

Testimony on House Bill 74, Ohio State Transportation Budget

Senate Transportation Committee

March 9, 2021

Submitted on behalf of Christine Hughes and Bob O'Neil, Village Bakery & Café

Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Transportation Committee. As owners of the Village Bakery & Café in Athens, we are submitting testimony today in support of reducing electric vehicle (EV) and hybrid registration fees in the state transportation budget.

The Village Bakery & Café opened in 2002 with a mission to support farms in the foothills of Appalachian Ohio. We buy from dozens of local producers, with minimal packaging, which lowers our dependence on oil. Five years ago, we embarked on a path to switch our energy system to renewable sources, and we've made great strides with efficient appliances, eliminating gas, and switching to a geothermal heating and cooling system. We are using 50% less fossil fuel than 5 years ago, while growing the business, and we will stay on track until we get to zero.

Across Ohio, businesses of all scopes and sizes are making the choice to embrace innovative approaches to sustainability in both their daily operations and their plans for future growth. Clean transportation options are a big part of these efforts.

Currently, there are more than 108,000 Ohioans employed in our state's automotive sector and that number could climb if Ohio embraces the growth of EV manufacturing. As EV ownership increases and related supply chain jobs grow, this could be important for those of us in Athens County.

According to census estimates for 2018, based on a five-year survey, the overall poverty rate for Athens County is 30.6 percent, the worst in Ohio. For those 17 and under growing up in the area, child poverty rates hit 31.5 percent in the same survey. This is almost twice the national average. We simply cannot afford to be closing our region to potential growth of the EV market.

However, Ohio's current up-front and annual registration fee structure seems to be doing just that. The \$200 annual registration fee for EVs and \$100 fee for hybrids in Ohio are the highest in the nation. Electric vehicle owners are prepared to pay their fair share for road maintenance and repair, but the long-term disproportionate fees for electric and hybrid vehicles send a clear message to automotive manufacturers that Ohio is not interested in growing the advanced transportation market.

We urge the Ohio General Assembly to reduce these fees to a national average rate of \$100 for EVs and \$50 for plug-in hybrids. We have made the long-term commitment to sustainability in our business practices and our daily lives. It is good for those we serve, and it has been good for our bottom line. We ask you to know do what's good for Ohio and reduce the registration fees for electric vehicles and hybrids in the state transportation budget.