



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE OHIO SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
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Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority (TARTA)
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Chairman Kunze, Vice Chair Reinike, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing and allowing me 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).

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.

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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. As a matter of fact, Site Selection Magazine just last week named Toledo as the #1 City for economic investment for cities with population between 200,000 and 1,000,000.

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.

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 40 other states. For comparison purposes on the state level, Ohio invests \$.63 per capita annually for public transit while neighboring Pennsylvania invests nearly \$80.00 per capita.



The framework of funding public transit in our state leaves no alternative to local funding of public transit systems. TARTA has been inadequately funded for years and has needed to use its federal capital apportionment funding to offset a mounting operating deficit. This business model has resulted in a steady decline in the condition of our vehicles, facilities and equipment. It has also impeded our ability to invest in technology that is common for mid-size transit systems such as an upgraded fare collection system, automatic passenger counters and security camera system. I arrived at TARTA fourteen months ago and can only describe the situation I encountered as one of many, many years of organizational neglect.

TARTA has attempted four times since 2010 to change its local funding model from two property taxes to a sales tax. The sales tax model is the most common in the country to fund transit and is considered more progressive, as it is a consumption-based model. Of the six largest urban centers in Ohio, TARTA remains that last public transit system funded locally by property tax.

Due to the existing statutory language related to adding a member jurisdiction to a Regional Transit Authority, we must obtain unanimous consent of our existing members. This overly restrictive requirement has resulted in multiple failed attempts to add Lucas County to TARTA due to one member jurisdiction's disapproval. Unanimous consent results in the intentions of the minority overriding those of the majority, and based on past history, this has proven an impossible task for us to accomplish.



I am here today to ask you to support the legislative language related to TARTA, as *introduced*, in the Governor's Office version of the Transportation Budget. For the first time ever, the Toledo Chamber of Commerce is supporting the TARTA initiative, and we have developed a broad coalition of business leaders and community partners that support it as well.

We have an entirely new executive team, comprised of transit professionals from across the country, who have moved to Toledo to completely transform the system and we have proven to the community this past year to be change agents.

A similar statutory language change was made two years ago for Hamilton County, allowing Cincinnati Metro to move forward, and we simply request the same consideration.

Without long-term, sustainable and proper funding of TARTA, the agency is on the verge of financial demise. Another dramatic round of service cuts will occur in 2022, shutting down access to jobs, healthcare, education and other destinations in our community. The results will be devastating.

Public transit 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 ensure continued investment in assets 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.

Funding public transit should be considered an *investment*, an investment in our present, as well as our future. The time is *now* to allow the *people to decide* if they wish to invest in public transit in Northwest Ohio.

By supporting the language change from unanimous consent to majority consent with bipartisan support, you will allow the democratic process to play out in our community.

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

