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Tiffin, OH 44883

Ed Huff Jr., 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
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Scott Fabian, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
126 Montgomery Lane  
Mingo Junction, OH 43938

Ron Miller, Secretary-Treasurer  
1371 Lemert Road  
Bucyrus, OH 44820

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Board of Directors

Dale Dietrich  
38415 Rock Camp Road  
New Matamoras, OH 45767

Bob Entenmann  
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Mansfield, OH 44903

Daniel Frederick  
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# OHIO TOWNSHIP ASSOCIATION

HEIDI M. FOUGHT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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March 9, 2021

The Honorable Stephanie Kunze, Chair  
Transportation Committee  
Ohio Senate  
1 Capitol Square, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: HB 74 Transportation Budget

Dear Chair Kunze:

On behalf of the Ohio Township Association (OTA) and as a member of the Fix Our Roads Ohio (FOR Ohio) coalition, I am writing to express our interest in House Bill 74, the Transportation Budget, particularly the distracted driving provisions.

A strong transportation system includes well-funded and safe roads, a responsibility shared by state and local officials. In fact, townships maintain 34 percent of the roads in Ohio – more than any other jurisdiction. Township officials take responsibility for their share of the roads seriously, and the OTA has been a consistent advocate for increased support in these duties, including additional funding through the recent motor fuel tax increase.

While adequate funding is essential to improving road conditions, it is only one piece of the puzzle. Distracted driving is a problem causing additional safety concerns. In 2017, Ohio recorded approximately 14,000 distracted driving crashes, and the problem is only increasing with the proliferation of smart phones in society. Notwithstanding the human impact, crashes also financially impact townships through increased safety service costs and needed repairs to guardrails, signage, etc. that has been damaged in an accident.

In an effort to make all roads safer, the OTA supports efforts to curb distracted driving, including the Governor's proposal in House Bill 74, by reducing the use of handheld devices while traveling. Changing unsafe driver behavior is an important part of building an effective transportation system in Ohio. The OTA encourages the Senate to reinsert this language in HB 74 to foster safe driving on our roads.

Additionally, the OTA would like to make note of the provisions in the bill related to trailer registrations. As proposed by the House, HB 74 reduces the annual local \$25 registration fee for permanent commercial trailers to a one-time \$50 fee for first-time registration in Ohio. We understand that this provision is meant to serve as pilot program to encourage trailer registration in Ohio. While it does not impact current funding levels, the OTA is concerned for future impacts to these fees and requests that the General Assembly be mindful of any additional changes in this area.

Finally, the OTA would like to note items in our legislative priorities related to transportation and urge this body's consideration of these issues, specifically increasing force account limits and allowing townships to receive a sixteen and a half-cent refund on fuel purchases.

The limits on force account work were last increased in 2003, while fuel and supply costs have continued to rise. The OTA requests that the General Assembly consider increasing the force

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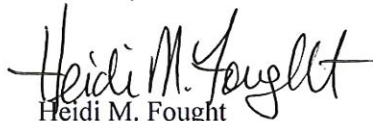
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account limits to reflect the cost of doing business today. Additionally, the OTA recommends that force account thresholds be tied to the construction price index so that the force account limits keep pace with inflation.

As it relates to fuel, townships receive revenue from the motor fuel tax, but also pay the tax themselves. Certain jurisdictions receive a partial refund from the state on the costs of their fuel, including schools, educational service centers, and county boards of developmental disabilities – recently increased to sixteen and a half cents per gallon. The OTA requests that townships be permitted to apply for the same refund as these entities.

Thank you for the opportunity to outline our interests in House Bill 74. The OTA would welcome a discuss on the additions outlined above – both funding-related changes would allow townships to stretch scarce dollars further. The OTA appreciates the General Assembly's consideration of these issues. If you have any questions or concerns about our position, please do not hesitate to contact me or OTA Director of Governmental Affairs Marisa Myers at 614-863-0045.

Sincerely,

  
Heidi M. Fought  
Executive Director