



Tax & Budget

Written Testimony to the Governor's Advisory Committee on Transportation Infrastructure Amanda Woodrum

Members of the committee, my name is Amanda Woodrum and I am a Senior Researcher for Policy Matters Ohio, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with the mission of creating a more prosperous, equitable, sustainable and inclusive Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

For decades, Ohio has underinvested in public transportation and other alternative transportation options. We spend billions of dollars each year to build out our transportation system, but only roughly one percent of those dollars goes toward public transit each year. The vast majority of those dollars goes toward roads and highways. As a result, we have created a transportation system that is difficult to navigate without a car. However, cars are expensive to own and expensive to operate. Prohibitively expensive for many low-income families. For the elderly and people with disabilities, driving may not be an option at all.

Transportation is the link to jobs. It's how we get to the doctor's office, the grocery store, child care, education, training, and other essential places. By limiting our transportation options, we limit access to education and opportunity, jobs, health care, healthy foods, and much more. This hurts job seekers, workers, employers, the elderly and people with disabilities.

Ohio must start investing to build a transportation system that works for everyone. Despite the fact that we are the seventh most populated state, we rank 45th among states for commitment to public transit.¹ We can and should do better.

Policy Matters Ohio respectfully recommends \$180 million in dedicated revenues be set aside annually into a Transportation Choice fund. The Ohio Department of Public Transportation, as part of its 2015 [Transit Needs Study](#), recommended the State of Ohio fund public transportation at \$120 million annually, starting in FY2015, including \$37 million for capital and \$83 million for operating costs.² By FY2025, the study recommended increasing the amount to \$185 million. Since we are approaching FY2020 and FY2021, we recommend funding levels at the total amount of \$150 million for public transit. We also need to invest in safe pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure. We recommend an additional \$30 million in transportation funds be set aside for these purposes.

¹ <https://www.policymattersohio.org/research-policy/sustainable-communities/transit/how-ohio-funds-public-transit>

² Ohio Department of Transportation Transit Needs study at <http://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/Planning/Transit/TransitNeedsStudy/Pages/StudyHome.aspx>

Ohio needs a 21st century transportation system that includes roads and highways but also includes public transit, passenger and freight rail, and walk-able, bike-able streets. Investing in alternative transportation options will put drivers and building tradespeople to work while helping commuters get to work and all Ohioans get wherever they need to go, safely.

If Ohio chooses to increase its gas tax, setting aside 20 percent of these new revenues for the Transportation Choice fund would be a good start in the direction of building our 21st century transportation system. Investing in public transportation is one way to counter the regressive nature of an increase in the gas tax, as would expanding Ohio's Earned Income Tax Credit. A number of other potential revenues sources can contribute to such a fund. For instance, funding for public transit could come from closing tax breaks in Ohio's \$9 billion tax expenditure budget or from flexing federal transportation funds. We hope to be a resource as you consider ways to create the transportation system Ohio needs for today and tomorrow.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.