2021 REPORT CARD FOR OHIO'S INFRASTRUCTURE

Ohio Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers
INFRASTRUCTUREREPORTCARD.ORG/OHIO
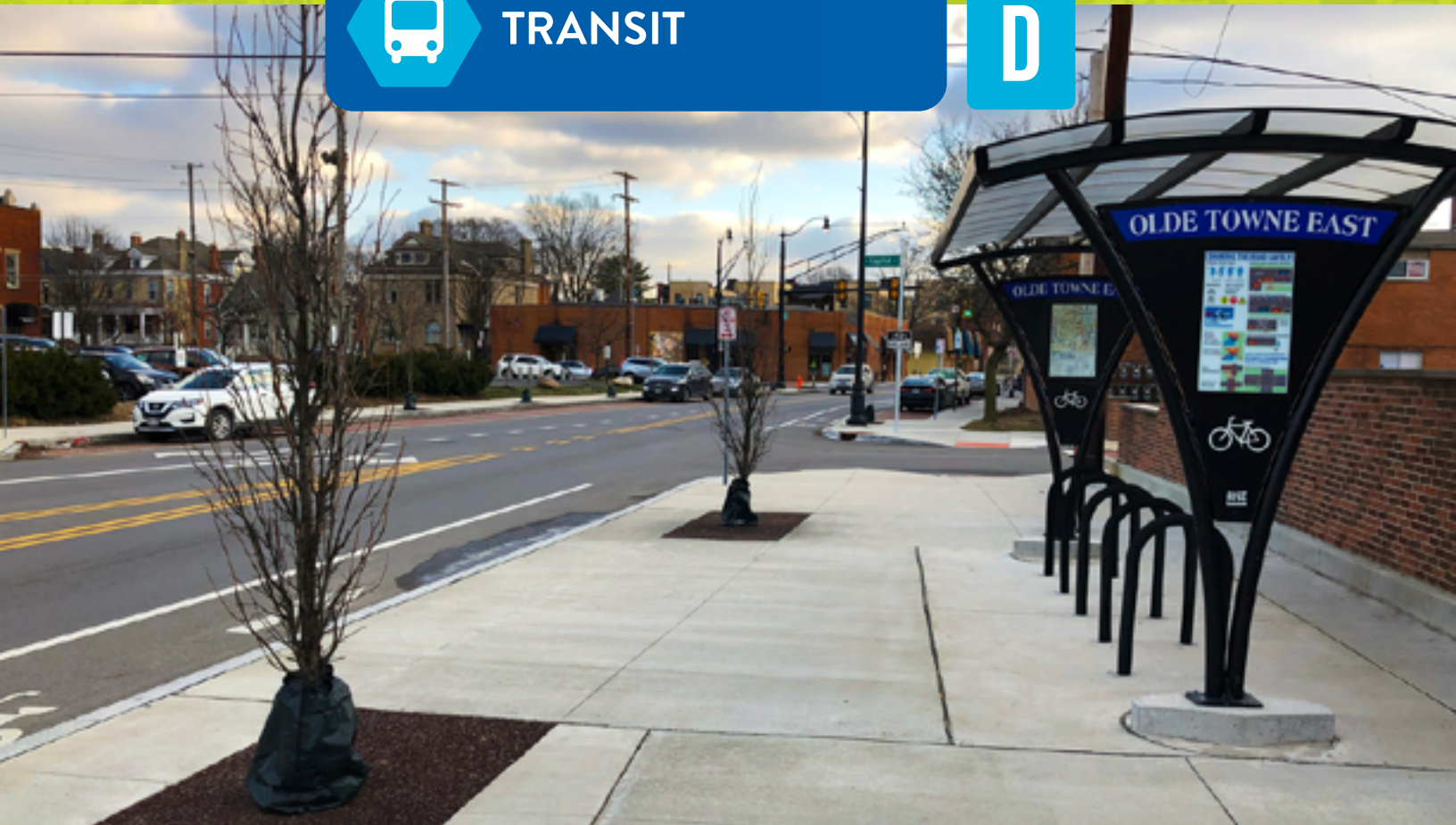
ASCE
AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS

TRANSIT
GRADE: D

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Ohio there are 27 urban and 34 rural transit systems serving 83 of Ohio's 88 counties. These systems provided 100.6 million rides in 2018 – a 25% decrease in the last 15 years. In 2018, 636 of 3,559 (17.9%) revenue vehicles exceeded their useful lives – a 55% increase over the 408 of 3,469 (11.8%) vehicles with this status in 2003. This coincides with the dramatic and long-term lack of state funding for transit that has decreased as follows:

- $42.3 million in 2000
- $18.3 million in 2005
- $15.8 million in 2008
- $7.3 million in 2013
- $6.5 million in 2018

In 2018, transit received only $6.5 million or $0.57 per person ranking Ohio 42nd in state per capita funding. By contrast, the average state provided $58.69 per capita – more than 100 times that of Ohio.

CONDITION AND CAPACITY

In 2018, Ohio's transit agencies were required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to create Transit Asset Management Plans (TAMP). This plan inventories existing assets and sets goals for asset condition in four areas:

- Percent of revenue vehicles exceeding their useful life

- Percent of equipment exceeding their useful life

- Facilities below a 3.0 rating on a 5-point scale

- Percentage track with slow zones for rail lines

TAMP plans also include goals for each applicable category and detail each agency's inspection and condition documentation.

Given that the TAMP is a new requirement, trend data is not readily available. However, the annual ODOT Status of Public Transit report does list all the revenue vehicle types and first year of service for the state's 61 transit agencies. This provides some trend data for revenue vehicles exceeding their useful life. Data from 2003, 2007, 2013 and 2018 is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1 – OHIO URBAN AND RURAL REVENUE VEHICLE CONDITIONS

	2003			2007		
	Revenue Vehicles	Exceed Useful Life	%	Revenue Vehicles	Exceed Useful Life	%
Urban	2933	358	12.2%	2947	456	15.5%
Rural	536	50	9.3%	505	38	7.5%
Total	3469	408	11.8%	3452	494	12.0%

	2013			2018		
	Revenue Vehicles	Exceed Useful Life	%	Revenue Vehicles	Exceed Useful Life	%
Urban	2808	407	14.5%	2971	564	19.0%
Rural	506	42	8.3%	588	72	12.2%
Total	3314	449	13.5%	3559	636	17.9%

Over the past 15 years the number of revenue vehicles exceeding their useful lives has grown steadily from 408 (11.8%) in 2003 to 636 (17.9%) in 2018. This growth in older vehicles exceeding their useful life has occurred both in the urban and rural systems and reflects the funding pressures facing transit throughout the state.

As the data above shows, the number of revenue vehicles in Ohio has grown over the last 15 years from 3,469 to 3,559, but the transit ridership has dropped 25% from 134 million in 2003 to 100.6 million in 2018. As shown in Table 2, the vast majority of ridership is concentrated in Cleveland, Cincinnati and Columbus (known locally as the 3Cs) accounting for 72% to 74% with the eight largest urban systems (the 3Cs, plus Akron, Canton, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown) accounting for 92% to 95% of all rides.

TABLE 2 – OHIO AND URBAN TRANSIT RIDERSHIP DATA (MILLIONS)

	2003	2007	2013	2018
Ohio Total	134.0	129.9	115.1	100.6
Akron	5.8	5.3	5.4	5.1
Canton	1.8	2.2	2.7	2.5
Cincinnati	23.9	22.7	17.0	14.0
Cleveland	59.3	59.5	49.2	39.6
Columbus	15.6	14.8	18.8	19.2
Dayton	11.6	10.5	9.7	9.1
Toledo	4.3	4.6	3.5	2.6
Youngstown	1.1	1.2	1.5	1.5
8 Large Urbans	123.4	123.8	107.8	93.6
3 C's	98.8	97.0	85.0	72.8

The ridership losses shown above highlight the transit impacts of urban sprawl and the de-densifying of Ohio's largest cities. Ohio's population has been stagnant over this period with Columbus as the only urban area growing in the state. This has supported Columbus's ridership growth of 23.0%. Canton and Youngstown, areas that recently noted ridership gains, have now either leveled out or decreased in the last five years.

FUNDING AND FUTURE NEED

Transit funding in Ohio is a combination of Federal, State and local funding. It is used for both operations and capital spending. Depending on the funding source, it is often restricted to either operating or capital spending exclusively. The 61 different transit agencies are funded via a number of sources including a combination of:

- County sales tax
- County property tax
- Local income tax
- City/county general funds

- Farebox revenue
- Service contracts
- Advertising
- Donations

State-level funding for transit comes in two forms – the State of Ohio General Revenue Fund and ODOT Flex Funds, the latter of which is derived from federal gas tax funds that are designated within the ODOT budget for transit. The ODOT Office of Transit controls and allocates a portion of those funds by formula through the Urban Transit Program to agencies and allocates another portion through competitive grants known as the Ohio Transit Preservation Program.

Federal funds are allocated by formula based upon population and ridership. They are administered through the FTA and provide a base level of funding. Federal funds also are available through several competitive grant programs through both FTA and the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) that provide one-time funds as well as a variation of funding for capital projects and vehicle replacement programs. For the rural transit agencies, the ODOT Office of Transit administers and distributes their federal funds and are used for both operating and capital projects. For the urban agencies federal formula funds are used to supplement operating budgets for preventative maintenance and for capital projects.

National Transit Database (NTD) time series data for operating, capital and total transit funding for 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018 are shown in Table 3. Local and other funding sources have increased approximately 3% per year over the last 15 years, keeping up with inflation. During the same period, state funding has decreased by 30% and federal funding has fluctuated, increasing slightly over 1% per year.

TABLE 3 – NTD OHIO TRANSIT FUNDING SOURCE DATA (MILLIONS)

FUNDING SOURCE	2003	2008	2013	2018
Operating				
Local/Other	$427.1	$460.1	$552.4	$692.7
State	$7.6	$18.5	$8.6	$10.3
Federal	$76.4	$88.8	$102.1	$112.7
Total	$511.1	$627.4	$663.1	$815.7
Capital				
Local/Other	$23.5	$63.2	$62.3	$78.3
State	$7.6	$8.7	$0.1	$0.4
Federal	$95.7	$103.5	$119.0	$89.8
Total	$126.8	$175.4	$181.4	$168.5
All Funding				
Local/Other	$450.6	$583.3	$614.7	$771.0
State	$15.2	$27.2	$8.7	$10.7
Federal	$172.1	$192.3	$221.1	$202.5
Total	$637.9	$802.8	$844.5	$984.2

A review of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Survey of State Funding for Public Transportation shows that Ohio's State funding for transit has decreased from $42.3 million in 2000, $18.3 million in 2005, $15.8 million in 2008, $7.3 million in 2013, and $6.5 million in 2018. (6,7,8,9) This does differ slightly from the NTD data due to variation in fiscal year and calendar year reporting. As shown in Table 4 the trend of Ohio's decreased state funding, significantly lower state to federal funding ratio compared to other states and low ranking in funding per capita shows that Ohio has lagged other states for a number of years. The passage of House Bill 62 in 2019 had increased state GRF funding to $70 million in State Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021, but due to COVID-19 those funds have already been reduced to $66.8 million and $56.0 million.

TABLE 4 – AASHTO FEDERAL AND STATE/D.C. TRANSIT FUNDING DATA

	2000	2005	2008	2013	2018
United States					
State to Federal Funding %	135%	129%	94%	161%	149%
Average State Funding per Capita	$26.57	$31.79	$42.50	$54.28	$58.69
Ohio					
State to Federal Funding %	32.0%	10.9%	8.6%	4.3%	3.1%
State Funding per Capita	$3.75	$1.60	$1.37	$0.63	$0.56
State Ranking	25th (est.)	30th	40th	37th	42nd

In 2015, ODOT's Statewide Transit Needs Study documented the future needs for both operating and capital funding to preserve existing services as well as additional funding for system expansion in order to increase ridership. In 2014, the unmet operating need was $97 million with annual operating funding needed to grow to $1.3 billion by 2025. In 2014, the capital project backlog totaled $274 million primarily for vehicle replacement with an additional $1.8 billion needed from 2015 to 2025 to achieve a systemwide state of good repair. The report also noted a need for an additional $2.1 billion from 2015 to 2025 to expand vehicle fleets and operating systems to meet the anticipated additional ridership demand. With the lack of new state and federal funding since the study was published, these future funding needs have only increased.

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

Ohio's transit agencies must balance the amount of service provided to match their available operating funds. They also must maintain a greater volume of older vehicles that have exceeded their useful lives and require significantly more time and money than newer vehicles to remain in service. Those added maintenance costs take funds away from providing service. This is impacting both the urban and rural agencies as shown above by the increasing number of vehicles exceeding their useful life and decreases in system ridership.

Several systems are re-evaluating their route networks for efficiency. They are also improving their communication networks, real-time vehicle tracking capabilities and utilizing data analytics to improve services.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ohio's public transit systems provide a much safer travel alternative to Ohio's freeway and roadway networks. According to the NTD, from 2008 to 2018 there were 3,362 injuries and 42 fatalities on Ohio's 61 transit systems. That's an average of 302 injuries and 3.8 fatalities per year. The injuries have trended lower with a high of 379 in 2008 and a low of 225 in 2018 with 2016, 2017 and 2018 – all below the 11-year average. The fatalities have fluctuated around the average with a high of 7 in 2012, a low of 1 in 2010, and 5, 4, and 2 in 2016, 2017, and 2018. This is a positive trend. In 2018, the ridership was 100.6 million rides with over 464 million passenger miles traveled for an injury rate of 0.48/million miles and fatality rate of only 0.004/million miles.

RESILIENCE

Ohio transit agencies are addressing resiliency in two ways – first as a modal alternative within the transportation network and second to provide reliable and continuous service during extreme weather events (snow, ice, wind, flooding or tornados) and manmade disasters.

The large urban agencies have been working with ODOT as well as media to communicate transit as a modal alternative during large-scale highway construction to mitigate delays. Similar efforts have also been included during large scale civic and sporting events to minimize traffic congestion on the highway and roadway networks.

Regarding weather and other disruptions, the transit agencies have been hardening their passenger and operating facilities in response threats of terrorism, adding addition emergency communications and backup electricity generators in response to power outages, and strengthening Emergency Operations Plans to provide continuity of service.

INNOVATION

Ohio's transit agencies had been lagging in the areas of technology and innovation. However, in the last five years a number of exciting initiatives are being developed and implemented. Examples include:

- Columbus won the USDOT SMART City Challenge which has resulted in the testing of an autonomous shuttle vehicle, development of transit related apps, and use transit to provide transportation to address health care disparities.

- Dayton has piloted its Ridetime program where the Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority is the lead agency coordinating Mobility as a Service, tying transit to rideshare, bikeshare and multi-modal ticketing and payment.

- NeoRide a multi-agency consortium is implementing a mobile ticketing application and providing mobile ticket readers for transit vehicles both small urban and rural authorities funded through the ODOT Office of Transit.

- Greater Cleveland through a USDOT ATCMTD grant has upgraded its entire vehicle communication backbone to place router on all vehicles allowing for free WIfi, and greatly improved vehicle tracking and location data.

- Many agencies have pursued and won FTA grants for adding all-electric buses to their fleets.

TRANSIT

D

RECOMMENDATIONS TO RAISE THE GRADE

- Implement the recommendations from the 2015 ODOT Transit Needs Study including increased and dedicated Operating and Capital funding from the State of Ohio.

- Dedicate portions of the State Sales Tax revenue to public transit and/or dedicate an expanded the State Sales Tax base to public transit.

- Explore state constitutional amendment to allow the state gas tax to fund transit.

- Explore partnerships with Health and Human Services organizations as Ohio's population ages and is less mobile.

- Incentivize investments in technology and implement policies to coordinate Mobility as a Service and Mobility on Demand in conjunction with public transit instead of competing with transit.

- Use Transit Asset Management Plans and performance metrics to document the condition of transit assets throughout the state.

- Update the ODOT Transit Needs Study to document and update the transit needs reflecting the changes from the last five years.

TRANSIT D

SOURCES

Status of Public Transit in Ohio, Ohio Department of Transportation Office of Transit, May 2020 (based on 2018 data)

Status of Public Transit in Ohio, Ohio Department of Transportation Office of Transit, October 2014 (based on 2013 data)

Status of Public Transit in Ohio, Ohio Department of Transportation Office of Transit, October 2008 (based on 2007 data)

Status of Public Transit in Ohio, Ohio Department of Transportation Office of Transit, October 2004 (based on 2003)

Time Series Reports for Total, Operating and Capital Funding, National Transit Database, 2018

Survey of Funding for Public Transportation, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, 2020 (based on FY 2018 data)

Survey of Funding for Public Transportation, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, 2015 (based on FY 2013 data)

Survey of Funding for Public Transportation, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, 2010 (based on FY 2008 data)

Survey of Funding for Public Transportation, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, 2007 (based on FY 2006 data)

Ohio Statewide Transit Needs Study, Ohio Department of Transportation Office of Transit, 2015

2018 and 2019 Annual Reports from the Central Ohio Transit Authority, Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority, and Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority

Time Series Safety and Security Report, National Transit Database, 2018