



Greater Cleveland
Regional Transit Authority

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Testimony of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority

The Ohio House of Representatives
Finance Committee
HB 74, Transportation Budget

February 17, 2021
10 a.m. Room 313

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chairman Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Greater Cleveland RTA, I am here to advocate for our organization, our ridership, our employer and education community, and our region.

Public transportation is central to our region's economic and cultural vitality. The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority ("GCRTA") is a strategic asset, providing mobility for thousands of daily trips to work and school, to the grocery store, to the doctor, and to enjoy all Cleveland and its surrounding communities have to offer.

We were pleased to read the DeWine Administration's recent COVID-19 Minority Health Strike Force Blueprint recommendation to "improve access to public transportation to better connect communities of color to health care, jobs, and education." We urge you to ensure the state budget reflects this important commitment.

Two years ago you increased Ohio's public transit funding from \$40 million to \$70 million per year statewide. However, that was short-lived due to the pandemic, resulting to cuts to \$66.8 million in State Fiscal Year 2020 and \$56.0 million in State Fiscal Year 2021.

Despite those cuts GCRTA was able to use the \$25 million in funds we received to purchase 16-40 foot CNG buses, allocate \$6 million for preventative maintenance which made funds available for rail track replacement on our light rail system, allocate \$4.5 million toward our rail car replacement program and initiate our Baby on Board pilot program provide transportation to expectant mothers. Just yesterday we awarded a second light rail track replacement project using \$6 million of State Fiscal Year 2021 funding.

Obviously, we were disappointed to see the executive budget slash this funding by nearly 90%, to \$7.3 million for State Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023, which is a giant step backwards. Given everything we as a transit industry are doing, we believe an increase should be considered and we are collaborating with our peer agencies through the Ohio Public Transit Association ("OPTA") to see this appropriation increased.

Last week the American Society of Civil Engineer's Ohio Section released their 2021 Report Card for Ohio's Infrastructure. They graded 16 categories of infrastructure for a statewide overall grade of C- with the Transit Grade of D. The Report Card cited the long term



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chronic lack of state funding for transit, the resulting decrease in transit ridership, and increased age of transit vehicles throughout the state. This proposed transit budget of \$7.3 million per years only continues the state's underfunding of transit after a short two year increase.

Despite the pandemic, we continued operations, maintaining payroll for over 2,000 workers. The nearly 50 ongoing projects for GCRTA have supported labor opportunities for 700 more workers across the region. Our in-state supplier expenditures totaled over \$190 million last year. GCRTA dollars help support business development and economic activity across the state. For 2019, we approved over \$96 million in contract opportunities and \$38 million in subcontracting for Ohio companies.

In addition, Cleveland is uniquely blessed with a rail car system—but one that is now beyond its useful life. We urge the State to contribute to funding the rail car replacement program, including through clarifying rail cars are eligible for Transportation Review Advisory Council ("TRAC") resources.

We urge your support for public transit in this bill and I would be happy to answer any questions you have. Thank you.