

Testimony  
House Bill 1012 – Department of Transportation  
State Aid for Public Transit Budget  
House Appropriations - Government Operations Division  
January 11, 2023

Chairman Monson and members of the committee, my name is Pat Hansen. I am the executive director of South Central Adult Services in Valley City. I am also a member of the North Dakota Senior Service Providers and Dakota Transit Association. I am testifying in support of State Aid for Public Transit funds in HB 1012.

The State Aid for Public Transit funding we receive is used to match federal dollars for operating transit services and as local match for purchasing vehicles for use in public transit. If we do not receive adequate state funding for match, we may be unable to access all of the federal dollars we are appropriated.

South Central Adult Services provides the same service in the very rural areas of North Dakota that are available in the larger cities. In the very rural counties we serve, which include LaMoure, Foster, Logan, McIntosh, Griggs, Emmons and Nelson South Central provided 45,796 rides this past fiscal year. Barnes County (which is our "urban" county) provided 56,572 rides. This is a 20% increase over our last fiscal year. Local service is provided to communities within the counties, and transit is available from the southwestern counties to Bismarck 5 days per week, to Jamestown 3 days per week, from our eastern counties to Fargo 5 days per week and to Grand Forks 5 days per week. We are transporting dialysis patients from Strasberg, Linton, Wishek, Ashley, McVile, Lakota, Carrington and Valley City on a

regular basis. We have made many trips to Fargo and Bismarck with patients for radiation treatments and chemotherapy in the last few months.

That is only the tip of the iceberg. We provide rides for local medical appointments, rides to work, school, daycare, Head Start, and many rides for local grocery shopping, hair appointments, rides to senior centers and rides for nursing homes and assisted living facilities. We currently have 32 full-time and 46 part-time transit employees. The cost of personnel at 152 8th St. NEI has increased dramatically over the past few years. We have had to increase wages in order to compete with other employers in our area and have increased hours to keep up with the demand for services. This problem has increased since the pandemic. Even taking the impact on the residents of our counties out of the picture, if we do not receive adequate funding, the staff reductions in these rural counties would be devastating to our employees and to the small rural communities where there are very few jobs available.

The Executive Budget estimated there would be \$6.8 million available in the State Aid for Public Transit fund in the 2022-23 biennium. In the past biennium, transit providers divided \$8.4 million. Even when providers were at the \$10 million level, South Central had to provide \$160,000 local dollars, or 13% of our budget to maintain services. Last fiscal year with the reduction in State Aid we had to put \$360,015 (over 20% of our operating budget) in local dollars in to meet expenses. That amount of local funding cannot be sustained long term. This concerns me on several levels as many of the people we serve do not have other options for transportation. Some of our rural riders would be forced to move to locations where

medical services such as dialysis and cancer treatments are available. A large percentage of them would need long term care and are low-income. Many of the people we serve do not have vehicles.

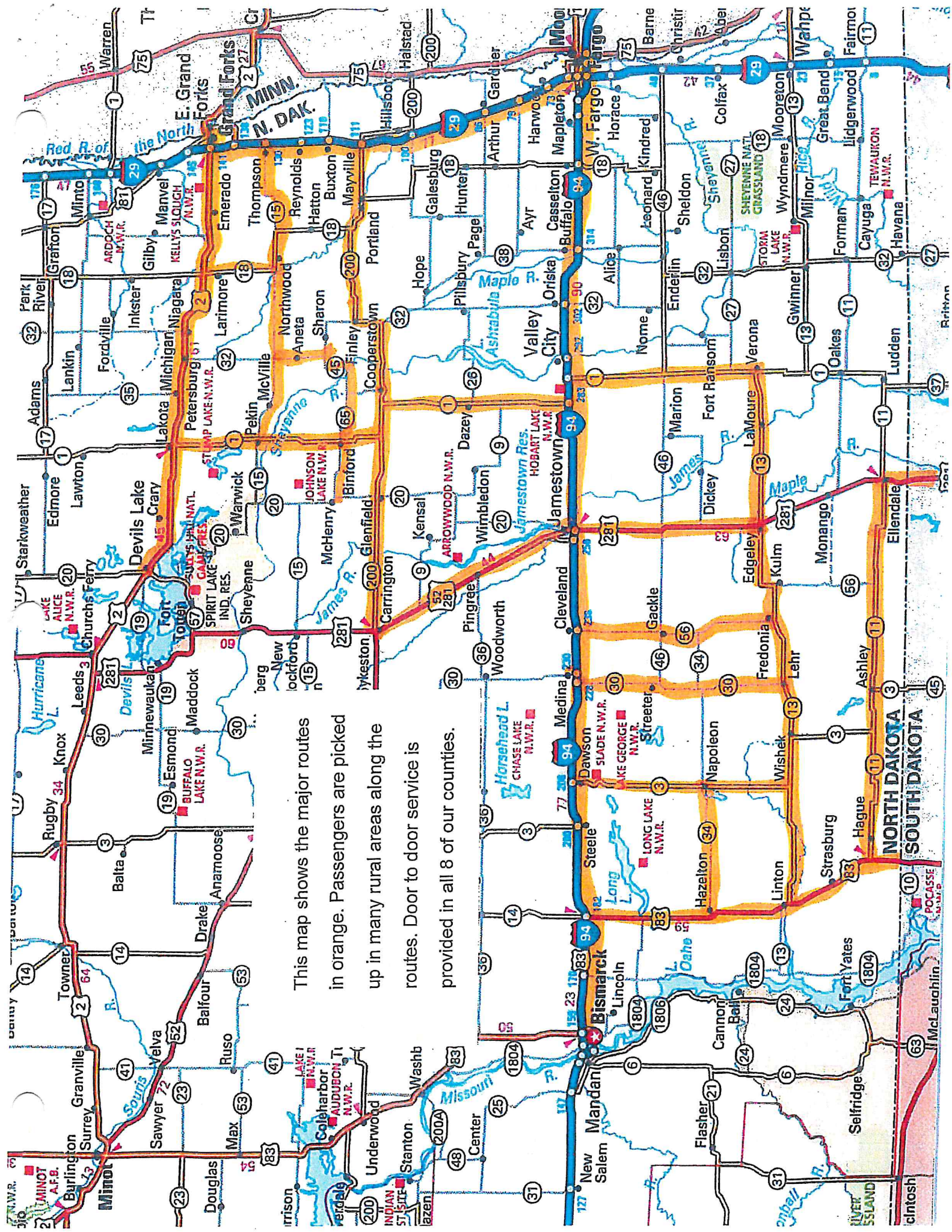
During the last session I expressed my appreciation to the DOT for applying and receiving a grant to replace our worn out vehicles. Sadly, Covid came along and none of the 10-15 passenger vehicles we ordered have been received. We are hoping that we will receive most of them in 2023. We are being told that they will be produced this year.

Transit providers would like to see us get back to a minimum of the \$10 million funding level that we received in the 2014-15 biennium.

I have attached a map of our coverage area and a financial report from the last fiscal year for your information.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.





This map shows the major routes in orange. Passengers are picked up in many rural areas along the routes. Door to door service is provided in all 8 of our counties.

**NORTH DAKOTA**  
**SOUTH DAKOTA**