



**County
Commissioners
Association of Ohio**

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Testimony

Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee Support for additional funding option included within Am. Sub. HB 26 Brad Cole, Managing Director of Research

Good morning Chairman LaRose, Vice Chairwoman Kunze, Ranking Member Tavares and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am here today primarily to provide supportive testimony in favor of an additional funding option included within the transportation budget – specifically the authority for counties to levy an additional \$5 permissive motor vehicle license fee.

County commissioners in 86 counties and county councils in our two charter counties are by general law the taxing authority for county government. County commissioners and their counterparts in charter counties are also the appropriation authority and the contracting authority for county government. This means that commissioners and county councils must work cooperatively and closely with county engineers regarding planning and approving projects to keep the highway infrastructure of our counties in good working order.

As you heard in the very informative testimony from the Delaware and Gallia County Engineers, county government is responsible for maintaining approximately 26,000 bridges and almost 29,000 miles of roadways. Counties are also responsible for maintaining all bridges on township roads.

These are substantial responsibilities which require a close cooperative relationship between state of Ohio and counties to make sure we have a seamless highway transportation system. State government provides critical resources to all counties in the form of the distribution of gas tax dollars and state motor vehicle license tax dollars to every county. These are vital revenue sources that are critical to the maintenance of our county highway infrastructure.

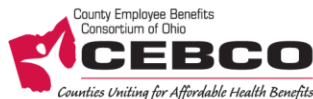
CCAO recognizes, however, that highway funding is a partnership requiring state and local governments to work together, not only in planning highway infrastructure, but also in funding such infrastructure. To that end the legislature has seen fit to grant counties, municipalities and townships authority to levy permissive motor vehicle license (MVL) fees.

At the present time, counties, municipalities and townships may levy a total of four - \$5 permissive motor vehicle license (MVL) fees. Counties are authorized to levy three of these \$5 permissive MVL fees. The General Assembly last adjusted county, municipal and township authority to do permissive



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MVL fees in 1987 as part of a transportation budget. It was at that time that counties were authorized to levy two additional \$5 MVL fees and municipalities and townships were each given exclusive authority to levy a fourth \$5 MVL fee. At the present time 30 counties are levying all three permissive MVL fees and a total of 42 counties are levying two out of three available MVL fees.

CCAO strongly supports the provisions of this transportation budget permitting counties to levy an additional \$5 permissive MVL fee. Additional infrastructure funding is a legislative priority of CCAO and we have been working hard with other local governments to secure additional permissive MVL authority for about 5 years.

We would be remiss if we did not recognize that the transportation budget does not provide any additional MVL authority to municipalities and townships. To that end, CCAO supports efforts to secure additional authority for municipalities and townships to adopt their own MVL fee similar to the authority proposed for counties under this transportation budget.

CCAO also would support a simple amendment to the county MVL authority that would permit commissioners to submit the question of enacting the fee to the voters, in addition to the authority already granted by the bill for commissioners to adopt the MVL fee, subject to a potential referendum requiring the question of the MVL fee to be submitted to the voters. The language we are seeking is identical to the language which can be found in the three sections of the Ohio Revised Code as it relates to county permissive MVL fees (ORC 4504.02, 4504.15, 4504.16). We would note that this was the sponsor's intent with this proposal and we have his support for this amendment.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony. I would be happy to try to answer any questions you have at this time.

