

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 2254
Funding for Urban Public Transit Fixed Route and Paratransit
House Transportation Committee
March 6, 2025**

**Dale Bergman, Public Transportation Director
City of Grand Forks, ND**

Chairman Dan Ruby and members of the committee, my name is Dale Bergman. I am the City of Grand Forks Public Transportation Director for the Cities Area Transit (CAT). I am here to speak in support of Senate Bill 2254 because of the importance of public transportation for our citizens in the State of North Dakota.

We are a small urban transit property that provides fixed route bus service and complimentary paratransit service for elderly, senior and disabled clients who are unable to make it to a fixed route bus stop for their travel needs in the large urban cities. We take people to the places they need and want to go. We're connecting people to careers, medical appointments, and opportunities with flexible transit options as part of a diverse and vibrant community of customers.

The current state-aid formula covers the elderly and disabled people riding the service in mainly the rural areas, but in the large cities we transport all individuals', adults, students, seniors, and disabled. Senate Bill 2254 identifies the needs of public transportation providers in the urban areas, but also the request for a study of a better state-aid funding program to provide a more sustainable funding source for urban properties. Our riders have needs like all of us to get to work, medical appointments, grocery shopping and daily living needs. They can be our neighbors, friends or family members that need the rides we provide. The current state funding formula only covers a small percentage (8%) of our services. The Federal portion is 50% percent, and the local match portion is 42% of a 3.5-million-dollar budget for operations. Our costs of service in the last 5 years have increased dramatically by over 40% for operations for labor, fuels, parts and supplies.

The costs of vehicles have gone up 30 to 50% in the last 5 years and have caused a severe strain on our budgets. With strain on the budgets of the cities, we may not be able to continue the services as they currently are or have the capital dollars for purchasing replacement vehicles. We will not be able to add any additional services requested. The transportation services for the citizens will affect many parts of their lives from job access to medical care to even buying food for their families. This will certainly have an impact on the economic impact on the cities.

We as urban transit providers would appreciate seeing the funding at the \$15 million biennium appropriations level and the opportunity to address the interim

committees during the study period to help find a permanent funding solution for all of our citizens of the great state of North Dakota and we are asking for a DO PASS on SB 2254 to address the short-term funding needs and the study for funding needs in the future.

Respectfully,
Dale Bergman
Public Transportation Director
City of Grand Forks