

For Immediate Release

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Statement from NC Go! Chair Marc Finlayson on Public Transportation and the State Budget

North Carolina remains a fast-growing state, attracting industries, creating jobs and welcoming new citizens every day. But if we want to remain a top destination, *The Good Roads State* needs to continue its commitment to all modes of transportation – including public transportation.

The recently-passed state budget represents a step back from that commitment, a move that we believe is out of step with future needs. Citizens across North Carolina have voiced their support for a multi-modal transportation future through local bonds and local option revenue for roads, public transportation, sidewalks, greenways and bike lanes. Cuts to public transportation funding and new hurdles for light rail are misguided and ignore the fact that North Carolina citizens – urban AND rural – benefit from a robust, multi-modal transportation system.

We need look no further than our competition to attract Amazon, which has stated public transportation as a selection requirement for its 50,000 jobs center in the Triangle. Economic development of that scale benefits the entire state through tax revenue and jobs. And, giving employees transportation options is increasingly a factor in the competition for jobs and economic development.

And public transportation is not just about light rail and urban buses. For many citizens in small cities and rural areas it is a lifeline to health care, groceries and even human contact. A bias against public transportation harms those citizens most in need in small towns or rural counties where lacking a car creates a world of problems.

The budget also cuts more than \$8 million in public transportation funds, specifically for bus maintenance, which lessens mobility in North Carolina. And, by requiring Federal commitment of funding for light rail projects before committing the state investment, the budget guts any chance growing urban communities have to actually build light rail projects. Even with strong local support and projects that meet the state's own data-driven guidelines of STI, this seemingly minor change kills any chance of bringing federal investment to our state for light rail development, which has always required a local and state match first.

North Carolina needs to embrace the 21st Century with a multi-modal transportation system that encourages safety, mobility, and job creation, and does not discriminate against any single transportation mode. We look forward to working with members the General Assembly to improve our state commitment to public transportation and a multi-modal future.

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