



Ohio Senate Transportation Committee

County Engineers Association of Ohio

Written Proponent Testimony

March 5, 2025

RE: Ohio's Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs)

Chair Patton, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Ohio Senate Transportation thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of reinstating the line item for Ohio's Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) in the State Transportation Budget, HB 54. This critical funding ensures that Ohio's rural communities have the resources necessary to address transportation infrastructure needs, promote economic development, and improve quality of life for residents.

The Role of RTPOs in Transportation Planning and Development

RTPOs serve as a crucial voice for Ohio's rural communities, working in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and local stakeholders to identify and prioritize transportation projects that align with regional and statewide needs. These organizations ensure that rural and non-metropolitan areas receive equitable consideration in transportation planning and project implementation. However, while ODOT provides funding for transportation planning, RTPOs rely on the state budget for capital project funding, which is now at risk of being eliminated in HB 54.

The Impact of Past RTPO Capital Project Funding

Since the State first awarded capital project funding to RTPOs in 2020, these funds have been instrumental in completing essential infrastructure projects that directly benefit local communities. The importance of this funding is evident in the successful completion of projects such as:

1. CR 18 Profile Improvements (Logan County)

- Total Project Cost: \$178,934
- RTPO Funds: \$157,642
- This project improved roadway safety by enhancing sightlines for vehicles on CR 18, reducing accident risks, and facilitating smoother transportation flow.

2. State Route 13 Relocation (Knox County)

- Total Project Cost: \$15,055,027
- RTPO Funds: \$261,316
- This project improved travel time for trucks, enhanced connectivity between rural and urban areas, and supported economic development efforts in the region.

3. Coles Boulevard Safety Improvement Project (Scioto County)

- Total Project Cost: \$4,985,950
- RTPO Funds: \$500,000

- This project addressed roadway geometrics, enhanced safety for motorists, and improved non-motorized facilities in a key transportation corridor.

The Need for Continued RTPO Capital Project Funding

The elimination of this funding in HB 54 threatens the ability of RTPOs to execute infrastructure improvements that rural communities desperately need. The demand for RTPO capital funding far exceeds current allocations, with over **181 identified but unfunded projects totaling \$112.54 million** statewide. Without continued funding, these essential projects will remain stalled, leaving communities without necessary infrastructure improvements.

Moreover, RTPOs operate with a unique challenge compared to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). While MPOs benefit from a four-year funding timeline, RTPOs must complete projects within the two-year state budget cycle. This constraint requires flexibility and sustained funding to ensure the successful implementation of projects without unnecessary delays.

Request for Action

We urge this Committee to reinstate the RTPO line item in HB 54. This funding is not merely an expenditure but an investment in Ohio's rural communities, ensuring that local transportation needs are met and that economic opportunities continue to grow outside of metropolitan areas.

The success of Ohio's transportation infrastructure depends on a balanced approach that considers both urban and rural needs. By reinstating RTPO capital funding, the legislature affirms its commitment to equitable transportation development across the entire state.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We respectfully ask for your support in restoring this crucial funding.