

OFFICE OF THE
Washington County Engineer
Roger E. Wright, PE, PS, County Engineer

Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Proponent SJR 4
November 8, 2024

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to present proponent testimony for SJR4 - The Reauthorization of the Ohio Public Works Issue 2 Funding. My name is Roger Wright, P.E., P.S. I am the Washington County Engineer.

I stand before you to express my support for the reauthorization of Issue 2 to fund the Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC). The Ohio Public Works Commission offers grants, loans and loan assistance through several funding programs, primarily the State Capital Improvement Program (SCIP), the Local Transportation Improvement Program (LTIP), the Small Government Program and the Emergency Program.
Paving

Washington County has 341 miles of County Road and 381 bridges. In 2023 all County roads were finally hard surfaced, with no gravel roads remaining. In order for Washington County to be competitive based on the District 18 scoring criteria, a typical application would be around \$1.2 million for asphalt paving. The project would consist of \$400,000 in OPWC grant, \$400,000 in OPWC loan, and \$400-500,000 in local funds. Without the OPWC funds, the County could not maintain the roadways and make improvements.

The yearly grant application cycle and continued ability to obtain grant funds create an opportunity to improve and maintain Washington County roadways. The OPWC Round 39 application consisted of resurfacing County Road 47, 1.72 miles, and County Road 544, 4.97 miles. Cold mix paving was selected due to the lack of road base present, with this type of resurfacing adding to the base structure. With OPWC funding the County paving budget can be expanded, allowing local funds to be leveraged with grant funding, and loan funds at 0% interest create the ability to envision projects that improve Washington County.

Joint Projects Between County & Townships

We performed a joint base stabilization project with three townships in 2017. The project envisioned taking roads within Washington County that were highly travelled township roads that, year after year, required repair to maintain the roadway. Due to the lack of road base the yearly repairs did not fix the underlying problem and resulted in a large percentage of township road budget spent to keep these roads open and passable.

The goal was to permanently stabilize the road base and provide a new wearing surface that, once completed, would not require the township to continually spend money year after year to maintain. This would then allow other roads to then be repaired and improved with the road budget, and the township would have the ability to then improve the entire township road system year after year.

From the OPWC application:

The project would consist of:

- *Base reconstruction for the entire road width and length, specifically pulverizing and shaping the entire road surface,*
- *Performing field testing of the pulverized soils to determine the correct amount of additives to create a uniform, compacted road base,*
- *Applying the additives to the road base, compaction and final shaping of the road.*

COUNTY-806 SPENCE LANE-0.71 MILES, 24 FT WIDTH;

WATERTOWN TOWNSHIP-LANG FARM ROAD-1.02 MILES, 20 FT WIDTH;

DUNHAM TOWNSHIP-CALDER RIDGE RD-1.81 MILES, 22 FT WIDTH AND DUNHAM TOWNSHIP-CONGRESS RD-0.35 MILES, 22 FT WIDTH;

BARLOW TOWNSHIP-SMITH RD-1.21 MILES, 21 FT WIDTH AND BARLOW TOWNSHIP-BELL RD-0.68 MILES, 21 FT WIDTH.

The County acted as the lead applicant and requested almost \$400,000 in OPWC grant and \$141,000 in OPWC loan, with local funds of \$206,000, creating a project estimate of \$746,000. The loan and grant funds were distributed to each entity based on road mileage percentage within the project. The townships were required to provide documentation that funds were available for the local match, and agree to loan repayment.

This project would not have been possible without the OPWC grant award, as it was 54% of the project total, with OPWC loan providing 19%, and local match 27%. Individually the townships could not compete due to the small scale and cost to mobilize equipment for this type of repair, but as a collective the application was competitive in scoring, allowed for economies of scale, and was ultimately successful. The large percentage of grant and 0% loan rate allowed the townships to move forward and made the project financially viable for them.

Finally, Washington County is in the unglaciated Appalachian plateau. As such, during heavy spring rain, landslips are almost a yearly occurrence. Having OPWC emergency funding available allows for repair and restoration of vital infrastructure. OPWC emergency funds are critical not only for Washington County, but for all counties and townships within southeast Ohio.