



House Transportation

HB 1106

January 9, 2025

Rep D. Ruby and committee members. I am Kirsten Dvorak, Executive Director of The Arc of North Dakota. The Arc of North Dakota is the oldest non-profit disability advocacy organization for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) throughout the state. We appreciate the opportunity 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 reliable and affordable public transportation is critical for individuals with IDD. It directly impacts their ability to participate fully in community life, access employment opportunities, attend educational programs, and receive necessary healthcare services. Many individuals face isolation and a significant limitation on their independence without adequate transportation options.

House Bill No. 1106 addresses these pressing needs by allocating funds to enhance public transportation services across North Dakota. The importance of this investment is further underscored by findings presented by the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute during the Government Services interim December meeting:

- **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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