

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



Ridership for calendar year 2014 will exceed 145,000 passengers, which will be another all-time ridership record for Wilmington Transit System! This equates to an 8% increase in ridership from 2013. Each year we experience increased ridership, but are unable to expand because of the lack of funds from the State of Ohio. With the economic downturn, the state of Ohio General Revenue Funding for public transit in Ohio has decreased 75% from \$44.32 million per year to \$7.3 million in 2014. This funding is spread over 59 transit systems across Ohio. These systems are providing vital transportation for people to access jobs, healthcare, education, shopping and entertainment among other things. While the typical state in the nation contributes 23% of the operating funds for transit from their state budget, Ohio contributes less than 3%. While there has been sustained growth in ridership, especially in Wilmington, available grant funds remain stagnant. With the increase in ridership, extended wait times continue to be the most perplexing problem. Given our constant mandate to keep expenses down, we must limit the number of drivers and hours worked.

Approximately 50% of the total rides were provided to the Elderly and Disabled. Our main goals continue to be maintaining fares at the same level, maintaining the same hours of operation and maintaining the highest level of safety for our passengers. Equally important is our striving to keep Wilmington's matching funds contribution at the lowest possible level.

Our performance numbers continue to surpass ODOT's calculated averages and actually place Wilmington Transit System as one of the most efficient rural systems in Ohio. Performance indicators and statistics are a big part of determining the awarding of public transportation grant funds. Many systems do not receive the total amount of funds requested in their submitted proposal!

Within the 2014 grant funds, Wilmington Transit System requested, and received funding for three replacement Mini Vans and one Wheelchair accessible LTN Vans. Because standard mini vans, listed as available on the state contract were not deemed “Made in America Compliant,” we were forced to purchase modified minivans instead. Because the cost was \$12,000.00 more per vehicle (Wilmington was only responsible for 20% of this total) we were able to purchase only two modified mini vans instead of the three we had been approved for, plus the one LTN wheelchair accessible LTN Van. This left a small amount of state funds available for capital purchase, which we were able to use on our sorely needed HVAC system, which we replaced.

The year 2015 will see us maintaining our fleet of seventeen vehicles, which include five Modified Mini Vans (Wheelchair accessible), seven standard mini vans, and five LTN Wheelchair Accessible large vans. Because of the continued heavy use of public transportation in Wilmington, it is our hope that we can expand our vehicle fleet by an additional one to two vehicles in the near future. This would require an increase in part time drivers, which would require an increase in Wilmington’s matching funds or an increase in fare cost. With the number of vehicles we presently maintain, and drivers we employ, we are very near our capacity in ridership. As stated, there are times when the waiting time is over an hour, which is unacceptable! The ability to stretch our budget any tighter may require changes in our fare structure or a reduction in service. These things are unacceptable as well, due to the obvious need in this community for our service. Many seniors, people with disabilities and the underprivileged rely on this service to help them maintain their independence and



wellbeing, using the service for medical appointments, food shopping, work transportation, etc.

Wilmington Transit System is still one year behind our planned vehicle replacement schedule. We have several vehicles with over two hundred and fifty thousand miles on the odometer. We are authorized by ODOT to replace vehicles after exceeding 150,000 miles, but because of our money-saving

efforts, and the lack of funds from The State of Ohio, we have not been able to replace as needed. Vehicle maintenance is critical to maintain safe and efficient service to our many riders.

Safety is our number one priority!

We have received confirmation from The Ohio Department of Transportation that we were awarded a total of \$926,426.00 for the CY2015 Rural Transit Program. Wilmington Transit System will also receive approximately \$68,000.00 through the Elderly and Disabled Grant program. For 2015, our already approved grant funds will allow us to replace one LTN Wheelchair Van and four Modified Mini Vans.

The biggest challenge for 2014 continued to be budget management and cash flow. The two areas that we have the least control of, fuel and vehicle maintenance costs, were manageable and stayed below budget! While attempting to budget close to the vest for 2014, we budgeted vehicle maintenance based on an average from the past five years of expenditures, crossing our fingers that we would experience another good year with lower than normal mechanical failures to our fleet of vehicles.

We were fortunate not to experience an abundance of high dollar mechanical repairs on our vehicle fleet during 2014. Fuel prices fluctuated wildly throughout the year, but as mentioned, we were able to stay below budget.

All of our part time drivers and full time personnel are to be commended for their continued dedication to providing Wilmington Transit System riders, with exceptional customer service. There is not a day goes by that I do not hear stories of their above-and-beyond-the-call-of-duty actions and positive attitude to our riders. They all contribute greatly to our cost containment efforts! We thank them for their service and commitment to their jobs!

*Submitted by:*

Phillip Floyd

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