

Ohio Senate Transportation, Workforce and Commerce Committee

House Bill 62 Testimony

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Mayors Association of Ohio

Chair McColley, Vice Chair Uecker and Ranking Member Antonio, I am Bill Flaute, Mayor of Riverside, Ohio, and President of the Mayors Association of Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today and discuss a topic that is very important to me and my fellow members at the Mayors Association of Ohio: the Motor Fuel User Fee.

The Mayors Association of Ohio is a subset of the Ohio Municipal League. Our mission focuses on the improvement of municipal government and administration and the promotion of the general welfare of the cities and villages of this State. We strongly support the proposal to increase the Motor Fuel User Fee, also known as the "gas tax." The current tax was established in 1925 and has not been adjusted since 2005, when it was increased to a fee of 28 cents per gallon. Adjusting for inflation, the 28 cent fee has the purchasing power of just 18 cents in 2019 dollars. This is simply not enough to support adequate funding to invest in Ohio's Transportation System.

A lack of appropriate funding for our transportation system will negatively impact our state's economy and quality of life for every citizen. Failure to fix the anticipated shortfall in transportation funding will eliminate dollars for new projects designed to add capacity and relieve congestion on Ohio roads. Inadequate funding will also delay needed maintenance and upgrades to existing bridges and roadways. As a Mayor, I can personally attest to how important transportation issues are to my constituents. Ohioans expect their roads to be safe, modern and well maintained. Members of the Mayors Association of Ohio tell me that this is unfortunately not the norm for roads and transportation ways in their districts.

I can personally attest to my community's desire to fix our roads. We put an 8 mill levy on the ballot in our City in November. This would have added \$143.00 to a citizen with \$100,000.00 house. Unfortunately, it failed by only 8 votes. The reasons it failed are many, but this does show that many of our citizens are willing to pay something for good roads.

That being said, I believe this is only a temporary fix. I am the proud owner of a Chevy Volt, an electric hybrid. A couple of months ago, I was able to get 2,000 miles out of a tank of gas. I put in 7 gallons. Electric cars, electric hybrids and regular hybrids are a reality and part of the problem. This problem needs to be addressed also.

We cannot afford to kick the proverbial can down the road anymore. Ohioans are asking for this General Assembly to bring the gas tax into modern times. The cost of inaction is great. We have made commendable strides when it comes to being a leader in advanced technology in Ohio. Autonomous vehicles and smart mobility are spreading throughout the state, thanks to the forethought and planning of the last General Assembly. For that, my members and I thank you. But we can't lose focus on the transportation needs of Ohioans now. Failing to secure adequate funding for transportation puts the momentum of all these wins in jeopardy.

I urge your thoughtful consideration of this matter as you determine the best path forward. Remember that roadways and infrastructure are issues that affect all citizens. Ohioans are asking for safe and modern roads and that cannot be provided without adequate funding. Raising the Motor Fuel User Fee can fix this problem. I will now be happy to answer any questions you may have.