



OHIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

March 15, 2023

OHIO SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE INTERESTED PARTY TESTIMONY – Sub. HB 23: TRANSPORTATION BUDGET (WRITTEN ONLY)

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Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reinke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Ohio Economic Development Association on Substitute HB 23 (Sub. HB 23), the state’s transportation budget.

OEDA is proud to represent its more than 600 members who are working within the state’s economic development ecosystem. OEDA’s members are leaders in advancing Ohio’s economy, creating jobs, supporting businesses, and building communities. Our members are on the front lines of economic development in every region of Ohio; in urban, suburban, and rural communities; and from both the public and private sectors.

As a non-partisan professional association, OEDA advocates on behalf of economic development practitioners and issues important to growing the Ohio economy. Transportation services and infrastructure are critical issues in economic development; impacting the ability of the state and local communities to attract new businesses and industries as well as to retain and grow existing ones.

OEDA’s members support robust investment in the state’s highway infrastructure and workforce transportation enhancements. As such, OEDA respectfully asks the Committee to provide funding for the Rural Highway Construction Program and Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership.

Rural Highway Construction Program

OEDA supports the allocation of \$1 billion to the Rural Highway Construction Program as originally provided in House Bill 23. The funding, which was eliminated in Sub. HB 23, is critical to the ability of rural communities to survive and thrive in the 21st-century economy.

Successful economic development efforts are heavily reliant upon the quality of local and regional transportation systems, particularly highways. According to *Area Development*, highway accessibility is one of the most important factors in site selection. The publication’s *Annual Corporate Survey* asks executives to rank the importance of various factors in their site selection decision-making.

- Highway accessibility was ranked as “very important” by 62 percent of those responding to the most recent survey.
- More than 93 percent of respondents gave highway access a combined “very important” or “important” rating.

Why? When it comes to business attraction and retention, companies make decisions on where to locate or expand based on their ability to connect to their workforce, their suppliers, and their markets. For Ohioans in rural communities, highways increase economic opportunity and improve quality of life by improving access to employment, health care, education, and amenities. These factors ultimately influence a person's decision on where to live; impacting population trends in Ohio's rural communities.

Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership

OEDA supports investment in workforce mobility and applauds the legislature's allocation of \$15 million annually to the Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership. Public transportation gets people to work. In a time when workforce challenges are one of the largest barriers to economic growth, policies and funding that improve workforce mobility are very important.

Businesses locate in communities that are within the regions that have the workforce they need. The vast majority of businesses do not draw their workforce from one city or even one county. Most often, a laborshed is comprised of multiple counties, and it's not uncommon for a particular laborshed to include ten counties or more. This is one of the reasons Ohio's regional approach to economic development has been successful. To ensure that employers can access the regional workforce, and transportation is not a barrier to employment, regional transit authorities need to be able to work together to provide transit services between jurisdictions.

Thank you for your consideration of the Ohio Economic Development Association's written testimony in support of funding for the Rural Highway Construction Program and the Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership as they pertain to the state transportation budget. We look forward to further opportunities to discuss these two programs and how they would support economic growth, prosperity, and opportunity for all residents of the State of Ohio.