



COUNTY ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION OF OHIO

Ohio Senate Transportation Committee
Dean Ringle, P.E., P.S. - Executive Director
March 16, 2021

Chairman Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the County Engineers Association of Ohio (CEAO) in support of House Bill 74.

The County Engineer is an elected official, serving terms of four years. We have fiscal and operational responsibility for the local infrastructure, as defined in the Ohio Constitution and Ohio Revised Code. Those responsibilities include the preparation of construction plans, specifications and estimates for improvements to all county roads. The County Engineer also serves as engineering advisor to all townships in their county, assisting them with township road improvements and maintenance. The office inspects and maintains all bridges on township and county roads and maintains traffic signals on county roads that intersect other county or township roads.

We are responsible for 26,859 bridges and 29,088 miles of urban and rural roadways that are vital to the continued growth and prosperity of our state. Although Ohio is ranked 35th in the nation by geographic size, it has the fourth largest interstate network that carries the fourth largest amount of truck traffic. The state is within a 600-mile drive of half of the nation's population and is considered a crossroad for America's manufacturing and agricultural industries.

Highlights from CEAO's support and requests to the Transportation Budget (HB 74)

CEAO would like to highlight the following items from Gov. DeWine's introduced version of HB 74 we support:

Bridge inspections

Specifies that certain newer bridges must be inspected at least once every two years according to a schedule set by the Director of ODOT, rather than at least once every year as all bridges are currently.

Load limits on highways and bridges

Removes the general vehicle weight exemption for a vehicle that runs on stationary rails or tracks (e.g. buses and cable trolleys). It also narrows the vehicle weight exemption that applies to all fire department vehicles (e.g., a fire engine) to certain vehicles under specified conditions.

Many low volume roads and bridges are not designed for these heavy loads and can result in significant damage to the pavement and bridges. These overweight vehicles have not been incorporated into the design of our roads, and bridges are not upgraded for their crossing. The vehicle may not present immediate structural damage to the naked eye; it will be the family crossing the bridge or on the road the next day, week, or month that could be the victims.

Highway maintenance and snow removal

Permits the ODOT Director to enter into an agreement with a political subdivision to allow it to remove snow and ice from and to maintain, repair, improve, or provide lighting on interstate highways located within the political subdivision or to reimburse the political subdivision for such improvements. Additionally, this continues the Catastrophic Snowfall Program to provide monetary aid for snow removal costs for municipal corporations, counties, and townships that receive 18 or more inches of snow in a 24-hour period.

Hands-Free Ohio (Distractive Driving)

As wireless communication technology has developed from cellphones to smart phones, and the range of electronic communication platforms has significantly broadened to include apps, cameras, social media, gaming, etc., laws curbing driver distraction must be updated to keep pace with the technology and ensuing distraction. The National Safety Council reports that cell phone use while driving leads to 1.6 million crashes each year. Nearly 390,000 injuries occur each year from accidents caused by texting while driving; and, 1 out of every 4 car accidents in the United States is caused by texting and driving.⁽¹⁾

In a recent survey conducted by the CDC, texting while driving would appear to be alarmingly prevalent, "with 21 percent of drivers in a recent survey indicating that they have done so within the last month".⁽²⁾ Among less experienced teen drivers, that number more than doubles to 46 percent, and 51 percent of those teen drivers admitted to cell phone use while driving. The use of electronic devices while driving imperils not only the distracted drivers, but all highway users. Those who are not distracted are victims of crashes that are caused by those who are.⁽³⁾

Given that texting is disproportionately conducted by younger drivers who have grown up with the technology, the risk associated with texting while driving will only increase as the younger demographics of our population transition into becoming a larger percentage of drivers on our roads.

Each distracted driving death and serious injury irrevocably changes the lives of families and communities in Ohio. We urge you to support the Hands-Free Ohio (Distractive Driving Initiative) in HB 74 Transportation Budget, a critical measure to curb dangerous and deadly distracted driving.

(1) *State and Federal Efforts to Reduce Distractive Driving*, Kitch, Vol. 26, No. 23, June 2018

(2) *Distracted Driving*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, December 2, 2020

(3) *Driven to Distraction: Technological Devices and Vehicle Safety – Joint Hearing* Serial No. 111-79

CEAO would respectfully ask the committee to consider the following item to be amended to HB 74.

Guardrail Standards (Amendment No. AM_134_0120)

Amends ORC 5591.36, guardrail mandates, to comply with state and federal design standards.

H. B. No. 74
As Introduced

_____ moved to amend as follows:

In line 28 of the title, after "5577.02" insert ", 5591.36" 1

In line 63, after "5577.02" insert ", 5591.36" 2

After line 10419, insert: 3

"Sec. 5591.36. (A) The board of county commissioners shall 4
~~erect do both of the following in accordance with state and~~ 5
federal design standards: 6

(1) Erect and maintain on county roads, where not already 7
done, one or more guardrails on each end of a county bridge, 8
viaduct, or culvert ~~more than five feet high. The board also~~ 9
~~shall protect;~~ 10

(2) Protect, by guardrails, all embankments ~~with a rise of~~ 11
~~more than eight feet in height and with a downward slope of~~ 12
~~greater than seventy degrees, where the embankments that~~ have an 13
immediate connection with a county road. 14

(B) The expense for a guardrail required under this 15
section shall be paid out of the county bridge fund." 16

In line 10620, after "5577.02" insert ", 5591.36" 17



The motion was _____ agreed to.

SYNOPSIS

Guardrails

R.C. 5591.36

Modifies guardrail construction requirements by specifying that a board of county commissioners must do both of the following in accordance with state and federal design standards:

-- Erect and maintain guardrails on county roads on each end of all county bridges, viaducts, or culverts, rather than only on such structures that are more than five feet high as in current law; and

-- Protect all embankments with guardrails that have an immediate connection with a county road, rather than only embankments with an immediate connection that have a rise of more than eight feet in height and a downward slope of 70 degrees as in current law.

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