



Written Testimony - Ohio Senate Transportation Committee
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Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reinke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of the Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority (TARTA).

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

The purpose of my testimony is to share TARTA's support for the efforts made by the Ohio House of Representatives to restore transit funding to the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) budget bill, H.B. 74. We strongly encourage the Ohio Senate to support this much needed funding.

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.

The Northwest Ohio region is becoming recognized as a top national contender for businesses to locate and people to live. The City of Rossford welcomed Amazon and the potential of thousands of new jobs in 2020. TARTA extended service to meet the transportation needs of this workforce. In the City of Toledo, there is more than \$2 billion in economic development, 3,500 new jobs and 1,000 new residential units planned and underway. Now is the time to be leveraging these successes through strong public transportation.

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 annual investment by

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the legislature in 2019 was 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 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.

