



# OHIO TOWNSHIP ASSOCIATION

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*2022 - 2023*

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The Honorable Stephanie Kunze  
Chair, Ohio Senate Transportation Committee  
One Capitol Square, Room 129  
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Sub. HB 23 Transportation Budget

Dear Chairwoman Kunze,

On behalf of the Ohio Township Association (OTA), I am writing to express our position and on Sub. HB 23, the Transportation Budget, as it is pending in the House Finance Committee.

First, I would like to express our support for following items included in Sub. HB 23. We appreciate the allocation of \$1 billion to the Rural Highway Fund of which 20% is to matching local projects. This appropriation helps to close the funding gap that local communities feel is disproportionately awarded to the metropolitan areas. Second, the OTA supports the \$4.5 million per fiscal year for Transportation Improvement Districts. The ability to partner with other government agencies to purchase, fund, and finance projects will further assist transportation projects in townships.

In the HB 23 substitute bill there are items that the OTA opposes, including changes to township zoning regarding aggregate mining operations. The bill before you forces townships to accept mining operations without recourse. This blanket rule change does not allow a township to make decisions based on their individual situation and what might be in the best interest of their residents. We respectfully request this language to be struck from the bill as the OTA believes it should be considered in stand-alone legislation as it has been envisioned in past sessions. The other matter to which we are opposed to is the removal of a township's ability to utilize traffic law photo monitoring devices. Numerous townships across the state rely on these devices to help keep the roads safe because of limited staff and funding in their respective police departments.

The OTA would also like to explicitly express the support of an amendment that at this point is not a part of the bill, but for which a number of House members put forward an amendment. This amendment would raise force account limit thresholds for townships.

As you know, the term "force account" refers to the situation in which a public official is statutorily authorized to act as a contractor on a project and the public body does the work itself, employing its own labor and purchasing its own materials. The limits on force account work (R.C. §5575.01) were last increased in 2003. The current township thresholds are \$45,000 per project for maintenance and repair and \$15,000 per mile for road construction and reconstruction. These limits do not reflect the cost of doing business in today's economy.

The responsibility of road maintenance is mandated for townships which includes 41,000 miles of road, or over 80,000 lane miles. That makes townships responsible for the largest number of miles in the state, and yet they receive the least amount of funding when compared to ODOT, counties, and municipalities to complete these infrastructure projects. The cost of materials, labor, fuel, and equipment continues to rise, straining already tight township road budgets. In the last four years alone, ODOT Chained-Fisher Construction Cost index shows an increase of 29% for asphalt, and 46%

in pavement repair. ODOT also forecasts construction cost inflation to be 5% in calendar year 2023 and 5.4% in 2024.

**The OTA supports raising the force account threshold to \$115,000 for maintenance and repair and \$45,000 per mile.** The OTA also supports indexing the thresholds to account for inflation annually. Local governments are known for their ability to make smart, cost-effective decisions. By updating the force account limits, the legislature can empower local governments to take on projects in-house and save taxpayers money.

While there is an expectation that the Transportation budget will continue to change prior to a full Ohio House vote, the OTA may return at a later date to provide updated testimony on further changes. If you have any questions or concerns about our positions, please do not hesitate to contact me or the OTA's Director of Governmental Affairs Kyle Brooks at 614-863-0045.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heidi M. Fought". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'H' and 'F'.

Executive Director