



OHIO SENATE TRANSPORTATION, COMMERCE, AND WORKFORCE COMMITTEE

PROPONENT TESTIMONY – HOUSE BILL 62

CORY NOONAN, ALLEN COUNTY COMMISSIONER

March 12, 2019

Good morning Chairman McColley, Vice Chair Uecker, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Transportation, Commerce, and Workforce Committee. My name is Cory Noonan, and I serve on the Allen County Board of Commissioners, a position I have held for 6 years. I also serve on the Board of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio, and as the Chair of CCAO's Jobs, Economic Development, and Infrastructure Committee. I am here today as a proponent of House Bill 62, and I ask the Transportation Committee to improve the bill by restoring the funding levels contained in the executive proposal.

County governments are very concerned about the condition of Ohio's transportation infrastructure. The quality of our infrastructure has a tremendous impact on the economic development potential of our state. Counties are responsible for the maintenance, repair and replacement of over 26,000 bridges and 29,000 county road miles. They rely on a strong partnership with the state in order to meet this responsibility, but this partnership is being slowly eroded over time as state revenues stagnate, construction inflation increases costs, and our aging infrastructure is in need of replacement or major renovation. In 2017, counties received a total of \$210.3 million in motor fuel tax revenue from the state, but the motor fuel tax rate has not been increased since 2005. Counties also received \$246.5 million in distributions from state license registration fees, but the basic \$20 fee for passenger cars has not changed in decades.

Allen County has a total of 377 bridges, of these, 3 are closed and 18 have posted load limits. Allen County should be changing 8 bridges per year, but currently can only accomplish 3 per year. Allen County has 352 miles of county roads and should be paving 24 per year. Over the last 10 years, Allen County has averaged 10 miles per year, meaning we are on a 35 year rotation on an aggregate that lasts 15 years.

In the context of stagnant state support, counties are doing what they can to finance additional road and bridge work. The 132nd General Assembly authorized a new \$5 license plate fee, and over 20 counties have this tool in effect for 2019. Last June, Allen County enacted two \$5 license fees that provide an additional \$750K so that we can do everything possible to repair our infrastructure.



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With this recent addition of \$750K, Allen County's Engineer is spending \$1.75M on county roads and bridges. To follow the appropriate paving cycle of every 15 years and bridge work of 8 per year, Allen County should be spending \$3.75M per year.

Although more counties may adopt the latest \$5 fee in the future, the usefulness of this revenue source is limited in most rural counties and even in some urban counties.

Local permissive fees and other locally enacted taxes alone cannot address the huge challenges of replacing our aging infrastructure and constructing major new projects. From a county perspective, there is simply no substitute for a strong state financial partnership to address the needs of our transportation infrastructure.

Twenty-seven states have adjusted their motor vehicle fuel taxes in some manner since 2013, including all of Ohio's neighbors. In 2015, Michigan increased the state motor fuel tax on gasoline by 7.3 cents per gallon, the motor fuel tax on diesel by 11.3 cents per gallon and indexed both to inflation starting in 2022. In 2017, Indiana increased its gas tax by 10 cents per gallon and indexed it to inflation. Ohio's motor fuel tax is now lower than all of our surrounding states except Kentucky. Given the projected growth in demand for electric and other energy efficient vehicles, consideration should also be given to leveling the playing field between electric, hybrid or fuel cell vehicles and conventional gasoline or diesel-powered vehicles, and we are encouraged that the House version of the bill has a provision to do this.

It is clear that Ohio must improve and expand its transportation infrastructure to meet the economic challenges of the 21st century, and Ohio's counties are committed to partnering with the state to ensure this happens. The House took a good first step toward improving state funding for infrastructure and public transit. I urge the committee to bring the proposal closer to the executive proposal, which would have provided increased funding of 1.2 billion dollars for roads and bridges in its first year alone, indexed to inflation in future years.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.