



Ohio Environmental Council

[ UNLEASHING THE POWER OF GREEN ]

**Interested Party Testimony - Jack Shaner, Deputy Director, Ohio Environmental Council  
Ohio Transportation Budget - Sub. House Bill 53 - As Pending in House Finance Committee  
Ohio House Finance Committee  
Ohio Statehouse - February 25, 2015**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Driehaus, and Members of the Committee-

Here is a summary of our perspective on important changes and our suggestions for additional amendments as you finalize your consideration of the Ohio Transportation Budget (Substitute House Bill 53 - As Pending in the Committee):

**1. Ohio Rail Development Commission (DOTCD4)**

**OEC strongly supports the House amendment** to maintain the Ohio Rail Development Commission as an independent commission and to reject the Governor's proposal to abolish the ORDC and to replace it with a new Division of Freight. While there is merit in a unified approach to intermodal transportation, this should not come at the expense of the repeal of the ORDC and its effective track record of achievement to maintain and enhance rail infrastructure.

**2. Metrics to develop Statewide Strategic Transportation Planning Across Transportation Modes (DOTCD30)**

**OEC strongly supports the House amendment** to enable a fair comparison of costs and benefits of the various transportation modes associated impacts of transportation modes on maintenance costs, short- and long-term economic impact, regional job growth and job retention, and safety. If implemented fairly and without prejudice for or against any particular transportation modes, this study could help Ohio chart a responsible roadmap for current and future investment. One friendly amendment we suggest is consideration of costs and benefits for energy and air quality.

**3. Public access roads for DNR sites, Exposition Commission, Ohio History Connection, and metro parks (DOTCD8)**

**OEC strongly supports the House amendment** to require ODOT to determine what portion of funding is attributable to these respective purposes. Taxpayers deserve to know what operations their fuel tax dollars are funding.

**4. Elimination of alternative fuel usage requirements for state vehicles (DOTCD5)**

**OEC opposes the Governor's proposal** to repeal this sensible investment in Ohio-grown bio-fuels and the economic, energy, and clean air benefits this program provides.

**5. Assumption of duties from Federal agencies (DOTCD3)**

**OEC is neutral on the Governor's proposal** for ODOT to administer compliance with the Federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for transportation projects.

**Final Amendment Requests:**

As the Finance Committee considers final amendments to the Transportation Budget, OEC respectfully asks the committee to consider the following recommendations:

**1. Public transportation funding** - Follow the recommendations of the ODOT Statewide Public Transit Needs Study to substantially increase state support for public transportation for rural and urban transit agencies. See the study [findings snapshot](#) for recommended funding levels to meet the current unmet need in rural and urban areas.

**2. Federal funds for intermodal freight transportation** - Require ODOT to pursue more Federal funds for efficient intermodal freight transportation to save shippers time and expense, reduce shipping congestion, and reduce harmful air emissions. Federal funds covered one-third of the successful \$15M Third Rail Line project in Cincinnati; see the [USDOT fact sheet](#) for more information.

**3. Federal flexible funds for public transportation** - Require ODOT to flex more Federal funds for public transportation. According to the most recent [ASHTO](#) survey of state funding for public, there is a strong relationship between state and Federal funding. The seven states with the largest state funding amounts—NY, CA, MS, MA, NJ, and IL—collectively, allotted \$11.5 billion in state funding. About \$5.2 billion—more than half of all Federal funds spent on transit—went to these seven states. The remaining 40 states allotted a total of \$2.76 billion in state funding and shared about \$5.0 billion in Federal funds; Ohio is among the remaining 40 states. In fact, only 12 states invested less state funds in public transportation than Ohio: MO, KY, ME, MT, NH, ID, GA, NV, UT, HI, AZ, and AL. This strongly suggests that Ohio is not helping itself enough and not leveraging its fair share of Federal flexible funds for public transportation.

**4. Require ODOT to consolidate human services transportation funding** - As recommended by the ODOT Statewide Public Transit Needs Study, encourage the consolidation of human services transportation funding through ODOT Transit. This will save taxpayer dollars by leveraging more federal transit funds (80:20 match) instead of federal Medicare funds (50:50 match).

**5. Create a Transportation Choice Fund** to match local pedestrian, bicycle, transit projects - Just 2.5 percent of Federal flexible transportation funds could fund a \$75M fund to match local family-friendly transportation projects.

For more information, please see our [testimony](#) from February 17, 2015.

Thank you for your consideration.



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