



Human Services Chamber
of Hamilton County

Transportation Empowerment Fund Proposal

The Human Services Chamber of Hamilton County (HSC) proposes the establishment of a Transportation Empowerment Fund (TEF) to support access to transportation for low income individuals. TEF would provide free or discounted bus passes or other types of ride options to eligible low-income citizens through participating non-profits or government organizations. These passes will allow eligible recipients to access transportation for employment, education, and other specified purposes. This initiative would offset the loss of ridership that is projected to result from increased fares.

TEF would be managed under the following general guidelines:

- **Process:** Bus passes, including single-ride passes, day passes, and monthly passes, will be available for purchase by organizations at a discount of 50% of cost. Participating organizations will offer the passes to eligible recipients for free or at a discounted rate, depending on the recipient's income to pay and/or the organization's policy.
- **Eligibility:**
 - Riders must have a household income below 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines.*
 - The primary purpose of the passes must be to access: employment/job-seeking; education/job-training; medical/mental health appointments; services from human services agencies; court-related appointments; trips to the grocery store; childcare.
- **Governance:**
 - TEF will be managed by an advisory board comprised of representatives from SORTA, the business community, bus riders, and the human services sector.
 - The advisory board will oversee distribution of bus passes and develop policies and procedures for application and reporting by participating organizations. These processes and procedures should allow flexibility to serve recipients and not be overly burdensome.
 - An existing, non-participating non-profit, such as the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, will serve as the fiscal sponsor for the fund.
- **Request:** HSC requests funding in the amount of \$300K per year for 3 years, with an opportunity to discuss expanding the program to rideshare and other transportation options after the first year. The Transit Tax Fund could be a source of funding for this initiative. As an example of impact, the requested funding amount would support discounted monthly bus passes for 1,400 workers who are not able to afford a full-cost bus pass.^

*This eligibility standard aligns with the United Way's regular report to the City of the number of disadvantaged individuals served through City human services funding.

^This number assumes workers would pay half of the discounted price paid by the organization.