

FAIR FARES

A CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER TRANSIT



WHY FAIR FARES?

In 2007, the American Public Transit Association named the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority the best transit system in North America. That year, riders in northeast Ohio boarded GCRTA's trains, buses, circulators, and paratransit vehicles nearly 60 million times each year. But the Great Recession took its toll on the agency and, alongside Cleveland generally, GCRTA has not fully recovered.

Over the past decade, transit riders have endured ever-increasing fares to pay for continually diminished service. Continuing the current policies of fare enforcement and fare increases will further compromise the safety of those who depend on GCRTA. Clevelanders For Public Transit believes that GCRTA must establish a fare enforcement policy that doesn't punish riders with excessive delays or a criminal citation by reforming fare enforcement and restoring and expanding all-door boarding.

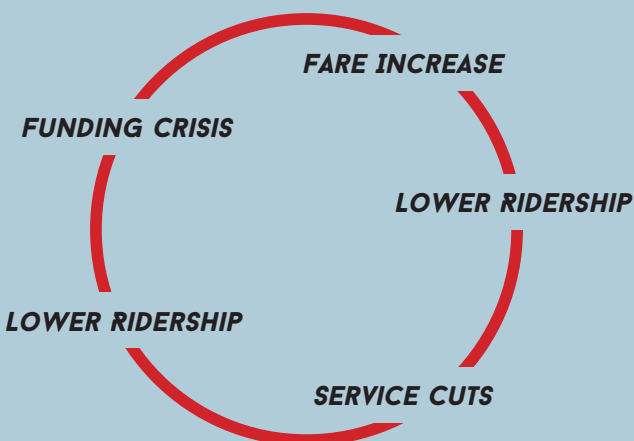
Riders need transit police to be 100 percent focused on the safety of riders and operators instead of fare enforcement. The fare increases in 2016 did not produce the revenue GCRTA

promised they would. Since GCRTA celebrated its APTA award a decade ago, fares have nearly doubled, even as service has fallen by roughly 25 percent. GCRTA riders today pay a larger share of their income for transit service than any mid-sized city in the United States.

Cuyahoga County residents have demonstrated their opinions with their feet: GCRTA ridership is down by more than one-third since 2007, falling to a record low of just 39.5 million rides last year.

This is wholly unsustainable. but nothing has been done. As the state of Ohio continues to cut funding and GCRTA continues to cut service and hike fares, Cuyahoga County's elected officials have sat by idly and, too often, silently. Our leaders have bent over backwards to fund stadium renovations and drop everything to draft secretive bids for Amazon. But when our public transit system, a vital lifeline used by tens of thousands of people to get to work, school, and necessary destinations like medical appointments, is imperiled, the people at the top go quiet.

GCRTA'S DEATH SPIRAL



A death spiral refers to a cycle of financial crisis that leads to reoccurring fare increases, service cuts, and ridership declines.

In 2006, GCRTA's single-trip fare was \$1.25. By 2009, the fare was \$2.25. That's an increase of 80 percent in three years.

FUNDING CRISIS

LOCAL FUNDING

The state of Ohio has never funded public transit in a robust manner. Meanwhile, population decline and the shift of both brick-and-mortar retailers and professional services, like legal services and accounting, to online platforms has resulted in the decline in value of GCRTA's primary source of revenue: the 1 percent Cuyahoga County sales tax.

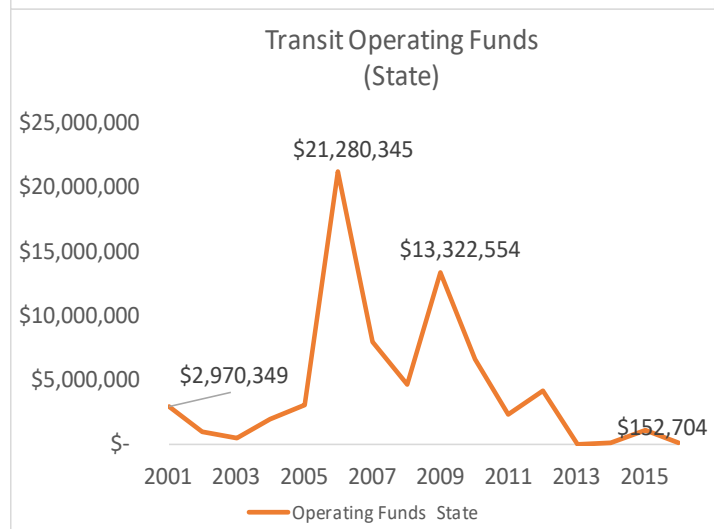
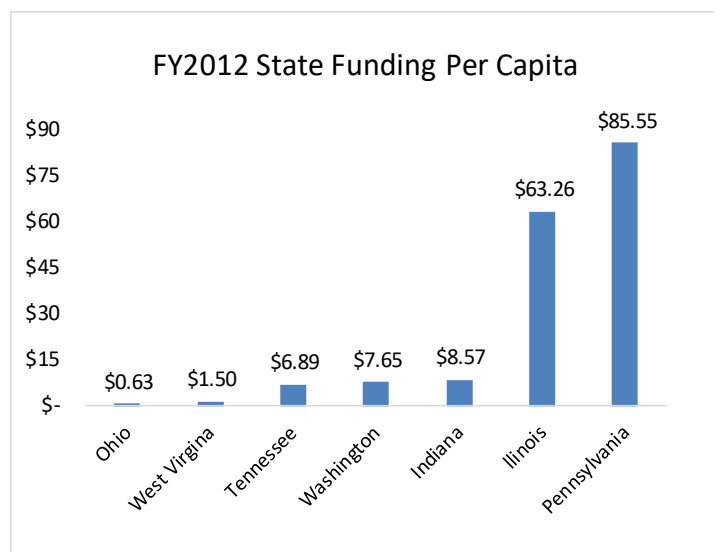
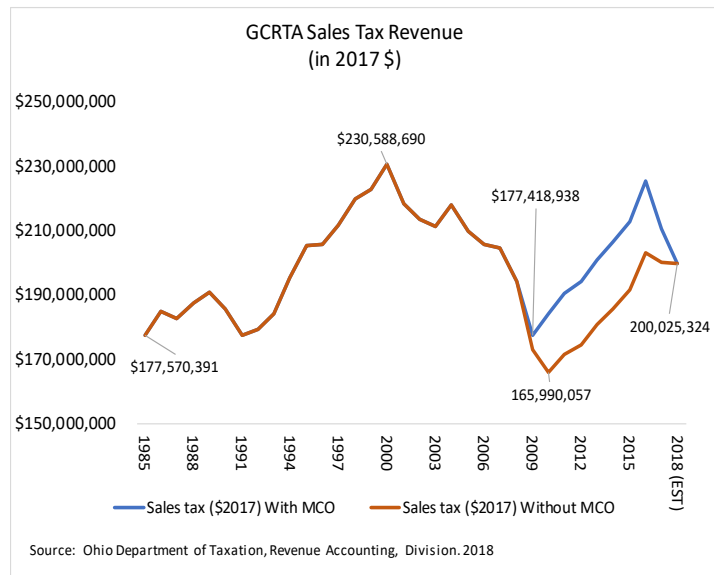
In 2017 dollars, the sales tax is providing 15 percent less revenue than it did at its peak in 2000.

The Medicaid Managed Care Organization (MCO) tax, added in September 2009, ended in 2017, leaving a \$20 million shortfall in 2018. Going forward, it is reasonable to expect that the sales tax as a revenue source will continue to decrease resulting in decreases in transit service.

Clevelanders For Public Transit recommends GCRTA seek to reduce its reliance on this shrinking revenue source.

STATE FUNDING

GCRTA is the largest transit system in Ohio. Like all transit systems in Ohio, it suffers from constant underfunding from the state, which spends only 63 cents per capita to support public transit. State funding for all 27 of Ohio's urban transit systems has declined from \$30 million to \$1.6 million. Between 2001 and 2015, that's a drop of 95 percent.



MAKE TRANSIT BETTER

People who choose public transit deserve efficient and affordable service. It's not fair that transit is becoming less useful while simultaneously becoming more expensive.

Since 2006, there have been five fare increases, and transit service in Cuyahoga County has fallen to historic lows.

By the end of 2018, fares will have increased 120 percent in 12 years, while service will have declined a staggering 29 percent during the same period. The effect of such drastic fare increases combined with service cuts is record-low ridership.

Ridership will continue to decline, fares will become increasingly unaffordable, and service will become less useful unless regional leaders find revenue sources that are more stable than the sales tax.

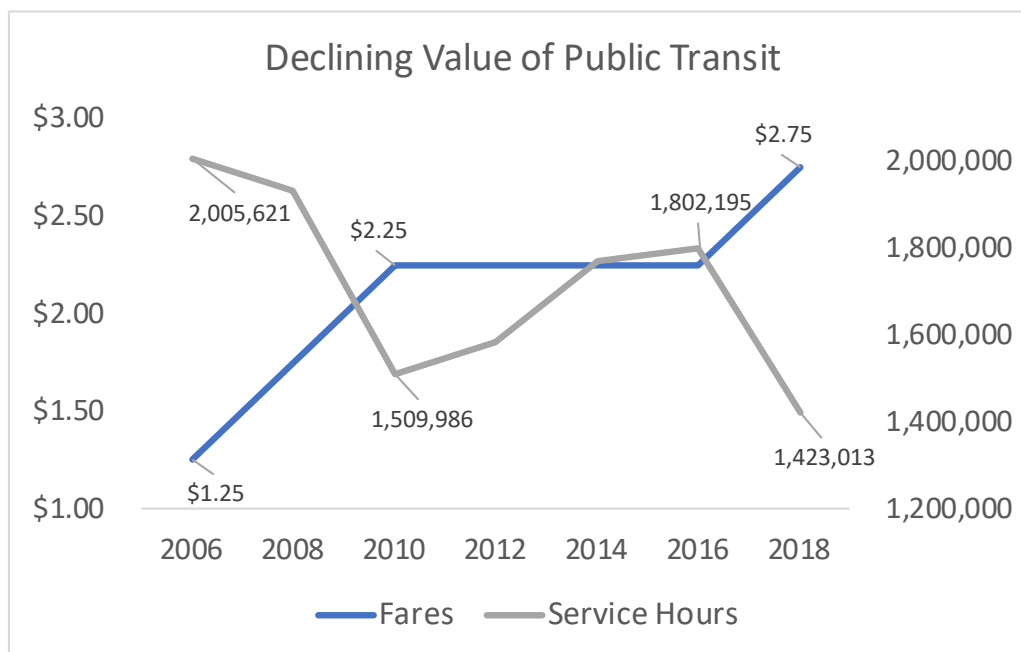
PROPOSED REVENUE SOURCES

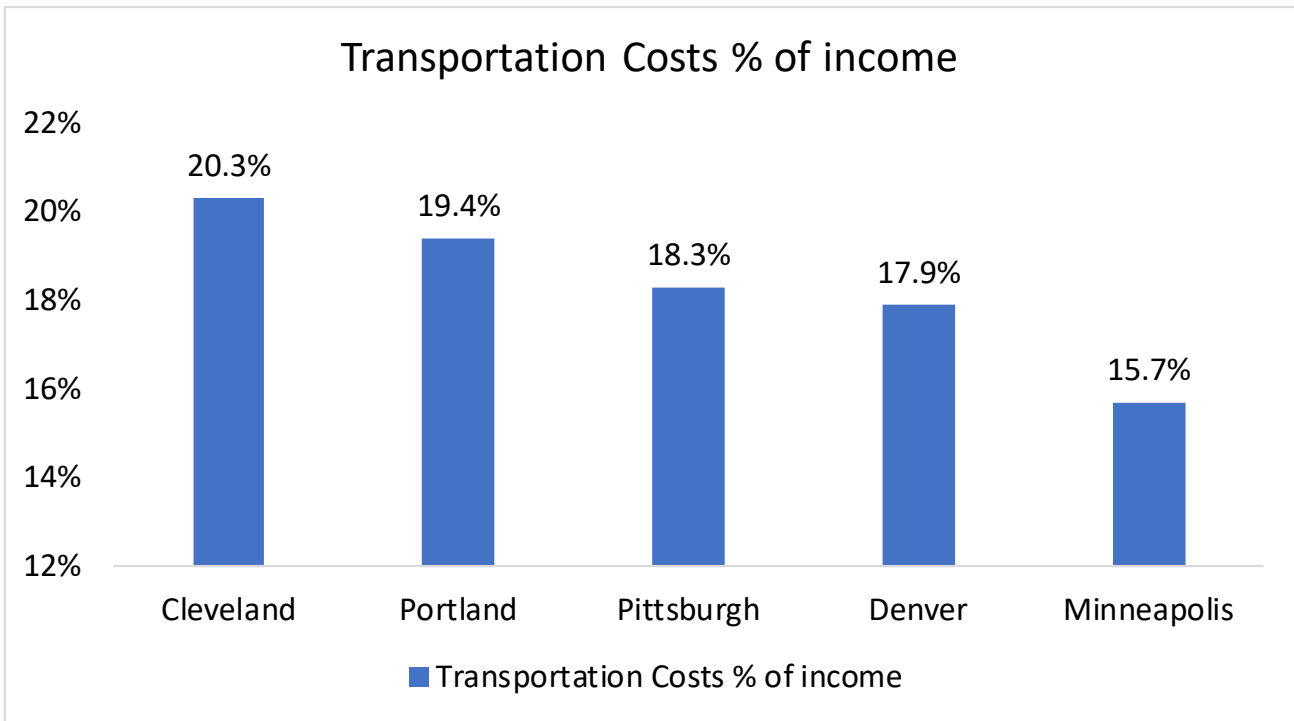
The Cuyahoga County Council Regional Transportation Advisory Subcommittee has recommended the following alternative sources of revenue:

- Transportation district employer tax
- Property tax
- Parking tax
- Transportation network company (ex. Uber and Lyft) tax

Clevelanders For Public Transit additionally recommends the following to diversify and increase transit funding:

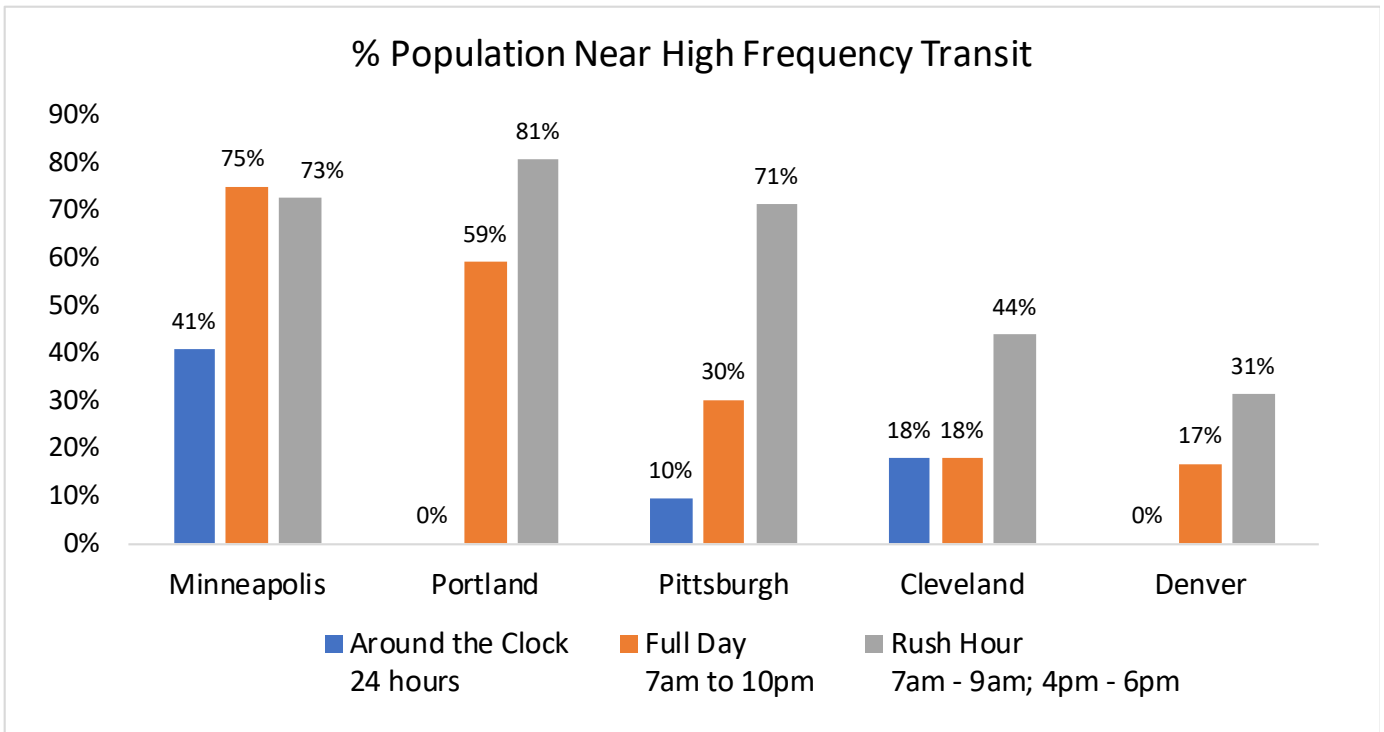
- Place a transit levy on the November 2018 ballot to address the immediate MCO funding shortfall and fare relief for riders
- Work with stakeholders to identify new revenue sources to reverse the death spiral of service cuts and fare increases
- Create a service development plan to address the unmet transportation needs in Cuyahoga County





MAKE FARES AFFORDABLE

- Restore \$5 all-day pass and the restoration of paratransit rates to 2016 levels
- Explore the creation of a reduced-fare program for low-income riders modeled on Seattle’s reduced-fare program.



INCREASE TRANSIT'S VALUE

- Increase the number of jobs accessible by 90-minute transit rides
- Reduce travel time for riders by making the transit network more efficient and reforming fare payment methods

CREATING FAIR FARES

GCRTA's fare collection actions and policies should be reformed to put customers first. Fare collection actions and policies that make using transit more convenient and are a better value reduce cost and make systems operate more efficiently.

GCRTA's elimination of one-way transfers in 2008 coincided with service cuts that increased the number of trips that required a transfer. Now, many riders spend double for one-way trips.

The inability of GCRTA to restore all-door boarding to the HealthLine and implement all-door boarding on any other routes burdens riders with additional delays and increases the cost to provide service.

PROPOSED FARE REFORMS

Transfer Policy

- Institute a policy for transfers that allows one-way trips to be completed without buying an all-day pass or paying a second fare
- Move from calendar period to rolling period for all passes, including daily, weekly, and monthly

Customer-Focused Fare Service

- Restore all-door boarding on the HealthLine, and expand it to other routes
- Simplify fare media policy by ensuring equality of fares regardless of how they are paid
- Improve access and availability of fare media

Collaborate Regionally; Include Fare-Capping

- Join regional transit agencies with the NEORide Regional Transit Council of Governments to create a regional e-fare solution.
- Leverage e-fare's open-payment capacity to institute a fare-capping mechanism.



OPEN PAYMENT

A regional e-fare system should be a common system of payment for public-transit trips in northeast Ohio.

A regional e-fare system would improve customer experience, reduce delays, and lower costs for fare collection for all systems involved. A modern fare collection system would replace multiple scattered types of fare media and rules with an open payment system that would accept near field communication smartcards, mobile apps, credit cards, or key fobs—all connected to a customer's account.

This open-payment architecture would allow for:

- Fare capping
- Multi-system operation and reciprocity
- Multi-tiered fares



FARE-CAPPING

Fare-capping enables a rider to pay toward a pass in single-trip increments. For example, in Cuyahoga County, GCRTA would have a day pass accumulator. GCRTA's local single-trip fare is \$2.50 and the day pass costs \$5.50.

First boarding: \$2.50 charged
Second boarding: \$2.50 charged
Third boarding: \$0.50 charged
Total fare collected for the day: \$5.50
Additional travel that day: **FREE**

A similar approach can be used to pay for a weekly or monthly pass, over the course of a week or month.

Benefits of Fare-Capping

- *Increased affordability* of passes through the ability to pay toward a pass in installments
- *Increased fare equity* through access to pass discounts for riders who are unable to afford the up-front cost of a pass
- *Increased simplicity* through the ability to pay as you go, given that fare is capped for the day, week, or month to provide riders with the best value for their travel patterns

Fare-capping requires the use of an electronic fare collection system that is capable of tracking paid trips, making a regional e-fare/open payment system a necessity.

FARE ENFORCEMENT REFORM

On October 26, 2017, Cleveland Municipal Court Judge Emanuella Groves ruled that the “proof-of-payment” system used on the Red Line Rapid trains and the HealthLine is unconstitutional if enforced by armed law enforcement officers. GCRTA’s response to the county ruling has been to shift fare enforcement to bus operators, which results in a much slower ride and causes riders to miss connections.

This decision has effectively eliminated the increased speed allowed by all-door boarding (available only on the HealthLine). We estimate that GCRTA’s suspension of proof-of-payment is costing the agency at least \$20,000 per month in additional operating expenses, money that should be being used to improve service for riders.

HealthLine and Red Line riders have been subject to indiscriminate fare enforcement by armed law enforcement officers for the past nine years, resulting in innocent men, women, and children entering the criminal justice system over the cost of bus fare.

PROPOSED ENFORCEMENT REFORMS

Improve Rider and Operator Safety

- Reallocate law enforcement resources from fare enforcement to patrols and equipment
- Implement a stronger presence at high-activity or problematic stations and stops, with a focus on deterring crime and improving the safety of operators and riders rather than punishment

Decriminalize Fare Evasion

- Make fare evasion a civil offense as opposed to a criminal offense
- Collect civil fines and penalties to offset the cost of fare enforcement and provide revenue for GCRTA

Civilian Transit Ambassadors

- Create a civilian transit ambassador program composed of unarmed transit ambassadors tasked to assist riders, check for fare evasion, and provide additional “eyes on the street” on vehicles and in and around stations and stops



22 W. PARK STA

2204



3002

OG 102

RTA



FAIR FARES NOW!

CLEVELANDERS FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT
FEBRUARY 2018

Clevelanders for Public Transit is a riders' organization that builds power for affordable, accessible and equitable public transit in Northeast Ohio.

For more information, visit www.clefortransit.org or find us on Facebook or Twitter @CLEforTransit