



Senator Stephanie Kunze
Chair, Senate Transportation Committee
1 Capitol Square
1st Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Senator Nickie Antonio
Ranking Member, Senate Transportation Committee
1 Capitol Square
1st Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Senators Kunze and Antonio,

Transportation access is critical for good health across the lifespan. In its report on the connections between transportation and health equity, the Health Policy Institute of Ohio (HPIO)—the state’s leading, independent, nonpartisan health policy think tank—provides examples of the impact of transportation on health:

- Reliable transportation offers better access to jobs and supports self-sufficient employment, which can lead to higher income and better physical and mental health.
- Transportation to prenatal care and healthy food can improve birth outcomes and reduce infant mortality disparities.
- Transportation enables older adults to access health care, seek supports and activities for healthy aging, and combat isolation by connecting with family and friends.

Transportation is an equity issue across race, income level, geography, and age. According to HPIO:

- Almost one-quarter of Black women in Ohio (23%) live in households without a vehicle, compared to 8% of Ohioans overall.
- More than half of individuals in low-income neighborhoods across Ohio’s metropolitan areas need more than 90 minutes to reach their jobs via transit. In Cleveland, it takes more than 90 minutes for nearly two-thirds (63%) of these individuals to reach their jobs.
- Older adults across Ohio delay care because of lack of transportation, ranging from 1 in 8 older adults in metropolitan areas to nearly 1 in 4 in Appalachia.

Our experience with the Greater Cleveland COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund has underscored that lack of transportation is a key to protecting health, preventing disease, and meeting Ohioans’ most basic needs. One of the first grantees of the Rapid Response Fund in March 2020 was Senior Transportation Connection of Cuyahoga County, a vital resource throughout the pandemic in providing access to crucial medical and food services to older adults with limited mobility and social supports. Since then, the Rapid Respond Fund has supported numerous small, community-based organizations, like the Senior Citizen Resources and Mommy and Me Too, in providing transportation and basic needs to residents throughout Northeast Ohio.

However, philanthropic support cannot possibly meet all critical transportation needs; instead, state funding for public transit is essential to meeting our residents’ needs at-scale.



Due to the aforementioned issues, we applaud the Senate Transportation Committee’s further investment in public transit through Substitute HB 74, and we urge passage of this important piece of legislation. The investments both the House and Senate have made in transportation over the biennium are critical at this most acute point in the coronavirus pandemic. Public transportation is used to get essential workers to their jobs, vulnerable populations to vaccine appointments, and residents across all walks of life to grocery stores, pharmacies, and other essential businesses.

State funding is foundational to providing public transportation ongoing services. Transit providers in the Rapid Response Fund’s service area—Cuyahoga, Geauga, and Lake counties—received over \$31.8 million in fiscal years 2020 and 2021 from five discrete programs: the Ohio Public Transportation Partnership Program, Urban Transportation Program, Rural Transportation Program, Specialized Transportation Program, and Elderly and Disabled Fare Assistance. These funds enabled providers to implement a Baby on Board pilot program for expectant and new mothers, replace vehicles for senior transportation, and continue indispensable transit services in the face of local revenue shortfalls.

For transportation to remain a key component of the pandemic safety net and a cornerstone of recovery moving forward, we encourage you to pass Substitute HB 74 with its increased public transportation funding.

Sincerely,

Mitchell Balk, President
The Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation

Jeanine Gergel, President
Healthy Lakewood Foundation

Susanna H. Krey, President
Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland

Ronald B. Richard, President & Chief Executive Officer
The Cleveland Foundation

The Greater Cleveland COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund