

Ohio Senate
Transportation Committee
Senator Stephanie Kunze, Chair

March 10, 2021

Testimony Given by:
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Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority
Dayton, Ohio

Madame Chairwoman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mark Donaghy, Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority (RTA). RTA is the regional public transportation provider for the Dayton Region including Montgomery and western Greene Counties. RTA provides fixed-route bus service as well as demand responsive services for people with mobility impairments across the region. As is the case with most urban transit systems in Ohio, 2/3rds of RTA passengers are riding the bus to access a job. Without our services these customers would lose their jobs and regional employers would face shortages of manpower that would be devastating. During the pandemic our system has carried 2/3rds of our pre-pandemic customers, a rate nearly twice the national average for 2020.

I am here today to testify in support of maintaining funding levels at \$70 million each year in the next biennium budget. Without adequate funding, Ohio's transit systems will be unable to meet the needs of our communities by keeping citizens employed and healthy. In the Dayton Region, tens of thousands of people use RTA services to get to work in essential jobs in healthcare, retail and logistics. Companies who have recently relocated to or expanded in Dayton such as Chewy, Proctor & Gamble, Crocs, Masonite, Frito Lay, Innovative Plastic Molders, White Castle, Alpla, Energizer and Purina represent 4,000 new jobs added and there are 2,000 more in the pipeline . They are the backbone of the workforce who are keeping the economy growing and supporting all Ohioans needs while trying to provide for their families. Just this week a roundtable of the Airport area employers raised concerns about the demands for increased service coverage and frequency. Our ability to serve these needs has been hampered by the loss of millions in sales tax revenues (from managed care) when the prior administration left regional transit authorities out of the solution they implemented. Without this critical state funding we will be forced to consider service reductions, stopping the economic growth in that area and others.

Also, many others rely on our services each day for life-saving medical treatments such as dialysis and have no other options to access this critical care. We are seeing inequities for communities of color, especially in the COVID

vaccination process as these families lag far behind their counterparts in gaining access. Further, we understand that lack of transportation is the most common reason stated for eligible persons being unable to get the vaccine. Our goal is to insure every person has the access they need.

In 2014, ODOT commissioned a Transit Needs Study which concluded that \$180 million in annual appropriations was needed to provide an adequate level of service to Ohio citizens. Today we are at 1/3rd that amount and the needs are so pressing that ODOT received more than \$200 million in funding requests making the program oversubscribed by a 3-1 margin.

As you can see in the table below, the potential impact for continued positive change including leveraging federal funds for our region is tremendous but can only happen with adequate funding in the transportation budget before you.

Potential Impact of SFY 2022 & SFY 2023 GRF Funds If Awarded to Greater Dayton RTA

Ohio Urban Transit Program (UTP)

\$4 Million Formula Awards

- RTA could use these funds to **leverage and access \$16 million in federal funds**. This could total \$20 million dollars which we could use as follows:
 - Fund contracts with independent construction firms, engineers, electrical contractors, local supply/support businesses, and others to jump start efforts to rebuild our 100 year old electrical distribution system and help ensure another century of continue use for our Electric Trolley Buses.
 - Fund efforts by the RTA Maintenance Team to keep our fleet running in top operating condition and our facilities in a constant state of good repair.
 - Fund contracts with local firms to supply support services and needed supplies to RTA.
 - Community improvement projects to benefit the various communities RTA serves.

Ohio Transit Preservation Partnership Program (OTPP)

\$5 Million Competitive Awards

- RTA could use these funds to **leverage and access \$5-20 million in federal funds**. This could total \$10-25 million dollars which we could use as follows:
 - Fund additional services to connect residents to quickly growing distribution center jobs, most of which have located in the suburbs and outer areas of the County. One important area is the quickly growing NW part of the County around the airport and includes the suburban communities of Vandalia, Englewood, Clayton, and Brookville. The other is the suburbs of Kettering and Moraine which are home to an Amazon distribution facility as well as a growing retail/service corridor.
 - Help fund a multi-county Medical Shuttle to ensure access of all residents to health appointments and related services. This could be a joint project with Miami County Transit and Greene County Cats.
 - Fund continued/expanded service on the Downtown Employment Shuttle connecting the University of Dayton to the Central Business District which includes the site of UD's new Innovation Hub.

Leverage – Each State Dollar Could Bring in Four Federal Dollars

\$9 million in State GRF Funds could be used as match to bring in up to \$36 million in federal funds. This could result in a \$45 million dollar economic impact.

Any reduction in funding will have devastating impacts on Ohio's communities. The unintended consequence in this case may well be slowing Ohio's progress toward rebuilding a 21st century economy that our children and theirs desperately need.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

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