



March 18, 2021

**Ohio Senate
134th General Assembly
Transportation Committee**

RE: Sub. H. B. No. 74, FY 2022-2023 Transportation Budget

Chair Kunze and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee,

Good morning, and thank you for this opportunity to deliver testimony regarding Sub. H. B. No. 74, the proposed FY 2022-2023 Transportation Budget. My name is Tom Collins, and I am Chair of the Ohio Sierra Club's statewide Transportation Committee. The Ohio Sierra Club was established more than 50 years ago, and today, I am writing on behalf of our tens of thousands of active members.

Our members are particularly interested in the three "Es" of transportation: protecting the environment, growing a sustainable economy, and promoting equity for all people regardless of demographics, age, ability or modality. We are focused today on four components of the Transportation Budget bill.

First, we join the MOVE Ohio coalition in asking you to allocate no less than \$150 million annually in both state and federal funds to public transit and active transportation. Second, we support proposed amendments to Section 4511.46 that will help to improve and enhance pedestrian safety. Third, we are asking you to eliminate or reduce the annual fees on electric and hybrid vehicles that were imposed in the last Transportation Budget, FY 2020-2021. Finally, we are asking you NOT to put any money toward the study or construction of new highways in our state. This Budget will be borne on the backs of all taxpayers, and statewide expenditures should benefit all people and all modalities, not just motorists and land speculators.

In 2015, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) released a Transit Needs Study that illustrates our transportation spending problem. Nearly a third of Ohio's counties have no transit services, nearly a tenth of our residents don't have access to a car, and the transportation sector spews out approximately one quarter of our State's air pollution. We sit near the bottom of a list of states ranked by transit expenditures. There is a growing demand statewide for transit and other transportation alternatives, and we need to address that demand in this Budget.

Separately, we should be studying ways to replace Ohio's gas tax, at least in the long-term. We are not far from the day when combustion engines join the dinosaurs that power them. The Sierra Club is willing to be part of that conversation, but in the meantime, we should not be penalizing owners of hybrids and electric vehicles. The additional motor vehicle registration fees that were adopted in 2019 for plug-in electric motor vehicles and hybrid vehicles were pegged at \$200 and \$100, respectively.

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These "user fees" were intended to match what the average internal combustion engine vehicle owner would pay in gasoline taxes each year. Upon review, it is clear that the established fee amounts are disproportionate and punitive to EV owners.

We have noted previously that the numbers do not line up, and an article in the February 2020 edition of *Consumer Reports* projected that EV owners in Ohio would end up paying 36 percent more in fees than their ICE-driving counterparts would pay in gasoline taxes. See <https://www.consumerreports.org/hybrids-evs/which-states-have-the-highest-fees-for-electric-vehicles/>.

Ohio should be promoting the use, ownership and manufacturing of next generation vehicles, rather than setting up artificial and inequitable roadblocks to their widespread adoption. These low and zero-emission vehicles will not only provide environmental and public health benefits to all Ohioans, when they replace dirtier ICE vehicles, but they will also be engines of economic development in areas like Lordstown and elsewhere.

Please do all that you can in this Budget cycle to fund clean, multi-modal transportation alternatives, and invest in our existing transportation infrastructure. Protect the environment, improve the economy and increase accessibility for *all* Ohioans.

Thank you again for your time today.

Tom Collins, Chair
Ohio Sierra Club Transportation Committee