



March 6, 2023

Members of the Ohio Senate Transportation Committee

Senator Stephanie Kunze
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square
1st Floor, 129
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for the record regarding funding for public transportation in the State of Ohio. I am Dawn Distler, Chief Executive Officer for the METRO Regional Transit Authority in Akron.

You have heard much of this testimony over and over again. Smart and equitable transportation systems connect the people you and I serve to jobs, schools, housing, health care services, grocery stores and nutritious food. I know every meeting or event I attend I hear over and over again that the lack of public transportation is one of the major barriers to these connections. When your business retention and expansion committees in your area meet to discuss the next major employment opportunity, the Intels the Amazons, over and over again one of their major requirements is always great public transportation infrastructure for their campus because without employees they have no business.

Public transportation takes many differing forms throughout our State but one core principal remains the same, and that is ALL trips matter. Whether the trip is being provided to a senior citizen living in Summit County accessing medical appointments, or a working adult riding a train in Cleveland, all trips matter. Millions of passenger trips are provided on transit services across Ohio each year. Without continued increased investments at the state level to support public transportation mobility and quality of life in every district, including yours, would suffer. Public transportation is vital in rural areas to help people access jobs, medical appointments and educational opportunities ... it is vital for seniors to maintain their independence and be able to age in place ... and it is imperative for persons with disabilities to be able to fully integrate and contribute to communities.

Yet over and over again the decision to adequately fund public transportation in our state is not considered as an investment that needs to be increased but as a question of should we continue to fund it. In the last transportation budget this body made a significant increase in public transportation and the public transportation providers have used that investment wisely to provide access for our transit loyal riders, jobs for those in our communities, as well as leveraging Federal Infrastructure funding to invest in our communities because Infrastructure done right boosts job creation as well as the productivity of our economy.

It may sound as though I am not thankful for your past investments in our essential services. I am thankful. But I am also hopeful, hopeful that you, as the representatives of the communities we serve, will continue to make the robust investments needed to give people access to where they need to go, to give businesses access to the hard working people of Ohio, to give public transportation providers access to the Federal funding opportunities available and to realize this access will bring economic growth to Ohio that will continue for decades to come.

Thank you for this opportunity.



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