

March 21, 2019

**Ohio Senate
133rd General Assembly
Transportation, Commerce & Workforce Committee**

RE: Am. Sub. H. B. No. 62, FY 2020-2021 Transportation Budget

Good morning, Chair McColley and Members of the Committee.

My name is Nathan Alley. I came from Cincinnati this morning, where I serve as Chair of the City's appointed Environmental Advisory Council. In my day job, besides being an active father of two young children, I work for the Sierra Club's Ohio Chapter. Our Chapter was established more than 50 years ago, and today, I am speaking on behalf of our more than 21,000 members.

The Sierra Club is particularly interested in the three "Es" of transportation: protecting the environment, growing a sustainable economy, and promoting equity for all people regardless of demographics, age, ability or modality. We have three specific asks today:

First, we join the MOVE Ohio coalition in asking you to allocate no less than \$150 million annually in both state and federal funds to public transit and active transportation. Second, we are asking you to support our state's transition to less polluting transportation technologies, such as hybrid and electric vehicles, and to treat owners of those vehicles fairly when contemplating future roadway "user fees." Finally, we are asking you NOT to put any money toward the study or construction of new highways in our state. In particular, we ask you to eliminate funding for the proposed "Eastern Bypass" project. This Budget will be borne on the backs of all taxpayers, and statewide expenditures should benefit all people and all modalities, not just motorists and land speculators.

In 2015, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) released a Transit Needs Study that illustrates our transportation spending problem. Nearly a third of Ohio's counties have no transit services, nearly a tenth of our residents don't have access to a car, and the transportation sector spews out approximately one quarter of our State's air pollution. We sit near the bottom of a list of states ranked by transit expenditures. In 2019, there is a great and growing demand for transit and other transportation alternatives, and we need to address that demand in this Budget.

The proposed "Eastern Bypass" stands in stark contrast to that public demand — it is a private plan with little to no support from Ohio's people or our public officials. In fact, the previous director of ODOT has described the Bypass as "an idea promoted by land developers for the sake of land development . . . not a new, feasible or good idea."¹

¹Jerry Wray and Mike Hancock, "Bypass won't solve Brent Spence Bridge problem," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Sept. 14, 2015, available at <http://www.cincinnati.com/story/opinion/contributors/2015/09/14/opinion-bypass-solve-brent-spence-bridge-problem/72247510/>.

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Greater Cincinnati's regional chambers of commerce have previously stated their opposition to the Bypass,² which would cost billions of dollars that Ohio doesn't have. If we did, that money should be directed to long-standing, high-priority needs such as improving public transit and repairing bridges. There are no good reasons to study the Eastern Bypass.

We *should* be studying ways to replace Ohio's gas tax, at least in the long-term. We are not far from the day when combustion engines join the dinosaurs that power them. The Sierra Club is willing to be part of that conversation, but in the meantime, we should not be penalizing owners of hybrids and electric vehicles. We agree with Clean Fuels Ohio and others that EV owners should pay no more than \$50 per year, and hybrid owners should pay nothing in addition to the gas tax.

Please do all that you can in this Budget cycle to fund clean, multi-modal transportation alternatives, and invest in our existing transportation infrastructure. Protect the environment, improve the economy and increase accessibility for *all* Ohioans.

Thank you for your time today.

² Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, et al., "Brent Spence corridor only option," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Oct. 22, 2015, available at <http://www.cincinnati.com/story/opinion/contributors/2015/10/22/chambers-brent-spence-corridor-option/74388564/>.