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Ohio Department of Transportation
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Transportation Subcommittee

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Good morning, Chairman McColley, Vice Chairman Green, Ranking Member Reece, and members of the subcommittee. I'm pleased to appear here today on behalf of Governor John Kasich to testify on the 2018-2019 biennial transportation budget.

Since many of you were present during my testimony before the full Finance Committee I will be brief in order to allow time for questions and answers.

It has been an exciting time at ODOT over the past six years. While many states have fallen badly behind in highway repairs and improvements, since 2011 we have invested \$12.6 billion in nearly 6,200 bridge and highway projects that improve safety and keep people and goods moving in Ohio, an investment not only in safety, but in our economy and quality of life.

In the past three years, ODOT has had a record annual capital construction program. Over 90 percent of that has been to preserve and maintain our existing system. Our primary responsibility is to protect the enormous investment the people of Ohio have made in their transportation system through many decades.

And we are meeting that responsibility with a smaller workforce. We have reduced staffing levels by over 500 positions since 2011, all through attrition. When I began my first appointment as ODOT director in 1991, we had just under 8000 employees. Today, we have just under 5000 people. That is the lowest head count since the department began the construction of the interstate highway system. We are doing more with less thanks to better training, better focus, better technology, and an ever-improving culture of professionalism and production.

For more than a century, Ohio has been at the heart of transportation manufacturing, innovation and research. Those ties grow stronger with each passing year and the innovations developed here will continue to build on our state's historic role as a world leader in transportation technology.

ODOT manages one of the largest transportation networks in the United States. With an average annual capital program in excess of two billion dollars, it is extremely important these funds are used as efficiently and effectively as possible to provide a safe and reliable system that meets the state's mobility and economic needs.

Through the years we have shown we cannot just build our way out of congestion. As I said earlier, we're spending over 90% of our capital construction dollars on preserving and maintaining what we already have. Using technology, technology that already exists,

we can operate our system more efficiently and achieve better results; results that are measured in terms of through-put or traffic capacity.

But even more importantly, it's about safety. By taking advantage of technology, we can make our highways safer.

The Governor's budget introduces new traffic management techniques that will enhance traffic flow on state highways and keep traffic moving during rush hour peaks: variable speed limits and hard shoulder running.

During peak hours on many Ohio highways, excessive starting and stopping of motorists results in waves of backed up vehicles and the potential for increased accidents. It has been proven that during high periods of demand on roadways, a temporary, slower speed limit results in a smoother and more even flow of traffic. For example, Europe has seen crashes drop by nearly 30 percent since using variable speed limits and secondary crashes, the result of backed up traffic caused by an earlier crash, are down by 50 percent. A recent ODOT study shows promising results for using these innovative proposals, resulting in a 40 percent reduction of traffic delays in Cincinnati and Columbus. Currently, the Ohio Department of Transportation is allowed to use variable speed limits in only two circumstances: school zones and highway work zones.

The Governor's budget also would give ODOT the authority to transform the shoulder into an additional lane during rush hour. This will allow us to strengthen our efforts to keep traffic and commerce moving. We plan to test this concept on I-670 here in Columbus beginning in 2018. Other states and countries that have successfully used this technique, called Hard Shoulder Running, to increase capacity without the expense of building additional lanes. Today, only public transit buses in Ohio have the authority to use this lane. At this test site, dynamic new message signs above the roadway will alert motorists on when the extra lane is open.

We'll also better manage traffic by having better data. We recently announced the establishment of the Smart Mobility Corridor, a 35-mile stretch of four-lane, limited access highway between Dublin and East Liberty, northwest of Columbus. Work will start this summer. High-capacity fiber optic cable will be installed and will instantaneously link researchers and traffic monitors with data from embedded and wireless sensors installed along the roadway. Data collected by the sensors will provide frequent and accurate traffic counts, weather and surface condition monitoring, and incident management improvements.

When complete, the Smart Mobility Corridor will allow premier automotive testing, research and manufacturing facilities to test smart transportation technologies on a highway that carries up to 50,000 vehicles per day through rural and urban settings in a full range of weather conditions.

Gov. Kasich's new transportation budget also includes funding for two additional smart highway projects – on the Interstate 270 beltway in Columbus and Interstate 90 in northern Ohio. These smart highways, as well as the Ohio Turnpike, will provide state-

of-the-art sites for innovators to test and refine jobs-creating technologies. An expanding network of smart highways will give Ohioans a safer, better driving experience and offer businesses reduced transportation costs, increased operating efficiencies and faster access to markets.

Funding in Gov. Kasich's new budget, matched by commitments from private-sector partners, will together invest up to \$45 million for expanded research capabilities at the Transportation Research Center in East Liberty. The TRC is a 4,500-acre independent testing facility – the continent's most advanced – offering the ideal environment for autonomous vehicle and smart highway research, compliance and certification testing for vehicles and components, crash testing, emissions testing, dynamic testing and durability testing. The TRC is also home to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's only Vehicle Research and Test Center, another unique advantage for our state.

While moving people and goods more efficiently has enormous benefits, ultimately, the biggest benefit of this transportation transformation will be to create a transportation system that maximizes safety by reducing crashes, injuries and deaths.

Ohio is already considered a national leader in traffic safety. ODOT has one of the largest Highway Safety Programs in the country, which provides over \$135 million annually to assist in improving high-crash and severe-crash locations. The department also works with law enforcement and other agencies to discourage distractions, speeding, drinking and driving, and encourage greater seat belt use across the state.

ODOT maintains more than 43,000 lane miles and 14,000 bridges. These state maintained roads carry 57 percent of all traffic and 67 percent of freight traffic. That's why we spend more than 90 percent of our capital dollars on preservation.

The "Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act" or FAST Act passed by Congress at the end of 2015 will authorize an annual 2 percent increase in federal highway funds over a five year period. We also expect state transportation revenues to increase about one percent a year for the biennium. With inflation, this two-year budget is essentially a continuation budget.

However, we do plan to increase funding for public transit. We are currently flexing federal highway funds to assist transit operators. It was \$23 million in fiscal year 2017. Our plan is to use additional federal funds to add \$10 million to this, increasing spending to \$33 million.

Thank you to our partners in the Ohio General Assembly. Without your support for the many innovative policies ODOT has sought to help build and maintain Ohio's transportation system, we would not be able to get the job done.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to working with you through this process. I will be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.