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**OHIO SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**PROPONENT TESTIMONY – HB 23: TRANSPORTATION BUDGET (WRITTEN ONLY)**

March 15, 2023

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Good morning, Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of CCAO on the proposed Transportation Budget. First, we would like to thank the DeWine-Husted Administration for continuing its strong support for transportation infrastructure. Counties receive distributions from the state motor fuel tax. The proposed budget will provide revenue from these sources to Ohio's 88 counties to be used for road and bridge design, repair, and construction. We are also pleased to see that there is a one-time infusion of \$25 million in general revenue to help county airports catch up on critical maintenance that has been deferred due to lack of funding, and increased allocation of federal funds for public transportation. We are also pleased to see the additional \$1 billion of support for highway construction in rural counties, and an additional investment in public transit through the Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership Program.

CCAO members believe that the quality of our infrastructure has a tremendous impact on the economic development potential of our state. Our constituents expect us to be good stewards of their tax dollars and to use public resources in the most efficient manner possible. Ohio counties are responsible for more than 29,000 miles of roads and 26,000 bridges. Unfortunately, the current market environment has driven up the costs of material inputs and labor tremendously for construction projects. ODOT estimates that overall construction inflation has been 20% over last four years alone. The result is that projects are more expensive than ever, and we sometimes have trouble finding bidders at an acceptable price.

For many years, state law has recognized that certain smaller projects can be done more efficiently and effectively by allowing the county engineer to do the work with county employees and equipment. State law establishes a cost estimate to define these smaller jobs. For counties, these thresholds, or "force account limits," are \$30,000 per mile for road work and \$100,000 for bridges (R.C. 5543.19). Unfortunately, these limits were established in 2003 and only received a slight inflation adjustment of 1.7% as a result of the previous transportation budget. We recommend that these thresholds be tripled, at least, given the lack of any significant increase since 2003.



We also recommend that the Senate remove the provision added by the House regarding local zoning approval for the expansion of aggregate mining operations. CCAO is opposed to this provision because it appears to override local zoning laws, even in residential areas. This is an issue that deserves further scrutiny and should be considered in a separate bill.

Thank you for your consideration of CCAO's testimony. We look forward to further discussion of these issues.