



Ohio Contractors Association

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Ohio Senate Transportation Committee
House Bill 54 Testimony – Written Only
Chris Runyan, OCA President
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Chair Patton, Vice-Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 54, the transportation budget bill. For those unfamiliar with the Ohio Contractors Association (OCA), it is the trade association for Ohio's heavy/highway construction sector. Our members perform the majority of Ohio's public sector infrastructure improvement work including building Ohio's vast highway and bridge network.

OCA and its members keep a close eye on the amount of funding that fuels the construction and maintenance of Ohio roadways. We worked collaboratively with the DeWine Administration in 2019 to increase the motor fuel user tax. We are now six years down the road. As Director Boratyn stated in her testimony, the unwelcome high rate of inflation has diminished the purchasing power of the motor fuel tax to a level that is effectively at its pre-2019 levels. The ability of ODOT to maintain core operations to sustain quality conditions, desirable corridor improvements, and support of dynamic economic development is now coming into question. I wish I could say I was surprised to be here talking about uncertainty with transportation funding, but I am not. The increases approved in 2019 were "short term" and that term is rapidly closing.

The funding provided in this bill pays for the projects our members build. Without these funds there would be no work for our members to perform and the jobs those projects create would be lost. Some legislators have described the transportation budget bill as a jobs bill, our members can attest to that fact. We appreciate the DeWine Administration sounding the alarm bells on impending shortfalls in transportation revenue and look forward to continuing that discussion in future budgets.

Regarding the policy components in the proposed budget, we are supportive of ODOT expanding the use of indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity contract authority. ODOT becomes more efficient and effective with authority to bid "task order" contracts as needed for maintenance work such as guardrail, lighting, and traffic signal repair. We support giving ODOT permanent law authority for this innovative project delivery option.

Language aimed at addressing utility delays is also appreciated by the construction community. I know I could call any of our members and they could share a story about utility-related project delays. All too often, utility relocations are not made in a timely manner, or unknown abandoned lines are discovered after construction commences.

These changes in conditions cause our members to deviate from the planned construction sequence which increases costs and project delivery timelines. We appreciate this issue being considered and welcome opportunities to share our perspective.

I would be remiss if I did not touch on work zone safety. We support the Road Safety Pilot Project included by the House. It gives the ODOT Director authority to conduct a pilot program using automated speed monitoring devices. Speed is a critical component of work zone crashes, and we welcome exploring technologies that can contribute to keeping workers safe.

Finally, the perennial issue of asphalt versus concrete is again being debated. It's like déjà vu all over again. We historically stay out of this issue as we have members that perform both types of paving. We do, however, have concerns with the proposed requirement that ODOT make any changes recommended in the study, especially if those recommendations include market share suggestions or goals. OCA cannot support market share mandates for any product.

This is a good budget that reflects the financial realities of today along with several operational adjustments needed for ODOT and the contracting community. Without question, hard revenue decisions are in our future. But return on transportation investment is one of the best paths towards future prosperity and growth for the citizens of Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 54.