



Chair Lanpher and the House Committee on Transportation  
Vermont General Assembly  
Room 43, Vermont State House

April 25, 2022

RE: H.736, Section 16 Language

Dear Madam Chair,

At your request, GMT is happy to provide our opinion on the changes made by the Senate Committee on Transportation to Section 16 of H.736 from the House passed version.

I'd first like to state for the record that on behalf of the GMT Board of Commissioners, our member municipalities, staff, and most importantly the public that we serve, we are incredibly thankful for the support that the Committee has shown through H.736.

From my understanding, the Senate version of H.736 appropriates \$1.2M to GMT's urban system and gives flexibility to GMT to use the funds, combined with federal drawdown, to do the following during fiscal year 2023: (1) operate routes other than commuter and LINK Express on a zero-fare basis; and (2) provide service at pre-COVID-19 levels.

I would like to note that GMT's understanding of the Senate's intent is that the language only applies to GMT's urban system, and not to GMT's rural system, or any other rural services in the state. GMT strongly supports the proposed Agency of Transportation budget in H.736 that maintains zero-fare service for all rural transit routes, including GMT's, in FY23.

It is my understanding that besides providing an additional \$233K to the GMT urban system in FY23, the House version of H.736 restricts the funding to fare revenue replacement on local routes.

Since the GMT Board voted to avoid the majority of planned FY23 service reductions at its April meeting, and since there seems to be similar intent in both the House and Senate versions of H.736 related to FY23 zero-fare service, the main practical difference between the two versions is the appropriation amount. GMT could use the extra \$233K in the House version of H.736 to to continue zero-fare service on all routes, but also understands that the Committee faces many competing interests.



Pending state funding being awarded to GMT through H.736, the GMT Board will make a FY23 fare collection policy decision at its May 17 meeting. Based on the proposed amounts and the current intent of both versions of H.736, the staff recommendation to the Board will be to continue some-level of zero-fare services in the GMT urban service area in FY23.

Pending the legislative language in the final version of the Bill, and other budgetary considerations, the GMT Board may be interested in considering zero-fare on all urban routes, only on local routes or possibly a means-tested program based on income eligibility that could extend the funding and provide the zero-fare benefit to those who need it most. The zero-fare program continuation would be in addition to avoiding the majority of the planned FY23 service reductions as mentioned above.

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to go on the record to state that while GMT will be financially sound in FY23, we will continue to face significant shortfalls in non-federal funding levels in FY24 and beyond. GMT will look forward to working with our local partners, the Agency of Transportation, and the Legislature to identify a more sustainable non-federal funding structure to pay for transit services in Vermont than the local property tax. This will be critical for GMT to be able to fully maximize the increase of federal transit funding, and to be able to maintain high quality mobility services that creates social equity, economic development, and climate benefits.

GMT thanks the Committee again for their support to help make GMT a best-in-class transit agency!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jon Moore', is written over a circular blue stamp or mark.

Jon Moore  
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Cc:

Jim Moulton, Vermont Public Transportation Association (VPTA), Chair  
Elaine Haytko, Vermont Public Transportation Association (VPTA), Executive Director