



**Sally Fish, The Ability Center of Greater Toledo
Testimony on HB23, The Transportation Budget**

I am Sally Fish, Disability Rights Advocate at The Ability Center of Greater Toledo, a Center for Independent Living serving seven counties in northwest Ohio. The Ability Center's mission is to make our community the most disability friendly in the nation by increasing independence for people with disabilities, discovering true passions, and changing the community's perception of disability.

The Ability Center appreciates the public support of Governor DeWine to use money from the Biden administration to modernize transportation systems in Ohio. We ask the transportation committee to support the money being proposed in Ohio's FY 24-25 transportation budget for public transportation.

We ask this committee to support the proposed money for public transit in Ohio.

In America, individuals with disabilities and the aging population heavily depend on public transportation services and systems to partake in full community access. Full community access involves an individual's ability to live independently in their communities, and living independently in one's community is dependent on the ability to commute to and from recreational activities and jobs. In Ohio, the public transportation services, and systems available to Ohioans with disabilities and those in the aging population have historically been underfunded, leading to barriers to community access.

In 2021, The Ability Center of Greater Toledo conducted a statewide disability needs survey, which included transportation needs. A total of 141 individuals completed the survey from every different region in Ohio. **Of those 144 respondents, 70.54% of respondents reported they do not have access to regular and reliable transportation.** In answer to a different question, 55.2% reported that they were not able to access public transportation to get where they need to go; 41.18% stated that there was no service by their home; 35.29% stated that public transportation takes too long; 29.41% reported that public transit does not go where they want or need to go; 22.06% reported that the bus stop was too far away from where they live; 19.12% stated that public transit was not accessible because of their health; and 60.87% disagreed with the statement that public transportation is reliable and gets them places on time. The top self-reported changes respondents would like to see in public transit systems and services in Ohio were increased systems, routes, and stops (24%); increases accessibility (16%); increased hours (15%); and more reliable and safe transportation options (13%).

It is evident from these results that the transportation services and systems available in Ohio are not meeting the needs of the individuals who depend on them to live independently in their communities. Due to the lack of funding available for the current transit systems and the construction of infrastructure; including roads and sidewalks, individuals with disabilities and aging Ohioans continue to suffer in their communities without full access. Therefore, we ask that the transportation committee support the funding proposed by the bill to develop alternative transportation systems in our State and maintain the existing funding for the current



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transportation systems and services in Ohio through the consideration of the current transportation needs of aging Ohioans and Ohioans with disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the proposed FY 24-25 budget, and we appreciate the members of the transportation committee taking time to consider our ask in the decision-making process.