



**Senate Transportation Committee
Proponent Testimony, Sub. House Bill 74 (Oelslager)
Thursday, March 18, 2021**

Chair Kunze, Vice Chairman Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to once again share interested party testimony on House Bill 74, the state transportation budget for Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023.

As I noted when I testified to the committee on March 3, two years ago, this legislature enacted a historic state transportation budget that provided for the single-largest investment in public transportation in a generation. This investment provided the resources necessary for Ohio's public transit agencies both large and small, rural and urban, to **expand services, enhance education opportunities, make needed capital investments and invest in new technology.**

The House of Representatives made important progress on improving upon an executive budget proposal which eviscerated public transit funding by 90 percent when compared to FY2020-2021 transportation budget. This committee, with the substitute bill accepted on March 17, builds on that by increasing GRF appropriations to \$37 million per year, while maintaining a direction to ODOT to earmark \$33 million per year in FHWA "flex funding" for public transit. We also appreciate the clarification in House-included language which states that ODOT may only request a reduction in FHWA flex funding by the Controlling Board if additional federal relief funds can be used for non-COVID related expenses, and important clarification.

This funding will ensure that Ohio's public transportation agencies are able to continue to invest in innovation and new technology while ensuring that riders who rely on public transportation will be able to do so.

I would also like to note, that while there does continue to be discussion about how the recently enacted funding Ohio public transit agencies will receive from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), it is important to note that like previously authorized funding in both the CARES Act, as well as the CARES 2 Act, funding can only be utilized for COVID-related expenses, which includes operating expenses, payroll, and PPE costs. This short-term, temporary funding, cannot be viewed as replacement of state resources that support the important needs of Ohio's public transit agencies.

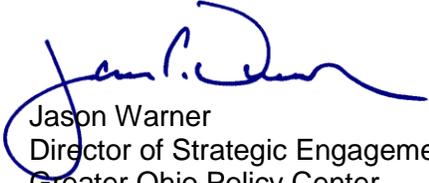
While we applaud the work the General Assembly has done to significantly improve upon the as-introduced budget, Greater Ohio does continue to believe that it is important that Ohio look to the future needs of public transportation along with the immediate needs as well.

To that end, we would once again ask that the committee consider the proposed amendment which would establish a joint legislative task force which can make recommendations to the General Assembly for a dedicated source of funding for public transportation, allowing Ohio to join with the 25 other states and the District of Columbia that have a permanent, predictable source of funding that allows for long-term planning and budgeting and gives riders the

confidence to know that public transportation can continue to be there for them for the years to come.

Thank you for your support and consideration of our proposal.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason Warner", is written over the typed name and title.

Jason Warner
Director of Strategic Engagement
Greater Ohio Policy Center