



City of Dublin
Mayor Chris Amorose Groomes and Megan O’Callaghan, City Manager
House Bill 96 | May 07, 2025

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide interested party testimony today on House Bill 96, the state operating budget. My name is Megan O’Callaghan, and I serve as the City Manager for the City of Dublin. Dublin is proudly home to approximately 50,000 residents and spans parts of Franklin, Delaware, and Union Counties.

We are grateful for the leadership of Governor DeWine and the Ohio House for their continuation of support for our state’s Local Government Fund and we encourage members of the Ohio Senate to prioritize continued collaboration so that our state local entities have the resources needed to effectively serve their citizens. While we do appreciate this support, there were provisions added during the House deliberations that we are asking the Senate to remove during your deliberations.

Remove Eminent Domain/Recreational Trail Provision

We respectfully urge members of the Senate to remove the provision that would severely restrict our ability to plan for and implement trail infrastructure that is critical to the economic, environmental, and community well-being of Central Ohio.

Similar language was reflected in the last General Assembly through House Bill 64 of the 135th General Assembly and it removes recreational trails from the definition of “public use” in Ohio’s eminent domain law. The City of Dublin uses eminent domain sparingly and judiciously as a last resort only after extensive negotiations and when it is the only remaining path to ensure connectivity, safety, and accessibility in our public infrastructure network.

Recreational trails are the foundational component of Dublin’s pedestrian and bicycle network. With Dublin’s more than 154+ mile shared-use path network, the majority of residents and visitors prefer to traverse our city via our extensive network of recreational trails. We’re proud to have earned silver level Bicycle Friendly Community recognition from the League of American Bicyclists and Runner Friendly Community honors from the Road Runners Club of America. Our infrastructure supports not only recreation but also daily commuting, alternative

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transportation, and connections between residential neighborhoods, employment centers, schools, and healthcare facilities.

- According to a statewide survey conducted by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, over 82% of Ohioans indicated that trails are either “extremely important” or “very important” to their daily lives.
- That same survey revealed that 42% of respondents cited a lack of trails as a barrier to use, and 35% said the nearest trails were too far away.
- These findings mirror what we consistently hear from our residents: trails and greenways are a vital resource, and the demand for them is growing.

Removing trails from the definition of “public use” would:

- Eliminate our ability to close critical trail gaps that connect neighborhoods and regional systems.
- Delay or derail ongoing and future investments in multimodal infrastructure.
- Undermine the autonomy of municipalities to respond to the evolving transportation needs associated with economic development, job creation, and housing growth across the state.

This provision also raises concerns about overreach into local authority. Eminent domain law already includes protections to ensure landowners receive just compensation. Decisions about how and when to use this power are best left to local elected leaders who are accountable to their constituents and best understand the infrastructure needs on the ground.

Remove Broadband Internet Access Service Provision

Our final request is to urge members of the Senate to remove the provision related to broadband internet access service. The language appears to exempt broadband providers from local and state right-of-way access regulation and fees. Local regulation of the use of public rights-of-way through permits and fees is essential for maintaining public safety, protecting infrastructure, and ensuring orderly development. Cities are responsible for managing streets, sidewalks, and utilities that serve as critical public assets and must balance access for utilities, telecommunications providers, and construction projects with the needs of residents, pedestrians, and local businesses. Permit and fee structures provide a transparent, accountable process to coordinate work, minimize disruptions, and recover costs associated with inspections, maintenance, and administrative oversight. Without local authority, cities would lack the tools to effectively manage competing uses and preserve the long-term integrity of the public space. Additionally, Dublin’s City-owned infrastructure has enabled partnerships with companies as a hub for technological innovation and have delivered tangible economic benefits, including significant cost savings for local enterprises. The lack of clarity related to the use of the word “entry” can be associated with multiple interpretations that could impair Dublin’s use and management of public rights-of-way.

On behalf of the City of Dublin, thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.