

Written Testimony of David Pritchard, P. E.

Submitted to the House Finance Committee - FY 2020-2021 Department of Transportation Budget

Chair, Representative Oelslager

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Chairman Oelslager and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about how to improve the funding stream for Ohio roadways and infrastructure.

I am a retired professional engineer registered in Ohio. My professional background is not in transportation, but I have worked on transportation issues in my local community and have an interest in transportation systems at all levels in the state as a long time user of the system, as a person interested in efficient and economical transportation, fair funding methods, and possibly most importantly the safety of my family and all Ohio motorists. Having lost to roadway crashes about half a dozen people I have known, two in the last 5 years, it is personal. And my experience is typical of what most folks can expect in their lifetime

I have attached a report that I submitted in 2016 for the Ohio Legislature's Joint Committee on Transportation issues. While some of the points in that analysis may have changed, last week's testimony by ODOT Director Jack Marchbanks noted the same concerns of that analysis, finally bringing highway safety to its much deserved position in the transportation funding issue. And the comment by the State Patrol Director that 25% of highway fatalities involve high way conditions as a cause was especially important. Transportation funding needs to increase for a number of reasons. Based on the attached analysis I would recommend the following:

- Raise the gas tax by at least 26 cents, 16 cents to account for inflation and improved gas mileage, and 10 cents to increase the proportion of gas tax going to local entities that pay an excessive portion of street and road costs from general funds, not from user fees such as the gas tax. This would reduce the distribution of costs in my community from 75% local non-user fee for roads to 50%.
- Provide financial incentives in the gas tax distribution to localities to use the savings in part for safer, more efficient and more equitable mass transit, an important consideration for low income Ohioans.
- Implement a fee for electric vehicles to pay their fair share of transportation costs, about \$340 per vehicle according to my estimates, to be equivalent to the gas tax paid by gasoline powered cars.
- Traffic fatalities have been on a general decline in recent years, but that may be leveling off due to more miles driven and distracted driving. As a bicyclist and motorcycle rider I am especially concerned over distracted driving, and I applaud public education and enforcement. Much of the lowering in fatalities has been due to engineering improvements in highways and vehicles. Funding should incentivize use of improved engineering in both categories through research and application.
- Include incentives or requirements in the funding stream to encourage safer highways and lower fatalities to bring fatality rates in line with other western nations, typically 1/2 to 1/4 the per capita fatalities in the US. Matching other nations' performance would save over 20,000 American lives per year nationally, and about 700 Ohioans' lives, an average of about 8 lives per Ohio County. An area that would yield immediate results is to provide incentives for heavy trucking firms to buy only trucks with automatic braking for stopped traffic, and to retrofit alarms for stopped traffic on existing trucks.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. I will attempt to answer any questions that you may have.

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