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Public Testimony Submitted to
Ohio Rail Development Commission and Ohio Department of Transportation
Public Meeting in Cleveland, September 16, 2009

Ohio needs a 21st century transportation system for a 21st century work force. Having a strong public transportation system is in the public interest. Mass transportation offers mobility to Ohioans without automobiles, provides an economical option for commuters, eases congestion, reduces overall energy use and carbon emissions, and adds to the appeal of urban communities. Mass transportation is of vital importance to those who can't afford to own, operate and maintain their own personal vehicle, have disabilities, or are past the age when they can drive safely. For others, public transportation represents an important alternative choice for commuting and travel, even if a car remains part of their total transportation mix.

In the past, we have not made public transportation a priority in the development of Ohio's transportation system and its economy. Habitually, we spend less than 1 percent of our state transportation dollars on public transit, giving us the low ranking of 40th in the nation for our relative commitment to public transportation. As one regional transit authority director noted in a survey of public transit systems that we conducted last year: "[The choice] should not be either roads or public transit – public transit should be treated as a critical tool in the tool belt for future development."

Ohio's 3-C "Quick Start" Passenger Rail campaign represents an opportunity to reshape Ohio's transportation system to better reflect the positive role public transportation can play in creating a more equitable, vibrant and sustainable Ohio. Public transportation is not only more energy-efficient than passenger vehicle transportation, it also spurs economic development, employs people, assists firms and workers with transportation needs by providing a low-cost commuting option, reduces urban sprawl and congestion, increases urban vitality, and is far less harmful to the environment than having every commuter drive a car.

Public Transportation could be a low-cost, environmentally friendly alternative to passenger- vehicle transportation. Volatile fuel prices hit working families hard in Ohio. During last summer's fuel crisis, an Ohio family earning the median income spent between 8.2 and 17.6 percent of pre-tax dollars on passenger vehicle transportation, depending on geographical location and number of drivers in the household. High fuel prices hit Ohio's low-income working families even harder. A single individual making the minimum wage, working 40 hours a week, would have earned \$14,560 in 2008 (before taxes). If that individual lived in the Cleveland area, she would have had to spend 30 percent of her pre-tax income to drive a car.

Ohioans are currently sending at least \$8 billion out of our state's economy each year to import fuel for highway travel, and Ohio ranks an unfortunate fourth in the nation for the amount of carbon we emit. Approximately 83 percent of Ohioans drive in their car alone to commute to work. Last year's high summer gas prices tipped family budget scales and lured many Ohio drivers to public transportation.



In this recession, investing in mass transit can be one part of a much-needed economic infusion for Ohio. The Surface Transportation Policy Project estimates that investments in public transportation create nearly 19 percent more jobs than new roads or bridge projects create.

Since December of last year, Ohio has lost 159,000 jobs, including 89,000 manufacturing and 11,000 construction jobs. This recent job loss is on top of all the jobs we've lost in since the last recession from which Ohio never recovered. Since 2001, Ohio has lost nearly 500,000 jobs, including 384,000 manufacturing and 58,000 construction jobs, jobs in the skilled trades that tend to pay higher wages and come with better benefits than others.

Ohio has lost nearly 500,000 jobs since the last recession, many of which were good-paying manufacturing and construction jobs. We continued to lose jobs while the rest of the nation recovered, between the last recession and this one.							
	Jun-09	Dec-08	Jan-01	Job Change Since December 2008	% Change Since December 2008	Job Change Since January 2001	% Change Since January 2001
Total Jobs	5113.1	5271.8	5606.1	-159	-3%	-493	-9%
Manufacturing Jobs	614.5	703.7	998.6	-89	-13%	-384.1	-38%
Construction Jobs	181.3	192.4	239.3	-11	-6%	-58	-24%

*U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Seasonally Adjusted, number of jobs in thousands

Ohio should pursue green recovery dollars that will help put Ohioans back to work in jobs that pay decent wages. Investing in public transportation, starting with the 3-C Corridor, will create jobs laying rail, work for electricians and civil engineers, manufacturing the parts for public transportation, operating the lines, and dispatching vehicles. Some jobs are entry level, and can create green pathways out of poverty.

Investments in public transportation will create good-paying green jobs in Ohio.		
	# Employed in Ohio (May 2007)	Average Wage in Ohio (May 2007)
Civil Engineers	6250	\$32.03
Rail Track Layers	640	\$21.84
Electricians	25,560	\$22.20
Welders	15,710	\$15.26
Metal Fabricators	2,660	\$15.08
Engine Assemblers	4,030	\$17.40
Production Helpers	30,450	\$10.92
Transportation Supervisors	9,030	\$23.65
Dispatchers	6,880	\$16.37
Political Economy Research Institute (based on Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2007)		

