

STATE TRANSPORTATION BUDGET OVERVIEW

The state transportation budget is a two-year funding plan that addresses Ohio's infrastructure and public safety needs. The legislation invests more than \$7.8 billion during the next two fiscal years, most of which will go toward capital construction for existing roadways. The bill was signed March 31st and will take effect June 30th. The following are some of the provisions that were of interest to MORPC:

Variable Speed Limits and Hard Shoulder Running – In relation to the expanding use of technology on roadways, ODOT can establish variable speed limits that differ from the statutory speed limits on I-670, I-90 near Cleveland and I-275 in Cincinnati. It would also allow for traffic on the hard shoulders of highways.

Smart Mobility Corridors and Smart Technology – The legislation makes investments in the Transportation Research Center to expand capabilities for self-driving research and creates smart highways where new technologies can be safely tested in real-world traffic situations, including I-270 and U.S. 33.

Permissive License Plate Fee Increase – Counties will be able to levy an additional \$5 motor vehicle license fee, with the revenue being used for transportation purposes. This provision stems from MORPC's work on license fees over the past few years.

Transit Funding – The bill helps to address the need for transit assistance by increasing public transit funding by \$10 million through flexible federal funding.

Highway Safety Funding – Further investment is made to reduce the occurrence of fatal and serious injury crashes on public roadways. The state highway safety fund is being merged along with others into the public safety - highway purposes fund.

ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS

- Permits an unattended vehicle to be running if locked or parked on residential property
- Makes the failure to display a front license plate a secondary offense if the car is legally parked
- Allows the Registrar to increase the transaction fee for deputy registrars to no greater than \$5.25
- Increases to \$1.50 per month the limit for a natural gas company infrastructure development rider for economic development projects, with the approval of a local development entity
- Increases the earmark for Transportation Improvement Districts currently in the bill to \$4.5 million per year from \$3.5 million
- Creates a two-year pilot program in six counties (including Franklin) in which registration fees on semis will be cut from \$30 to \$15

Senate President Larry Obhof has asked the Senate Ways & Means Committee to hold hearings on possible alternatives to the gas tax as the primary revenue source for transportation, given the development of more fuel-efficient cars and emergence of other fuels.

Although a CNG tax was included in the bill at one point during the process, there was concern the tax would hurt the growth of the industry.

TESTIMONY

MORPC Executive Director William Murdock testified to the Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Transportation on February 8, 2017.

Murdock testified to the Ohio Senate Transportation, Commerce & Workforce Committee on March 14, 2017.

To view testimony and other policy resources from MORPC, visit morpc.org/government-affairs. For more information, contact Bevan Schneck at bschneck@morpc.org or 614.233.4130.