



Senate Transportation Committee
House Bill 54
Interested Party Testimony
March 5, 2025

Chair Patton, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written interested party testimony regarding House Bill 54 (H.B. 54), the state transportation budget.

Ohio Rural Development Alliance (ORDA) supports the rural transportation planning grant program for regional transportation planning organization (RTPOs) and believes the earmark of \$5.2 million per fiscal year over the biennium should be reinstated in H.B. 54 (DOTCD5: Section 203.45).

By way of background, the Ohio Rural Development Alliance (ORDA) is an organization of regional transportation planning organizations (“RTPOs”) and other entities dedicated to economic parity for Ohio’s rural communities. ORDA’s members advocate for policies that create sustainable and diverse economic growth and prosperity in their communities. ORDA believes the RTPOs provide unique solutions and perspectives on regional transportation issues and give great insight to the Ohio Department of Transportation when implementing statewide planning activities. Ohio’s RTPOs provide transportation planning products and services to the non-metropolitan regions of Ohio, and work with both ODOT and local stakeholders to facilitate an integrated approach and support better informed transportation decision making in Ohio. RTPOs have established many successes within the current operational framework. Seven years into the program, RTPOs are trusted local partners and facilitators.

Ohio’s six RTPOs serve their local communities by providing critical transportation planning. The six RTPOs are listed below.

- Buckeye Hills Regional Council (Athens, Hocking, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Perry, and Washington Counties)
- Central Ohio Rural Planning Organization (Fairfield, Knox, Madison, Marion, Morrow, Pickaway and Union Counties)
- Logan-Union-Champaign Regional Planning Commission (Logan and Champaign Counties)



- Maumee Valley Planning Organization (Defiance, Fulton, Henry, Paulding, and Williams Counties)
- Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes, Muskingum, and Tuscarawas Counties)
- Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission (Adams, Brown, Fayette, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, part of Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto, and Vinton Counties)

To better meet the needs of the rural regions of Ohio, the RTPOs received additional planning dollars in a new grant program, the rural transportation planning grant program, in the 134th General Assembly's transportation budget, House Bill 74. The grant program required each RTPO to develop a process for receiving and reviewing project applications. In H.B. 23 of the 135th General Assembly, the planning grant program received \$5.2 million per fiscal year. Thus far, around \$9.3 million of those funds have been allocated to projects already for FY 2024-2025. For additional information on the type of projects funded through the grant program, please find attached the RTPOs Planning for Program- Impact Report 2024.

ORDA supports the planning grant program, and it should be reinstated in H.B. 54. To continue the success and build on the momentum of the previous rural transportation planning grant program, ORDA believes the program should continue.

We encourage this committee to support the rural transportation planning grant program and reinstate the funding for the program. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written interested party testimony on House Bill 54. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to us via phone or e-mail.