohioans make 115 million trips by transit every year. We project that number will increase to 250 million by 2025. The majority of these trips are taking people to work. School and medical services are the next most frequented locations.

The MCO sales tax issue is by the greatest issue facing transit and county governments this year. In fact, it is the largest challenge we've faced in many years.

In Stark County we will have to make substantial reductions including xyz. Other transit systems will have to make even larger service reductions. As a result Ohioans will have difficult time getting to work, school and health care services.

As an association we are asking for a permanent solution that allows systems to maintain current services. A proposal like resetting the franchise fee in July 2018 to keep the state, counties and transit authorities whole while retaining the one-time allocation for counties and transit authorities in the first year of the state budget would work well.

We also encourage you to keep funds from the Volkswagen settlement dedicated for transit. This funding makes sense to help transit authorities invest in new and cleaner burning buses – especially at a time when many of the state's busses are running on borrowed time.

Lastly, we ask that you restore \$800,000 in funding for the Office of Public Transit. For over 30 years it has been the policy of our state to support the Elderly and Disabled Transit Fair Assistance Program through the Office of Public Transit.

This program allows us to offer reduced fares for elderly and disabled passengers. These are for passengers who are often on low and fixed incomes who work hard to make ends meet, live independently, and to keep dignity in their lives. Eliminating this program will eliminate those worthy goals.

Thank you.