

**Proponent Testimony on HB 54**  
**Before the Senate Transportation Committee**  
**By Tony Fiore, Executive Director, Ohio Aviation Association**  
**Tuesday, March 4, 2025**



Chair Patton, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate 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?**

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

### **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)

Under federal law, state or local taxes on aviation fuel (except taxes in effect on December 30, 1987) are considered to be airport revenue and subject to the revenue-use requirement. Airport revenues can only be expended for the capital or operating costs of the airport; the local airport system; or other local facilities owned or operated by the airport owner or operator and directly and substantially related to the air transportation of passengers or property. State taxes on aviation fuel can also be used to support state aviation programs.

OAA is proposing to keep the general revenue 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 simply using the aviation fuel tax revenue from the users of airports. The amendment adopted by the House in Sections 4519.401, 4955.50 and 5736.02 and 5736.13, directs all aviation fuel tax revenue collected by the locals and 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 in the operating budget can also 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. If Ohio does not provide additional funds for Ohio's 104 public-owned, public use airports to access up to 95% of federal funds for infrastructure projects those funds will go to airports in other states.

I would be happy to answer any questions.