

FACT SHEET

Public transit is an investment in Alabama's future

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It's time to jump-start public transportation in Alabama. Our lack of state support for this vital service is hurting people, communities and the broader economy. Many Alabama seniors, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes rely on public transit to go to work, get to the doctor and run essential errands. Yet unlike almost all other states, Alabama provides no state money to help meet those needs. Alabama can fix this problem with a General Fund appropriation to the Public Transportation Trust Fund.

Lack of investment leaves Alabama behind

Alabama's gasoline tax brought in more than \$430 million in 2018. But not one penny of that money is available to public transit agencies. A 1952 constitutional amendment prohibits the use of gas tax revenues for anything other than road and bridge construction and maintenance, law enforcement, and highway-related debt payment. Alabama spends about \$7 of every \$100 of its state budgets on transportation, but none of that money goes to public transit.

Public transportation is vital to the well-being of families throughout Alabama. In the Birmingham metropolitan area alone, 3 million bus rides per year help take people where they need to go. But a lack of funding severely limits the bus schedules and routes there and elsewhere. No public transit system in Alabama operates past 11 p.m., even on weekends. Many rural lines operate only from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays, and they often are booked weeks in advance. Maintenance problems can cause hours of wait time between buses on the lines that do exist.

Alabama is one of only five states to provide no state funding for public transit, unlike all four of our neighbors. By failing to invest in these services, Alabama leaves millions of dollars in federal matching funds on the table yearly. If public transit agencies in the state invest in new buses or vans, the federal government can contribute \$4 for every \$1 that Alabama invests. For other necessary public transportation expenses, the federal government can double any state investment.

Transit funding expands economic opportunity

Stronger investment in public transportation could create hundreds of good-paying jobs in every part of our state. Every \$1 million spent on public transit capital improvements creates 24 full-time jobs, and every \$1 million spent on operation creates 41 full-time jobs, according to the American Public Transportation Association. These are stable, long-term jobs with benefits and a 2017 median salary of \$58,000.

The economic benefits of state public transit funding would stretch across Alabama. Reliable public transportation systems greatly improve the economic opportunities available in an area. Companies often determine whether to expand to a location based partly on the health and availability of public transportation there. State support for the Public Transportation Trust Fund would mean much more than just money for buses, vans and trains. It would be an investment in Alabama's economy and quality of life. It would be an investment in our people. And it would be an investment in our state's future.