

Proponent Testimony on HB 54
Before the House Transportation Committee
By Tony Fiore, Executive Director, Ohio Aviation Association
Wednesday, February 12, 2025



Chair Willis, Vice Chair Daniels, Ranking Member Grim, and members of the House Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on **House Bill 54**.

My name is Tony Fiore, and I serve as the Executive Director for the Ohio Aviation Association. OAA advances aviation and airports across Ohio. It represents the 104 public-owned, public-use airports in the State of Ohio and numerous businesses that use and rely on airports.

Airports Economic Impact in Ohio

Ohio's diverse and robust system of airports:

- **Has an economic impact of between \$15-30 billion**
- **Employs more than 119,000 employees**
- **Has a development (construction) estimate of \$1.18 billion (2025-2029)**

It connects citizens, businesses, and communities to destinations around the world while providing significant economic impacts and growth opportunities to the Ohio economy.

Airport Infrastructure Need

Ohio airports need your help to access funding under the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The annual request from general aviation airports is between \$20-\$25 million. The FAA Airport Improvement Program (AIP) provides funding for public-owned, public use airport pavement maintenance, lighting, marking and terminal development. But, depending on the size of the airport, the local match required is 5-25% of the project. Therefore, state funds can enable Ohio's airports to remain competitive in maintaining and enhancing these critical aviation infrastructure assets. As you can see in the chart other states are making significant investments in their airports. We hope the Ohio General Assembly will do the same.

**How Does Ohio Funding Compare to Other
State Budgets Supporting Airports?**

Ohio: \$10 million	104 Public Use Airports
Kentucky: \$23 million	59 Public Use Airports
Florida: \$328 million	125 Public Use Airports
Georgia: \$80 million	105 Public Use Airports
North Carolina: \$232 million	72 Public Use Airports
South Carolina: \$57 million	58 Public Use Airports
Tennessee: \$57.3 million	77 Public Use Airports
Virginia: \$56.9 million	65 Public Use Airports

Existing Funding in Transportation Budget (HB 54) and General Operating Budget (HB 96)

Ohio airports receive funding in both the transportation and general operating budgets. I've summarized the line items below.

- ALI 777471 – Airport Improvements – State – appropriates \$10 million/ fiscal year (no change)
- ALI 777472 – Aviation Improvements – Federal – \$405,000 in each fiscal year (no change)
- ALI 777475 – Aviation Administration – Increase in FY26 to \$6,973,124 and \$7,106,246 in FY27
- ALI 777615 – County Airport Maintenance – \$620,000 in each fiscal year (no change)
- ALI 772456 – Unmanned Aerial Systems Center – appropriates \$500,000 in each fiscal year. This is a 102% increase from FY25.
- ALI 777477 – Aviation Infrastructure Bank – State DOT – appropriates \$2.4 million in each fiscal year (no change)

I'll draw your attention to ALI 777471 which funds Ohio's airport improvement program under the Ohio Department of Transportation – Office of Aviation.

Proposed Amendment – Direct All Aviation Fuel Tax to Fund Airport Improvement Projects

OAA is proposing to keep the appropriations at the levels in the as introduced budget. But there is a way the General Assembly can increase funding to be closer to the levels of other states without additional funds from general revenue. The attached amendment directs all aviation fuel tax revenue collected by the state go toward airport improvement projects as federal law proscribes. Other states have set up similar trust funds and Ohio should do the same. Under this scenario the Ohio Department of Taxation is directed to transfer over to ODOT - Office of Aviation the full amount of aviation fuel tax receipts into the airport improvement program. The existing \$10 million in general revenue funding outlined above can be allocated toward one or all of the other needs outlined below.

- Funds to replace underground fuel storage tanks on airports (proposed \$4 million in Ohio Department of Commerce – Bureau of Underground Storage Tanks)
- Funds for enhancing security, baggage claim and customer experience at commercial service airports (proposed \$10 million in Ohio Department of Commerce)
- Fund building hangers at general aviation airports (proposed \$10 million in Ohio Department of Commerce)

The Ohio Aviation Association urges your support for HB 54 with the amendment requested above.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

In line 2947 insert

“Sec. 4561.021. (A) There is hereby created in the division of multi-modal planning and programs of the department of transportation the office of aviation. The director of transportation shall appoint the administrator of the office of aviation, who shall serve at the pleasure of the director. The administrator of the office of aviation shall be responsible to the director for the organization, direction, and supervision of the work of the office and the exercise of the powers and the performance of the duties assigned to the office. Subject to Chapter 124. of the Revised Code and civil service regulations, the administrator, with the approval of the director, shall select and appoint the necessary employees. The director also may employ experts for assistance in any specific matter at a reasonable rate of compensation.

(B) There is hereby created in the state treasury Ohio airport grant program fund. The fund shall be used by the administrator of the office of aviation to support the Ohio Airport Grant Program, which provides grants for airport pavement rehabilitation and obstruction removal or marking to publicly owned airports in Ohio that do not receive Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Air Carrier Enplanement Funds or FAA Air Cargo Entitlements. Investment earnings of the fund shall be credited to the fund. All moneys credited to the fund shall be used solely for expenses related.”

In line 3851, AA insert

“XXX0 777471 Airport Improvements-State	\$20,000,000	\$20,000,000
Dedicated Purpose Fund Group Total	<u>\$22,830,047</u>	<u>\$22,857,389”</u>

In line 4125 insert

“(H) TRANSFERS TO OHIO AIRPORT GRANT PROGRAM

On July 1 and January 1 of each year in the biennium ending June 30, 2027, or as soon as possible thereafter, respectively, the Director of Taxation shall certify to the Director of Budget and Management the amount of aviation gasoline and aviation fuel as defined in R.C. 5735.01 that is included in motor fuel tax revenues. The Director of Budget and management shall transfer this amount, from the Highway Operating Fund (Fund 7002) to the Ohio Airport Grant Program Fund (Fund XXX0).

The Director of Transportation, with the consent of the Director of Budget and Management, may request the Controlling Board to approve additional transfers of cash and expenditures in excess of the amount appropriated under appropriation item 777471, Airport Improvements-State, if additional amounts are necessary. The amounts approved by the Controlling Board are hereby appropriated.”



2025-2026

Public Policy Priorities



What We Do

The Ohio Aviation Association (OAA) advances aviation and airports across Ohio. As the voice for Ohio airports, the OAA works to develop policies and affect legislation through education and advocacy in the executive and legislative branches on behalf of our members.



What We Practice

OAA helps to position Ohio's 104 public-owned, public use airports for growth opportunities. To do this, we prioritize the following:

Support Infrastructure Investment: Ensure a sustainable funding stream to provide needed infrastructure improvements at Ohio's network of airports.

Protect Aviation Assets: Ensure legislation and policy is in place to protect Ohio's airports and airspace to provide for future needs of Ohioans.

Support Air Service Initiatives: Support state efforts to ensure an attractive level of air service for current and future businesses and universities, as well as residents of Ohio.

Support Workforce Initiatives: Support state + local efforts to increase the workforce pipeline in all sectors of aviation.



Why Ohio Lawmakers Should Prioritize Aviation + Airports

The aviation sector is designated as critical infrastructure. Ohio's diverse and robust system of airports collectively have an economic impact of more than \$15 billion + employs more than 119,000 employees. It connects citizens, businesses, and communities to destinations around the world while providing significant economic impacts and growth opportunities to the Ohio economy.

In addition to the economic impacts, airports further strengthen Ohio through:

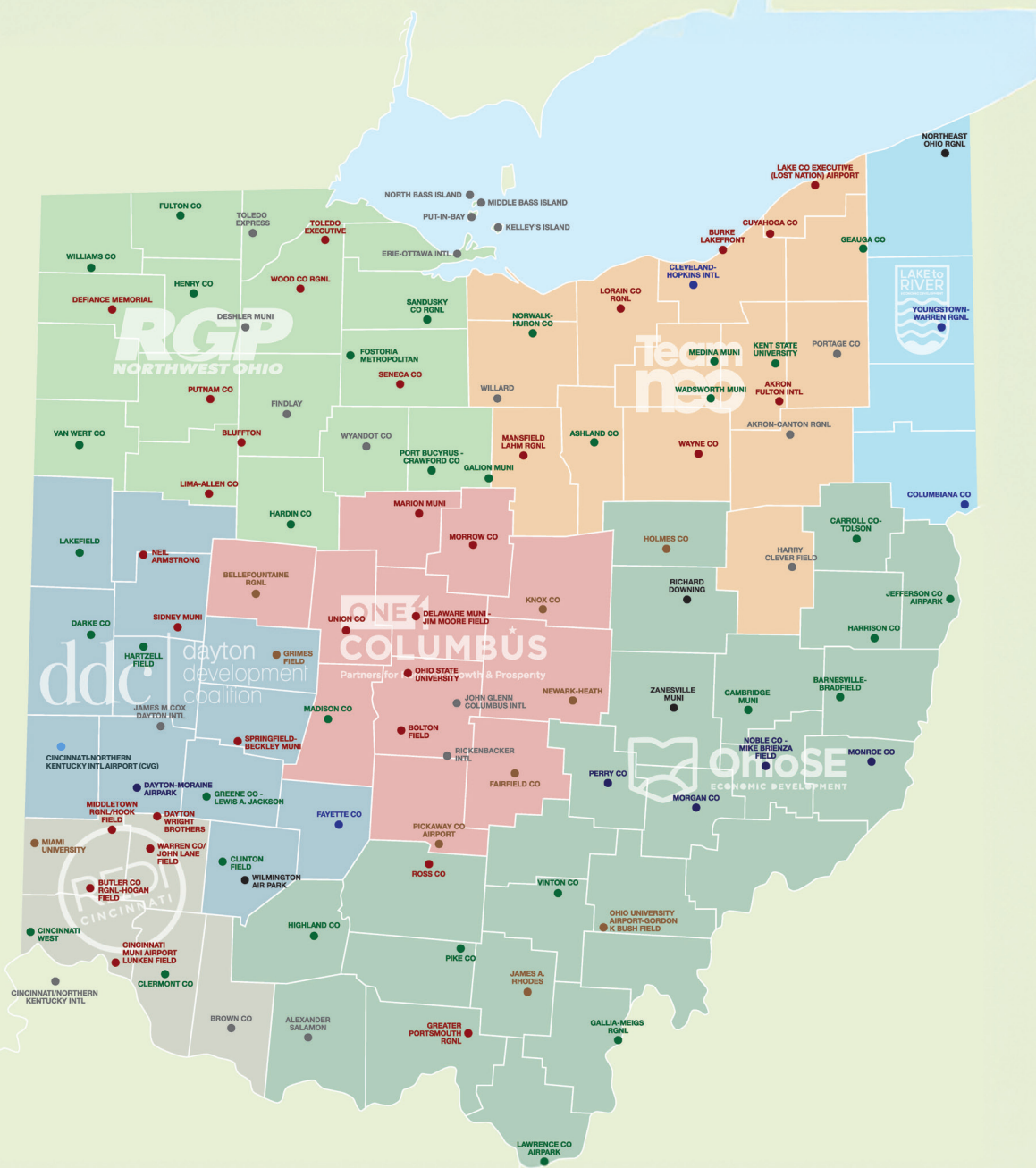


Executive Director + Kegler Brown Attorney



For more information, please contact OAA Executive Director Tony Fiore at tony@ohioaviation.org or 614-462-5428

All General Aviation Airports
Annual Economic Impact: \$1.85-3B
Jobs Created: 17,497



Ohio Department of Development
\$10M Airport Customer Service
Enhancements Fund + \$10M Hangar
Construction Development Fund

The annual requests from general aviation airports is between \$20 and \$25 million. Commercial airports do not have any dedicated state funding. The Federal Aviation Administration Airport Improvement Program provides grants to public-owned, public use airports. But, depending on the size of the airport, the local match required is 5-25% of the project. Therefore, state funds can enable Ohio's airports to remain competitive in maintaining and enhancing these critical aviation infrastructure assets.

Ohio: \$10 million
Kentucky: \$23 million
Florida: \$328 million
Georgia: \$80 million
North Carolina: \$232 million
South Carolina: \$57 million
Tennessee: \$57.3 million
Virginia: \$56.9 million

104 Public Use Airports
59 Public Use Airports
125 Public Use Airports
105 Public Use Airports
72 Public Use Airports
58 Public Use Airports
77 Public Use Airports
65 Public Use Airports