



**Ohio House Finance Committee  
Transportation Budget for FY 2020-2021  
HB 62  
February 20, 2019**

On behalf of the Ohio Municipal League (OML) and our 750 members, my name is Kent Scarrett and I am the Executive Director of the League and I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the current needs and challenges that Ohio's municipalities face in properly funding transportation infrastructure across the state.

The OML's **2019-2020 Public Policy Agenda** identifies transportation funding as a top priority.

To this end, the OML has been working with our member municipalities on understanding transportation infrastructure needs. Additionally, we are a member of the Fix Our Roads Ohio coalition, which, as you are familiar, is the banding of stakeholders interested in securing more transportation infrastructure funding at the state and local level.

We appreciate the leadership this committee and the administration is demonstrating by asking local governments to share information about our transportation systems and our needs and diving into the conversations of solutions as it relates to the critical needs of our above-ground infrastructure system.

Earlier this month, Governor DeWine appointed the Transportation Infrastructure Advisory Committee. This blue-ribbon panel took testimony from transportation stakeholders from throughout Ohio and issued a compelling report sharing some of the great challenges our state and local governments face in addressing our transportation infrastructure needs.

The Governor stated that "we must ensure that our transportation system is not only safe and reliable, but that it also strengthens our economy by offering accessibility for current and new businesses."

Ohio's cities and villages share this view. Our municipalities are home to over 8.5 million citizens and over 80 percent of Ohio businesses. Our roadways provide critical first- and last-mile connections for employment, commerce, social services, culture and recreation, hospitals and healthcare. Our own police, fire, and EMS forces use these roadways to serve our citizens and residents of neighboring communities.

Municipalities maintain over 70,000 lane miles and 2,500 bridges and have an annual count of over 100 million vehicle miles traveled. The most well-traveled portion of this municipal system, about 21,000 lane miles of local connectors and arterials and highways, carry over a quarter of all vehicle miles traveled in Ohio.

Greater investment in the municipal roadway system will promote local, regional and statewide economic vitality and improve safety for the traveling public.

**The Challenge**

Reports are plenty that show the mismatch between transportation infrastructure needs and funding at the national, state, and local level. Ohio is not immune from this challenge. Recent testimony contends that ODOT estimates a \$1 billion annual need and estimates range up to \$1 billion annually for locally-maintained roads.

Municipalities invest in a variety of transportation assets, including roadways, curbs and gutters, bridges, sidewalks and pedestrian paths, storm sewers, traffic signals, street lights, public transit systems and airports.

Although municipalities face needs with all of these transportation assets, today we are focusing primarily on roadways and bridges and related investments, such as traffic signal management. This approach is taken because the roadway system is generally the largest area of municipal transportation investment.

As you can imagine, with over 900 independent municipalities in our state, there is not one place to go to document every need and funding source. But it is fair to say, like other units of government, our communities face infrastructure funding challenges.

## **Key Needs**

Understanding that Ohio is not in a position to meet every state and local transportation need, the OML believes the following measures would make a significant and ongoing down payment on municipal infrastructure investment:

- 1. Increase motor fuel tax with current proportional allocation of these resources between state and local governments.** Doing this will restore buying power, pay for priority projects and index to inflation.
- 2. Create a State-Local Partnership to Prioritize Investment in well-traveled, critical local roadways.**
  - a. Roadway Investment:** Ohio should create a 10-year maintenance program for “well-traveled” highways, arterials and connectors maintained by localities, including critical roadways outside these designations that provide access to critical police, fire, EMS, hospital, education, key community services and employers. Localities and the state would partner to assess the needs of these important roadways and develop a maintenance plan for repaving and occasionally reconstruction.
  - b. Bridge Investment:** Local governments maintain over two-thirds of the state’s 44,000 bridges. Although counties maintain most of these bridges, municipalities maintain 2,453 bridges.
  - c. Traffic Management and Smart Technology:** More funding to install, operate and maintain traffic management and emerging smart technology would improve safety and efficiency and reduce congestion on the high use roadways. Since the life cycle costs of these systems are evolving rapidly, best practice research will establish their maintenance cycle.
  - d. Transportation Planning and Emerging Technology Best Practice Training:** There also is a need for good planning and training to help localities make the best infrastructure investment decisions, like establishing effective pavement condition ratings. Funding for this need would be within the budgets of the above three components.
- 3. Restore Local Government Fund Cuts.** Support restoration of Local Government Fund cuts – which totaled nearly 50 percent (\$450 million/year) since FY 2012. Local governments use these funds for general government purposes, including transportation infrastructure.
- 4. Expand Support for Public Transit.** Ohio ranks 41<sup>st</sup> in public transit funding in the face of growing urban and rural needs, including in 27 counties that have no public transit. Ohio should begin to address this problem with an increase in state GRF funding for public transit.
- 5. Create Long-Term Transportation Funding Study Commission.** Ohio should create a commission to analyze and make policy recommendations that address the ongoing shift away from gas fueled vehicles to alternative fuel vehicles and greater use of public transportation and information technology, including online work.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this crucial issue. We look forward to working with you on these important matters and ensure a safer, stronger transportation infrastructure for Ohio for years to come.