



**NATIONAL
VETERANS
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March 5, 2021

The Honorable Stephanie Kunze
Chair, Ohio Senate Transportation Committee
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Supporting Central Ohio Public Transit/COTA

Dear Chairwoman Kunze,

I write to express my strong support for the restoration of \$70 million per fiscal year for public transportation funding in HB 74, the State of Ohio's biennial transportation budget.

The value of public transit to Central Ohio has been tested and proven during the COVID-19 pandemic, delivering thousands of customers to their essential jobs, food sources, social services, health care needs or to care for others. The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) employs nearly 900 frontline workers who have kept COTA operating every day, working more than 1.4 million hours since March.

Among our communities most vulnerable customers are Veterans who served our country and now depend on public transportation for their essential needs. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Central Ohio Health Care Systems, specifically its Community Outreach Division (COD), provides medical, housing and employment services to thousands of Veterans every year. It is estimated that 85% of these Veterans lack sufficient means of reliable transportation to enable them actively search, gain and maintain housing or employment. COTA provides an invaluable service for this Veteran demographic by providing low cost, variable routes and time schedules.

Ohio's transit systems generate \$3.6 billion in economic activity and create and support 180,000 private sector jobs. Ohio's public transit authorities advance economic opportunity while providing access to essential services to our most vulnerable populations, including Veterans, seniors and those with developmental disabilities.

Because public transit is crucial for the recovery of Ohio's economy, I respectfully ask that the state budget maintain public transit funding at \$70 million per fiscal year.

Sincerely,

Lt. General Michael Ferriter, U.S. Army (ret.)
President/CEO
National Veterans Memorial and Museum

CC: Members, Ohio Senate Transportation Committee
The Honorable Matt Huffman, Speaker of the Ohio Senate
Joanna M. Pinkerton, President/CEO, Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA)