



## Greater Ohio Policy Center Contract Proposal: Public Transit Research and Advocacy Project

November 27, 2017

### INTRODUCTION

Greater Ohio Policy Center (GOPC) believes there is widespread agreement across Ohio on the following general principles:

1. There is a common interest in promoting greater state investment in public transit;
2. The governor's race in 2018 provides a unique opportunity to change the public discourse about public transit and to raise the profile of the issue;
3. Strong and consistent efforts should be made to educate gubernatorial candidates about public transit in the Fall of 2017 and until the 2018 election;
4. Success in this effort will require engaging many different stakeholders in the public and private sectors, including some who are not seen as traditional allies of public transit.

In the spirit of advancing these principles GOPC is submitting the following proposal for research and advocacy work on public transit in 2017 and 2018.

### **GOPC PROMOTES TRANSPORTATION REFORM THROUGH ADVOCACY, RESEARCH AND EDUCATION**

#### ***Advocacy***

GOPC is a non-profit, non-partisan public policy think tank located in Columbus, Ohio. GOPC is well-positioned to advance state-level policy change and views its ability to carry out research, strategic assistance, and policy development as essential to our credibility as an independent, moderate, and pragmatic thought-leader in the state of Ohio and nationally. GOPC's mission is to champion revitalization and sustainable growth in Ohio. One of the organization's strategic goals is to identify and advance policies that diversify transportation options in Ohio and recognize all transportation modes as economic redevelopment tools. A desired outcome from the goal is to achieve the enactment of transportation reform policies, including policies that provide additional funding for expanding public transit service and multi-modal options in metropolitan areas.

GOPC staff have developed expert knowledge in transportation funding and policy, and have used advocacy and research to create a successful track record in achieving policy goals. One of our long-standing goals has been to increase the amount of federal highway funding that is flexed to public transit. In 2015 and 2016, GOPC met with legislators and Ohio Department of Transportation to advocate for an increase in the allocation from its level of \$23 million per year. The ODOT executive budget proposal introduced in 2017 included an increase to a proposed level of \$33 million per year, which was maintained through the budget process. In the future, we would like to see an increase to \$50 million per year, a target that we believe is achievable by

working with members of the Ohio Public Transit Association, Ohio Association of Regional Councils and other stakeholders.

GOPC also demonstrated its effectiveness in the state operating budget process by securing the removal of a harmful amendment that was added by the House. The amendment would have mandated that stickers be affixed to retail service station pumps displaying the rates of federal and state taxes applicable to gasoline and diesel fuels. There was no cost estimate for the program, which would have had to be fully implemented in 14 months, and was clearly aimed at negatively influencing public opinion to ward off any future gasoline tax increase. By working with key Senators, GOPC ensured that this amendment was not included in the Conference Committee report.

GOPC also continues to keep advocates up to date about new funding opportunities for transit. In the fall of 2016, GOPC informed transit advocates and legislators about a proposed national settlement involving Volkswagen's deceptive practices involving diesel emissions. GOPC made advocates aware that the Ohio EPA was soliciting stakeholder suggestions for possible uses of settlement dollars, and that the purchase of low emissions public transit vehicles was a permissible use of these funds. Although it may be some time before the funds are actually distributed, transit advocates made a strong case and transit is likely to receive a significant share of the proceeds.

### ***Research***

GOPC staff have substantial experience in researching examples of transportation reform at the state and local levels around the country. Three memos released on GOPC's website include:

**Model for Comprehensive Reform of Transportation Funding in Ohio.** This memo analyzes Pennsylvania's 2013 comprehensive budget reform and identifies strategies that Ohio could replicate. Undertaking a similar reform in Ohio could produce more resources and recalibrated funding to better fund all transportation modes, especially public transportation.

**Adjusting Existing Federal "Flex Funds" to Meet Demand for Improved Public Transportation in Ohio.** This memo outlines benefits to "flexing" \$30 million of Ohio's federal dollars to public transportation. Ohio is the 7th most populous state in the country yet ranks 38th in state support of public transportation. The allocation of existing federal funds to transit could increase the state's portion of transit funding by 33% and decrease support for highways by less than 3%. As noted above, this goal was partially achieved in 2017.

**Three Recommendations to Improve the Impact of the Ohio Motor Fuel Tax.** This memo discusses the benefits of raising the state motor fuel tax, indexing it to inflation, and removing, through statewide ballot, the constitutional provisions that restricts the gas tax's use to highways. While increasing the gas tax is not a complete solution for Ohio's transportation needs, it is a

longstanding resource that will remain important for Ohio and can make available other, unrestricted, funding for transit.

Other memos that were not publicly-released include case studies of successful local transportation reform in Oklahoma City and Indianapolis that expanded public transit options. These memos can be updated and made available as part of the proposed project.

### ***Education***

GOPC is currently partnering with Transportation for America (T4A), a national organization, to hold a Local Transportation Leadership Academy for multi-sector teams from five Ohio regions. This Academy is giving participants the tools to develop and execute campaigns for local funding sources or reforms to improve transit service. This Academy includes four in-person workshops and two webinars and will conclude November 2017. During the next ODOT Budget, GOPC and local stakeholders will be able to point to these trainings and resulting campaigns as evidence that local partners are doing all they can to support transit and that state support is still necessary.

### **RESEARCH IN OTHER POLICY AREAS**

GOPC has an eight-year track record of producing accessible, high-quality research that has shaped the policy landscape in Ohio. Our work focuses on policies that promote the economic revitalization of Ohio's cities and improve the overall quality of life. Some of our recent reports are detailed in Appendix B.

### **SCOPE OF WORK: RESEARCH DELIVERABLES**

GOPC will create a report that analyzes the feasibility of no more than six (6) state and/or local funding sources for public transit uses as directed by a *Project Advisory Committee*. Funding sources may include tax revenues, fees, bond issuances, congestion pricing, parking taxes, or other concepts, some of which may not have been previously tried in Ohio. GOPC expects to discuss the project plan and finalize the list of funding sources in a planning meeting(s) with the Advisory Committee before the work commences. GOPC will use its expertise to make suggestions whenever possible so that the project investigates policy options with the most likelihood of success.

For each funding source, GOPC will write a 3 – 5 page analysis with the following information:

- Whether the funding source is currently established, and if so, whether proceeds are transferred to the General Revenue Fund or are dedicated to specific purposes;
- If the source is not established, what statutory or constitutional changes would be required to establish the source;
- A description of legal or constitutional provisions that restrict, or could potentially restrict, the use of the revenue source, and relevant information pertaining to the policy intent behind the restriction;
- For established revenue sources, annual amounts received by the state or local governments, if applicable, for the revenue source since state fiscal year 2010, if available, and analysis of trends and fluctuations;

- How much revenue would be generated annually for the indicated policy scenario and the assumptions behind the revenue estimate. GOPC will not use “dynamic” modeling of tax or fee changes but will identify ways in which changes are likely to consumer behavior over time and will use commonly accepted national estimates of price elasticity where available;
- An analysis of the political support or opposition that may result from using or repurposing the revenue source, and the likelihood of success from the proposal;

In order to inform the analysis, GOPC will rely primarily on state budget documents and data provided by the Ohio Legislative Service Commission, the Office of Budget and Management, the Ohio Department of Taxation, and state regulatory agencies with information pertaining to each specific revenue source. From time to time we expect to consult with experts in state agencies, academia, or key stakeholders. Before commencing work, GOPC expects to agree on a protocol for these interviews with the Advisory Committee so that this activity is coordinated with other efforts Advisory Committee members may have underway.

GOPC will deliver these analyses to the Advisory Committee sequentially, as they are completed, to expedite the review process and will make changes, within reasonable limits, to the draft analyses as requested by the Advisory Committee. After the Advisory Committee has reviewed all changes, they will be compiled into a final report with introductory framing and concluding remarks appropriate for gubernatorial candidates and other target audience(s) identified by the Advisory Committee.

Upon the Advisory Committee’s request, GOPC will also create one (1) powerpoint presentation that summarizes the project results and can be utilized by Advisory Committee members in their own advocacy efforts.

GOPC staff will undertake the following actions to ensure proper communications during the course of the Project:

- Organize a planning meeting with Advisory Committee members to finalize the list of revenue options and policy scenarios, and other items related to research scope and deliverables;
- Regular progress updates via email or phone calls to the designated point of contact(s) among Advisory Committee members;
- Up to two (2) in-person meetings with the Advisory Committee regarding project development, interim findings, design layout of final deliverable and/or other items related to project completion;
- Attendance at up to two (2) meetings hosted by Advisory Committee member organizations to discuss and present project results. More meetings can be scheduled, however a discussion about the project’s level of support will need to occur between GOPC and the Advisory Committee.

GOPC will complete the project within 90 days of the finalization of the list of revenue sources.

## **SCOPE OF WORK: OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY ON PUBLIC TRANSIT**

Throughout the remainder of 2017 and through the primary in May, 2018, GOPC will work with the Advisory Committee and other partners to raise the profile of public transit issues through advocacy and outreach. GOPC has already begun to meet with the campaign and policy staffs of the gubernatorial candidates. Public outreach will include a bi-weekly blog series and regional forums that will include legislators and local government officials. The blog series will have the following topics:

- Federal and local funding challenges to supporting all modes of transit
- Active transportation overview – need for statewide policy
- How public transit is funded in Ohio
- Transit needs study: Current and future budget gaps
- Rural transportation overview
- Transit and the jobs connection
- Transit-oriented development and economic development
- Transit’s role in meeting the needs of the elderly and disabled
- Connection between transit and access to medical care
- Dispelling common transit myths

GOPC expects to work with partners, including OPTA, OARC, and others to hold 2 – 3 regional forums on transit needs around the state over the next nine months. Legislators, gubernatorial candidates, and local government officials will be invited to hear the perspectives of employers, economic development officials, transit users, and others about their needs and the importance of transit. Members of the media will be invited. The forums will raise the profile of transit in preparation for the state budget process in 2019.

## **KEY PROJECT PERSONNEL**

The primary project personnel are Jason Warner, Manager of Government Affairs, and Alex Highley, Project Coordinator. They will report to GOPC Executive Director Alison Goebel, Ph.D. Mr. Warner worked for eight years as a legislative aide in the Ohio House of Representatives, during which time he helped to manage the legislative process for putting together four state transportation budget bills. Mr. Highley, who holds a Masters in Public Administration from the John Glenn College of Public Policy at the Ohio State University, has done extensive research on transportation reform issues, and is the author of the transportation reform memos discussed above.

## **SUGGESTED ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

- OPTA staff and members, such as
  - OPTA Association Manager (Andy Bowers & Associates)
  - Central Ohio Transit Authority
  - Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority
  - Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority
- OARC members, such as
  - Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
  - Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments

- Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study
- Local Government Elected Officials Association
  - County Commissioners Association of Ohio
  - Ohio Municipal League
- Chambers of Commerce and other private sector membership groups, such as:
  - Ohio Chamber of Commerce
  - “Metro Chambers” caucus
  - Columbus Chamber
  - Cincinnati Chamber
  - Columbus Partnership
- Private Sector Transportation Leaders, such as
  - WSP
  - AECOM

**PROPOSED TIMELINE AND BUDGET**

GOPC proposes to do the work proposed herein for the sum of Forty-two thousand (\$42,000) dollars.

GOPC proposes each Advisory Committee member contribute five thousand dollars (\$5,000) toward the project total.

- APPENDIX A: BIOGRAPHIES OF PRINCIPAL PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS

**Alison D. Goebel, Ph.D.**  
**Executive Director**

Alison Goebel is Executive Director of the Greater Ohio Policy Center (GOPC). She has been with GOPC since 2010 and has held a number of positions within the organization during that time. Today, Goebel is responsible for charting GOPC's strategic direction, directing the research, advocacy, and outreach teams, and securing resources for this work. She is the author of a number of research reports and policy briefs related to the revitalization of weak-market, legacy cities, transportation funding, and local governance structures in Ohio.

From 2005 to 2009, Goebel periodically lived in Mansfield, Ohio where she conducted long-term qualitative research on social relationships in a small city setting. Goebel is a graduate of Leadership Ohio and was elected by her class for the 2014 "Leader Among Leaders" award. She holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in anthropology from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and received her B.A. from Miami University (Oxford, Ohio).

**Jason Warner**  
**Manager of Government Affairs**

As the Manager of Government Affairs for the Greater Ohio Policy Center, Jason is responsible for representing GOPC at the Ohio Statehouse, advocating for the issues and policy positions central to the organization's mission.

Prior to joining GOPC, Jason worked for more than eight years as a legislative aide in the Ohio House of Representatives, where he had the opportunity to work on a wide array of policy matters, including agriculture, economic development, taxation and transportation issues, serving as the staff assistant for the House Ways & Means Committee and House Finance Transportation subcommittee, as well as two years working on state rules issues before the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR). More recently, he served for five years as the legislative and policy director at School Choice Ohio, a statewide not-for-profit organization working to advance public and private school choice options in the state of Ohio.

Jason is a 2001 graduate of the University of Akron where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree with a concentration in American Political Science. He also holds a certificate in Applied Politics from the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron.

## **Alex Highley**

### **Project Coordinator**

As Project Coordinator for the Greater Ohio Policy Center, Alex works with local, state, and national partners to develop and implement research projects. He is also responsible for planning events and webinars, as well as co-managing GOPC's external communications. Since joining GOPC in 2015, Alex's research work has focused on multimodal transportation policies in Ohio.

Alex is a graduate of the John Glenn College of Public Affairs at The Ohio State University. He earned a Master of Public Administration degree in August 2015 and completed a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a Minor in Spanish in May 2013. At the Glenn College, Alex served as Treasurer of the Public Affairs Student Association and as Student Representative of the Graduate Studies Committee. As a student, Alex worked on local and national initiatives seeking to develop solutions for people experiencing homelessness while interning with Barbara Poppe and Associates, LLC. Prior to the 2014 statewide elections, Alex interned with the John Patrick Carney campaign for Ohio Auditor of State.

## APPENDIX B: SELECTED GOPC RESEARCH REPORTS

- ***From Akron to Zanesville: How are Ohio's Small and Mid-Sized Cities Faring?*** (June 2016). GOPC analyzed how the economic health of small and mid-sized legacy cities compared to Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati from 2000 to 2014. The report finds that mid-sized Ohio cities—Akron, Dayton, Toledo, Canton and Youngstown—have experienced some of the steepest declines in housing market stability of all city types. On the whole the smallest legacy cities experienced the greatest declines in economic health of any city type, even though conditions among these cities vary more widely than their larger peers. Legacy Ohio cities of all sizes continue to experience serious population loss. The report recommends developing strategies to focus on each city's unique local assets and encouraging regional collaboration to promote investments in downtown core areas.
- ***Regenerating America's Legacy Cities*** (Summer 2013). In an analysis of 18 cities facing manufacturing decline and population loss, GOPC advocates for step-by-step “strategic incrementalism” to promote economic development, rather than the silver-bullet approach of signature architecture, sports facilities, or other megaprojects. This analysis suggests that these legacy cities can build new economic engines and draw new populations by leveraging longstanding assets such as downtown employment bases, stable neighborhoods, multimodal transportation networks, colleges and universities, local businesses, medical centers, historic buildings and areas, and arts, cultural, and entertainment facilities.
- ***Investing in Brownfields: The Economic Benefits of the Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund*** (Spring 2013). Based on an economic impact analysis of 21 projects funded by the Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund (CORF), GOPC found that the brownfield remediation program generated substantial direct and indirect economic impact. In particular, GOPC concluded that goods and services related to predevelopment alone produced a return on investment of \$4.67 in new economic activity for every one dollar spent by the Program on the 21 assessed projects.
- ***Sales Tax Analysis Report: Horse and Buggy Tax Structure Holding Ohio Back*** (Spring 2011, with earlier editions in 2007 and 2004). This analysis shows that Ohio's county-based sales tax structure is misaligned with regional shopping trends. The study demonstrates that while the amount Ohioans spend on retail goods has changed little over time, especially relative to income, where they spend their money has changed considerably. Counties at the core of a region have experienced declines in sales tax revenue as new malls in neighboring counties outperform older retail centers. Meanwhile, counties with large, new retail centers enjoy increases in sales tax collection. The report's findings support GOPC's previous calls for reforms to provide modern vehicles for economic regrowth and tools to help regions build on their assets and achieve greater efficiencies and cost savings.