

Ottawa County Engineer's Office

Ronald P. Lajti, Jr., P.E., P.S.
Ottawa County Engineer

8247 W. State Route 163
Oak Harbor, Ohio 43449

Phone: 419-734-6777
Fax: 419-734-6768

March 21, 2021

To: Chairman Kunze, VC Reineke, Ranking Minority Member Antonio,
Transportation Committee Members

From: Ronald P. Lajti Jr., Ottawa County Engineer

Re: Sub HB 74, Transportation Budget
Force Account Limit Increase - SUPPORT

I am writing to express my support for the above mentioned HB 74, particularly for the portion of language increasing county and other local government force account limits.

The County Engineer's Office is an emergency response unit, particularly during the winter months. The general public doesn't care how it's done; they want their roads cleared and safe for passage. This demand is what typically dictates our staff size. By increasing the force account limits, our offices can fully utilize those staff all year on the backlog of necessary projects that we just do not have the funds to formally bid out. An increase would in-turn singlehandedly create efficiencies within our budgets that cannot be realized at the current levels.

When negotiating the scheduling of our smaller jobs, I have actually had contractors remind me that we are not ODOT or the Turnpike, and our projects are pushed back on the calendar to a more convenient time. Being able to complete these smaller jobs with our own crews mitigates the issue of getting a sub-par finished project because we can control the variables. When an unknown or mismarked utility is discovered on our job site, we have the ability to reassess the issue and either postpone the project, or develop a work-around without the financially crippling effects of a "Change Order". Not to mention our crews will be maintaining their own work in the future so they tend to work a bit more meticulously with an all but forgotten home town pride.

Our townships and villages are in the exact same predicament. Rural townships with 40 plus miles of roads to maintain have to be given the opportunity to complete some of their own work. When their annual road budget allows them to contract the repaving of one to two miles of road, and that improvement lasts 10 years, the math proves that they will continue to fail without a change in the rules.

In my opinion, the passage of the increased fuel tax goes hand in hand with the increase of the force account limits. Our legislature had the foresight to give us more resources to get the job done that the tax payers expect. Increasing the Force Account Limits is the next logical step to making sure the fuel tax dollars are utilized as efficiently as possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ronald P. Lajti Jr., P.E., P.S.
Ottawa County Engineer

Cc: File