

February 15, 2021

Re: Opposition Testimony to SB 15

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and member of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Currently, there is a proposal to cut the transit discretionary funding by as much as 90% - from \$70 million annually to a mere \$7.3 million. This cut would be devastating to public transit systems across the state. In many cases, for every dollar of state funding lost, transit systems also lose a dollar of federal funding. As state funding is used as dollar for dollar match for federal funding. Ultimately this could translate to a \$125 million loss in public transit funds in Ohio.

Hocking Athens Perry Community Action operates several transportation programs in Southeast Ohio and across the state. With the additional state funding that became available in calendar year 2020, we were able to expand much needed service to rural and often isolated areas of Hocking and Athens Counties.

In Hocking County, the funding meant that we were able to extend our services countywide, rather than the more limited areas we could serve prior to the expansion. This had been one of the major County shortfalls outlined in our County Coordinated Plan for many years. This funding allowed us to quadruple our service area and add transit availability for over 12,000 additional County residents. Many had no access to any form of transportation other than family and friends.

In Athens County, this funding enables Athens Public Transit to continue its new route (Line 7) which started as a locally funded pilot project in August 2019 and expanded service to the communities of Nelsonville and Albany. The funds are also enabling our demand response system (Athens On Demand Transit) to service the general public county wide. Historically, due to its funding sources Athens On Demand Transit served a limited scope of residents, providing service primarily to individuals with disabilities and the elderly. These funds are allowing Athens Public Transit and Athens On Demand Transit to continue operating efficiently while meeting the transportation needs of the public.

Without the support of state funding, we will have no choice but to reduce service, significantly decreasing access to employment, education, medical care, food, and other necessities. Individuals who live in the more rural areas of Athens and Hocking Counties will feel the greatest impact. Without access to public transportation, unemployment, poverty,

infant mortality, and childhood hunger are likely to rise. Those who have already suffered greatly due to the global pandemic will face enormous challenges if their transportation is taken from them. This, of course has a ripple effect throughout the economy.

On the behalf of the residents of Athens and Hocking County, we ask you to please reconsider reducing funding to vital services during these already difficult times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelly Hatas". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "H".

Kelly Hatas
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