



Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Transportation

House Bill 33

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Ohio Department of Transportation

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Chairman Patton, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Transportation:

I am Dr. Jack Marchbanks, Director of the Ohio Department of Transportation. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today, and to provide you with some information about transportation provisions in House Bill 33.

ODOT's mission to provide for the safe and easy movement of people and goods from place to place is critical to the welfare and prosperity of our state and our citizens. Since taking office the top transportation priorities for the DeWine-Husted administration have been safety and improving Ohioans quality of life. During our time together today, I will explain how Governor DeWine's transportation priorities support these objectives.

The bulk of the Department's funding is being negotiated in House Bill 23: the Transportation Budget. Thanks to constitutional and federal restrictions limiting the expenditure of motor fuel tax dollars to the maintenance of the state highway system, there are several transportation programs that cannot be funded in the transportation budget because they do not have a direct link to roads and bridges. These items are funded in the operating budget via state general revenue.

Transformational Investments

The Brent Spence project is not the only transformational component of the DeWine-Husted budget proposal. As the Governor said in his State of the State address: this is a fiscally sound budget that uses one-time money for one-time expenditures.

In-line with the Governor's commitment to safety, this budget creates a Railroad Crossing Safety Grant program. With a one-time infusion of \$125 million in state general revenue Ohio can leverage newly available federal infrastructure dollars to make improvements at rail crossings, such as overpasses or underpasses at existing at-grade crossings throughout the state. Many of you have stories about the danger and frustration of blocked railroad crossings. These funds will be used by the state and local communities to meet the matching dollars needed to leverage \$500 million per year in federal dollars over the next five years. Also, by increasing the Ohio Rail Development Commission appropriation from

\$2 million to \$10 million it puts Ohio on par with its peer states for assistance to shortline railroads and companies in Ohio that need access to the rail network for their raw materials and products.

Funding in this budget will also create a two-year grant program to help our county airports catch up on some much-needed improvements to their facilities and infrastructure. ODOT currently provides about \$7 million annually for county airport maintenance. Every year, applications for funding far exceed the available funds. This one-time infusion of \$25 million in general revenue will help these local airport operators catch up on critical maintenance that has been deferred due to lack of funding. These airports contribute more than \$13 billion to the state's economy.

We are also requesting your consideration of \$2 million for our DriveOhio team to partner with the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation in the deployment of workforce training and credentialing programs related to the emerging field of electric vehicle charging. As part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Ohio will receive over \$100 million in federal funding over the next five years to install, operate, and maintain electric vehicle charging stations. Investing in electric vehicle workforce development will ensure Ohio is well-positioned to perform necessary installation and maintenance of charging facilities and capitalize on the opportunities that come from this transition.

The \$2 million appropriation for Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Workforce Training is crucial to supporting Ohio's forthcoming Electric Vehicle (EV) workforce strategy, which is being led by the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation. The purpose of this line item is to provide funding for the workforce development required to support Ohio's EV charging infrastructure and ensure Ohio's plan is in line with the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure formula program.

The funding will be used to invest in EV charging infrastructure training and credentialing programs, providing opportunities for workers to gain the skills and credentials necessary to participate in this growing industry. By investing in workforce training and development, Ohio will attract more investment in EV charging infrastructure, build a strong and competent workforce, and position itself as a leader in the EV industry. This will result in increased job opportunities and economic benefits for Ohioans.

DriveOhio also oversees our efforts to build our next generation of transportation infrastructure, including technologies being deployed by the Ohio Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) Center that support advanced aircraft travel within low altitude airspace.

Uncrewed aircraft, (also known as drones) are being developed at a blinding speed to transport sensitive items like life-saving organs and medication as well as other goods and supplies to urban and rural Ohio businesses and citizens. Additionally, innovators believe the horizon for crewed drones is fast approaching. This budget proposal includes \$11 million in general revenue to allow our UAS team to begin deploying the low-altitude aircraft radar system we've developed with our partners from the Department of Defense and NASA to ensure these aircraft can operate safely while securing Ohio's place as a hub for innovation in this growing field.

Conclusion

Governor DeWine and Lieutenant Governor Husted are proposing transformational investments to keep people and freight flowing safely and easily through Ohio and beyond.

I sincerely appreciate all your efforts to work with your many constituencies by responding to and answering their many questions about Ohio's transportation system. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and respectfully ask for your approval of this important budget.