



## OHIO PARKS AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION

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### Testimony Before Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee Am. Sub. H. B. No. 26 March 7, 2017

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##### Woody Woodward

Executive Director

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I am Woody Woodward, Executive Director of the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association and I am pleased to be with you this afternoon to speak to one specific element of Amended Substitute House Bill 26. I appear today on behalf of the 57 Metropolitan Park Districts who are part of our statewide membership of nearly 1,700 parks and recreation professionals.

For many decades, the ODOT budget has provided a small amount of motor vehicle fuel tax dollars to assist in the construction and reconstruction of roads within metropolitan park districts. The funds are administered by ODOT, in conjunction with OPRA and are distributed proportionally to metropolitan park districts based on motor vehicle registrations in each county.

Again this year, lines 16753 through 16757 of the bill before you appropriate \$2,228,000 in each fiscal year "for the construction, reconstruction, or maintenance of park drives or park roads within the boundaries of metropolitan parks."

While we sincerely appreciate this appropriation, we would note that since the 2005-2006 biennial budget the amount of this appropriation has remained flat at \$2,228,000.

During the past year, we have surveyed Ohio park districts regarding their need for this funding. We have learned that:

- The average number of road miles and parking spaces in metropolitan parks have **increased by an average of 27%** since 2005;
- The average cost of paving roadway has **increased by 19%** since 2005;
- A number of metropolitan park districts have assumed responsibility for significant new parks (including some state parks) since 2005 and the roadways which those parks contain;
- Many park districts make plans to "carry over" their road funding dollars from biennium to biennium because the funding supplied in this line item is not adequate to undertake even a modest repaving project.

In light of this data, we are requesting an increase in the Metropolitan Park District Road Improvement Fund for the 2017-18 Ohio Department of Transportation biennial budget from \$2,228,000 per fiscal year to \$2,562,000 per fiscal year to assist park districts with road improvement needs.

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Ohio's metropolitan park districts include many of the most visited recreational facilities in the state, and those visitor numbers are only increasing. Our members contribute much to the quality of life in our state. This increase to a relatively small line item in the ODOT budget will help to ensure that those parks will be accessible to all who seek to visit them.

Thank you for allowing me a few minutes of your time. I would be happy to attempt to address your questions.