



February 17th, 2021

## OHIO HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE – INTERESTED PARTY TESTIMONY ON HB 74

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

My name is Kimberly Dunham and I am the Chief Executive Officer at the Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority (TARTA). In addition to my role at TARTA, I serve on the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Board of Directors.

TARTA provides a vital link in the Toledo metro region to jobs, education, health care and other destinations. It enables everyone in our community to have access to transportation regardless of their age, race, physical ability or economic background.

Every successful metropolitan region in the country has a robust public transportation system and understands the value that transit brings as an economic driver and community partner. Public transit is woven into the framework of a community by making connections that support economic vitality, workforce development, health, affordable housing and education initiatives.

With more than \$2 billion in economic development, 3,500 new jobs and 1,000 new residential units planned and underway, the City of Toledo is poised and ready for an extremely bright future. The Northwest Ohio region is becoming recognized as a top national contender for businesses to locate and people to live, and we should be leveraging that reputation.

Recently, the Regional Growth Partnership announced that Northwest Ohio was ranked as the No. 2 manufacturing region in the United States by Business Facilities. Our area businesses and economic development partners regularly contact TARTA requesting additional transit service to connect workers to jobs and to attract new businesses to our region.

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According to the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) annual report on per capita investment in public transportation by state, Ohio lags behind more than 40 other states. The \$70 million investment by the legislature in 2020 has been critical for Ohio public transit agencies to maintain service and invest in vehicles, facilities, equipment and technology.

Public transit is interwoven into the fabric of a community, serves as an economic driver, opens doors of opportunity and literally changes people's lives. A public transit system can thrive only when adequate resources are provided to cover operating costs and ensuring continued investment in asset repair/replacement and emerging technologies. Even a well-funded transit system faces challenges, trying to find balance between increasing ridership, covering a broad geographic area and at the same time meeting employer needs for highly qualified workers.

As part of a truly multi-modal transportation strategy on the national, state and local level, public transit should be prioritized and adequately funded along with roads, bridges, passenger and freight rail, bicycle, pedestrian, air and ports. It is imperative to remember that public transportation is an industry; not an afterthought.

The time is now to invest in the Ohio statewide public transit network, not to pull back. TARTA and our peers will continue to prove that not only are we in the community; we are a vital part of it as an economic driver and strategic partner.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman and esteemed members of the committee, for the opportunity to submit this testimony to you today.

