



American Council of Engineering Companies  
*of Ohio*

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chairman Scherer, Ranking Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee, I am Beth Easterday, President of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Ohio. I am here today as a proponent of House Bill 62, which contains new revenue to solve the financial crisis of funding Ohio's roads and bridges. ACEC Ohio is a non-profit trade association comprised of more than 130 companies representing over 7500 employees in Ohio. Companies that provide a wide array of engineering and other professional services for all types of construction and environmental improvement projects around the state. In Ohio alone, our industry provides services worth more than \$1 billion annually.

To reiterate what Steve Bergman, an ACEC Ohio member, testified to last week, the efficiency and condition of Ohio's transportation system is critical to the health of the state's economy. As business owners in the state of Ohio, my members must make strategic decisions on where and how to grow their businesses. The lack of funding for critical infrastructure projects in Ohio has forced many of my members to seek offices in states where funding is available including Michigan, Indiana, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. The ability to maintain their talent in Ohio is hampered as work diminishes and staff must move to where the work is. In addition, engineering college graduates in Ohio are seeking employment in other states as companies in Ohio are downsizing.

The Governor created an advisory committee to review transportation infrastructure in Ohio. That committee recommended an increase in the motor fuel user fee as the most efficient way to increase revenue for ODOT and local governments to fund projects. These findings and recommendations are not new. In fact, a joint House and Senate task force released a report in December 2016 that stated: "an unchanged motor fuel tax rate for Ohio and the federal tax rate has bought forward many concerns about infrastructure needs not being met." The report went on to state that "There has been an increase in the number of roads and bridges that must be maintained, and construction costs have increased, including materials and labor." With the final recommendation stating "Transportation infrastructure funding improvements are critical to help keep Ohio attractive to current and prospective employers. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that future budget discussions give consideration to ways to generate more revenue and how that will affect Ohio's standing as a premier location for business investment."

Those future budget discussions are right now. We are here to tell you that the engineering consulting business wants to stay in Ohio, grow our businesses in Ohio, and hire good talent in Ohio -- but the current funding situation for transportation is not conducive to increased business investment.

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The Department of Transportation should be commended for digging deep to find efficiencies and pledging to find \$100 million more, but the reality is that our state's transportation system—and local transportation system -- is in worse condition today. Our ability to maintain mobility and safety while fostering economic growth has fallen grossly behind.

The motor vehicle user fee is the quickest, most efficient way to raise revenue for Ohio's roads and bridges. This revenue source is constitutionally protected for use only on roads and bridges. On behalf of the 7500 employees ACEC represents, I urge you to act now and support the proposed increase in the motor vehicle user fee with indexing the Consumer Price Index annually going forward to maintain purchasing power. This is an immediate influx of revenue to address the current system needs and it's an investment in Ohio's transportation future ensuring safe, effective and efficient transportation for all Ohioans.

I appreciate your time and will be happy to answer any questions.