



**House Finance Transportation Subcommittee
Interested Party Testimony, House Bill 23 (Edwards)
Jason Warner, Director of Strategic Engagement, Greater Ohio Policy Center
Tuesday, February 21, 2023**

Chairman Patton, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the House Finance Transportation Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to share Interested Party Testimony regarding House Bill 23, the state transportation budget for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025.

My name is Jason Warner, and I am the Director of Strategic Engagement with the Greater Ohio Policy Center (GOPC). GOPC is a statewide non-profit organization that champions revitalization and sustainable growth in Ohio's cities and metros. GOPC is highly respected for its data-driven, nonpartisan policy analysis, research expertise, and policy development. Our mission is to improve the communities of Ohio through smart growth strategies and research for a revitalized Ohio.

Last week, I testified before the full finance committee regarding the as-introduced version of the budget. My remarks today are based on the substitute bill which was made publicly available this past weekend.

Points of Concern with Substitute HB 23

Greater Ohio is concerned about two provisions which have been added to HB23.

Bike Lane Design

We are concerned with the addition of language in HB23 that would interfere the ability of local governments to develop active transportation infrastructure that has been planned and designed with local input, and strong local support from the affected community. While we are happy to see that the bill compels ODOT to establish standards for the uniform application of construction standards for bike lanes, we oppose the state intervening in the authority of local governments to design public right of ways and urge the removal of this specific provision in the bill.

Highway Interchange Development

We have serious concerns with a provision has been inserted into the substitute bill that would override the ability of metropolitan planning organizations to make planning decisions that are in the region's best interest and jeopardizes roadway safety for the convenience of a few. Studies have shown that are highway entrance and exit ramps the most dangerous parts of highways ([about 50 percent of all crashes occur on exit ramps and nearly 36 percent occur on entrance ramps](#)). Further, NOACA, the MPO for the greater Cleveland area, has [rejected plans for a new highway interchange](#) as proposed in HB23 because the proposal would substantially increase vehicle miles traveled in the area. Finally, the community where the proposed interchange would be developed, the City of Brunswick in Medina County, has [voiced strong opposition to the project](#) because the location (a residential neighborhood) was not designed for such capacity. It is for these reasons that we strongly encourage the removal of this provision from HB23.

We Remain in Support of Public Transportation Provisions

Greater Ohio is happy to see that the substitute bill maintains funding to public transportation at the same level as has been appropriated for the current fiscal year. Public transportation is a vital link for millions of Ohioans averaging more than 100 million trips per year.

We also support the new Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership Program and the proposed \$15 million per year earmark to support efforts to foster transit connectivity between counties for large employment centers. [As I noted in a recent op-ed](#), it is critical that projects such as Intel be developed with multiple transportation options available to workers in the early stages of the project development. This project presents a unique opportunity to shift our focus from paving over our future with miles of new highways. Instead, this project can serve as a model for the development of a true multifaceted transportation network that will meet transportation needs for decades to come.

We Remain in Support of Recent Decision to Seek Federal Funds for Passenger Rail Study

Greater Ohio welcomes the news that the state will be requesting funding from the federal government to study the expansion of passenger rail service across Ohio. It is right and prudent that the state should take advantage of this unique opportunity to learn more and study the feasibility of greater accessibility to passenger rail.

With all of the new and exciting economic development activity we have seen announced recently across Ohio, now is the perfect time for Ohio to embrace this opportunity to shift our focus away from paving over our future with miles of new highways, and instead use this as a catalyst for the development of a true multifaceted transportation network – one that supports passenger vehicles, public transportation, and bike/ped infrastructure - that will meet our state's needs for decades to come.

We Recommend Continuing to Make Roadways Safe for Children, Pedestrians, and Bicyclists

Greater Ohio strongly believes in the development of a transportation network that promotes the safe movement of people everywhere. One program that is designed to support active transportation is the Safe Routes to Schools Program (SRTS). This program, administered by ODOT with \$5 million in federal funds annually, supports the development of pedestrian infrastructure (sidewalks, bike infrastructure, safety signals, etc.) adjacent to schools. Recent changes at the federal level have expanded the number of schools that are eligible for SRTS grants from K-8 buildings to K-12 facilities.

To support this program and ensure that more communities have the opportunity to access this incredible program that is routinely oversubscribed, we are encouraging the legislature to provide equal state GRF funds matching the federal funds available to the program. By providing \$10 million per year in state and federal grants to support the SRTS program, we can ensure that more students in Ohio have the opportunity to commute to schools in a safe and efficient manner.

Chairman Patton, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts regarding the transportation budget. I appreciate your attention.