

## House Transportation

### HB 1106

March 20, 2025

I am Kirsten Dvorak, the Executive Director of The Arc of North Dakota. The Arc of North Dakota is the oldest non-profit organization advocating for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) across the state. We appreciate the chance to express our support for House Bill No. 1106, which proposes an appropriation of \$2,000,000 to the Department of Transportation for transit program grants during the biennium.

Access to dependable and affordable public transportation is crucial for individuals with IDD. It directly affects their ability to engage fully in community life, obtain employment opportunities, participate in educational programs, and access necessary healthcare services. Many individuals experience isolation and significant limitations on their independence without sufficient transportation options.

House Bill No. 1106 addresses these urgent needs by allocating funds to improve public transportation services throughout North Dakota. The significance of this investment is further emphasized by findings presented by the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute during the December meeting of Government Services:

- **Population Impact:** North Dakota is home to approximately 96,378 individuals with disabilities, with an estimated 23% relying on specialized transportation to travel outside their homes.
- **Service Limitations:** Funding shortages have reduced coverage areas, restricted operating hours, and increased wait times. For example, during the 2023 Christmas holiday, transit services in Bismarck operated only from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., while services in Fargo and Grand Forks were closed entirely.
- **Disability Status:** Approximately 49% of rural transit riders and 52% of urban transit riders identify as having a disability.

These statistics illustrate the critical role that public transportation plays in the lives of North Dakota residents, particularly for older adults, individuals with disabilities, low-income households, and those without access to personal vehicles. By allocating \$2,000,000 to the Department of Transportation for transit program grants, House Bill No. 1106 will:

- Expand service coverage to underserved areas.
- Enhance accessibility for individuals with disabilities.
- Empower residents to participate more fully in employment, education, healthcare, and community activities.

Supporting this bill represents a significant step toward fostering inclusivity, equity, and mobility for all North Dakotans. We urge the legislature to approve this funding to help remove transportation barriers and improve the quality of life for our most vulnerable residents. Thank you for considering our perspective on this important matter.

Kirsten Dvorak

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