



House Finance Subcommittee on Transportation  
House Bill 23  
Interested Party Testimony  
February 21, 2023

Chair Patton, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Transportation, thank you for the opportunity to submit written interested party testimony regarding House Bill 23 (H.B. 23), the state transportation budget.

By way of background, the Ohio Rural Development Alliance (ORDA) is an organization of regional transportation planning organizations (“RTPOs”) and other entities dedicated to economic parity for Ohio’s rural communities. ORDA’s members advocate for policies that create sustainable and diverse economic growth and prosperity in their communities. ORDA believes the RTPOs provide unique solutions and perspectives on regional transportation issues and give great insight to the Ohio Department of Transportation when implementing statewide planning activities. Ohio’s RTPOs provide transportation planning products and services to the non-metropolitan regions of Ohio, and work with both ODOT and local stakeholders to facilitate an integrated approach and support better informed transportation decision making in Ohio. RTPOs have established many successes within the current operational framework. Seven years into the program, RTPOs are trusted local partners and facilitators.

Ohio’s six RTPOs serve their local communities by providing critical transportation planning. The six RTPOs are listed below.

- Buckeye Hills Regional Council (Athens, Hocking, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Perry, and Washington Counties)
- Central Ohio Rural Planning Organization (Fairfield, Knox, Madison, Marion, Morrow, Pickaway and Union Counties)
- Logan-Union-Champaign Regional Planning Commission (Logan and Champaign Counties)
- Maumee Valley Planning Organization (Defiance, Fulton, Henry, Paulding, and Williams Counties)
- Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Muskingum, and Tuscarawas Counties)
- Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission (Adams, Brown, Fayette, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, part of Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto, and Vinton Counties)

To better meet the needs of the rural regions of Ohio, the RTPOs received additional funding in a new grant program, the rural transportation planning grant program, in the 134<sup>th</sup> General



Assembly's transportation budget, House Bill 74. The grant program required each RTPO to develop a process for receiving and reviewing project applications. The pilot program was funded at \$2.6 million in each year of the biennium. With guidance from their technical advisory committees, each RTPO successfully developed guidelines, project applications and scoring criteria needed to fairly and effectively select projects for funding. Many local projects are hard to fund, as they just do not fit into any of the current programs. The pilot program allowed these projects to move forward and continuation of this funding into the future is vital to improving the local transportation networks across the state. All funds from H.B. 74 were obligated to projects. For additional information on the type of projects funded through the grant program, please find attached the RTPOs Planning for Program- Impact Report 2022.

In the as introduced version of H.B. 23 again appropriated \$5.2 million over the biennium for the planning grant program (DOTCD5: Section 203.45). To continue the success and build on the momentum of the previous rural transportation planning grant program, ORDA believes additional funds are needed. ORDA is grateful for the increase of funding to \$ 10 million per fiscal year in the substitute bill. Each RTPO has experienced growing demand for funding opportunities from their local communities and local projects, and the additional funding would provide additional funds to each RTPO to support their local projects identified by local leaders.

We encourage this committee to support the rural transportation planning grant program and maintain the earmark of \$ 10 million per fiscal year. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written interested party testimony on House Bill 23. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to us via phone or e-mail.