

*Office of the Lucas County Engineer*

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March 22, 2021

Senator Stephanie Kunze, Chair  
Senator Bill Reineke, Vice Chair  
Senator Nickie Antonio, Ranking Member  
Ohio Senate Transportation Committee

RE: **Testimony of Lucas County Engineer Mike Pniewski P.E., P.S.**  
**Sub H.B. 74 – Transportation Budget for FY 2022-2023**

Dear Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio and the Members of the Senate Transportation Committee,

I am writing to you today to express my support for Sub. House Bill 74, the Transportation Budget for 2021-2023. In particular, I want to bring your attention to the following provisions in the Budget.

- 1) Language in the Transportation Budget proposed by the Senate included an increase in the force account limits. I want to bring your attention to the fact that the last time the force account limits were raised was in 2003, at the same time as an increase in the gas user fee.

In the last transportation budget, the gas user fee was raised based on the realization that the purchasing power of the funds raised by the fee have been eaten away by significant increases in the price of construction. The force account amounts are no different. We are at a point in time where many of the small scale projects we perform by force account are running into the existing limit. Many of these projects are such that it is more efficient in terms of time to perform the work with our own forces and are generally not the type of work where it is more efficient to perform the work through competitive bidding.

Most of our projects are large in scale and we anticipate that over 98% of our work will be performed by trades workers and

contractors through competitive bidding. In many cases, we have increased the amount of work we placed into competitive bidding over the last five years as we recognize that for most projects, contractors are the more efficient method for performing significant portions of work. But we recognize that there are many types of projects where the most efficient choice is to perform the construction by our own forces with equipment that we already own and utilize every day for our maintenance activities.

- 2) Sub. HB 74 as passed by the Senate included language that would allow for majority consent of the Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority (TARTA) member jurisdictions to allow Lucas County to joint the system. The language is narrowly tailored to TARTA and represents a local solution to a local problem.

The method of funding proposed if Lucas County is permitted to join the system will allow for TARTA to obtain the funds for its operating budget through the sales tax. Currently, TARTA is the only urban transit system that obtains its funding through property taxes.

As a result, TARTA's service area does not include some of the region's most heavily visited destinations. Near our office, I see workers walking the last 2 to 3 miles to their jobs because TARTA does not service the community. Transportation does not stop and start at jurisdiction lines, and the needs of our community requires a comprehensive transit system. Allowing Lucas County to joint TARTA will allow our region to support the employers who drive our economy.

Thank you for your consideration today, and I look forward to your questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mike Pniewski, P.E., P.S.  
Lucas County Engineer