TO: Senators Dolan, Peterson, & Antonio
Representatives Oelslager, Greenspan, & Cera

FROM: William Murdock, MORPC Executive Director

DATE: March 27, 2019

SUBJECT: Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission House Bill 62 Letter of Interest

Members of the Transportation Conference Committee, thank you for your leadership on House Bill 62. The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is a regional council of over 60 communities across Central Ohio's rural, suburban, and urban areas. We provide programs, services, and funding related to transportation, land use, data, sustainability, and economic prosperity. Our role in transportation in our region is critical. We provide planning, technical services, funding, and more for much of Central Ohio as we work with local governments, businesses, and residents to determine the region's transportation needs and priorities.

Although Governor DeWine and members of the House and Senate did not all agree on specifics within the transportation budget, there is an overwhelming consensus for additional dollars to fund our roads and bridges. MORPC views this transportation budget as an opportunity to achieve an advanced, inclusive, and exceptional transportation system that connects Central Ohio’s people and products to the world. As the conference committee deliberates over the 2020-2021 biennium transportation budget, we urge you to consider the following items.

Raising Our Motor Fuel User Fee

At 28 cents per gallon, Ohio currently ranks 29th in the nation, while we are 6th in the country in total Vehicle Miles Traveled, at 118.6 billion miles annually. The only border state with a lower fee is Kentucky. The last time legislators voted to raise the fee was 2003. The reality is a dollar then is worth 58 cents today. Inflation has cut the productivity of our dollars by nearly half, and essentially no additional revenues have been added. The purchasing power issue is a big one. The efficiency of new processes, better materials, and streamlined administration is important, but it cannot keep up with the loss of purchasing power for what needs to be spent to maintain our roads. Anyone who has had to recently replace a sidewalk or driveway knows how much more it costs than 15 years ago. You can patch it and delay it only so long before it becomes an even more expensive hazard. Our transportation system is no different.

Earlier this month MORPC members – who represent over 60 communities – unanimously passed a resolution in strong support of Governor DeWine’s proposed transportation budget and increase to the motor fuel user fee with indexing to inflation. The consequences of delayed maintenance are more crashes, congestion, and a negative impact on economic development. In action isn’t
an option. Therefore we respectfully urge you to include Governor DeWine’s proposal in the final version of the transportation budget. We commend members of the General Assembly who, in collaboration with the DeWine Administration, continue to work diligently to craft a meaningful and sustainable solution to the well-documented problems associated with Ohio’s transportation infrastructure

**A Funding Tool for Local Governments**

Local governments are seeking additional tools to address their infrastructure needs. An effective option, was included in both the House and Senate passed versions of House Bill 62 that is expanding the permissive vehicle license fee cap by just $5 for municipalities and townships. The last Ohio transportation budget (House Bill 26), gave counties similar authority to raise this fee to help fund road and bridge maintenance. It’s already being used to advance critical road and bridge projects by county engineers. We think it is important to give Ohio’s communities this tool to invest in basic and necessary repairs for the roads and bridges they maintain. We request that this tool be maintained in the final version of the transportation budget.

**Reasonable Fees on Electric Vehicles and Hybrids**

MORPC members are concerned that both the House passed $200 fee on electric vehicles (EV) and the Senate passed version of $175 will stifle the adoption of this new technology. We agree that all users of roadways should participate in the cost of maintenance and repair, but not at the cost of disrupting efforts to adopt emerging technology in a state trying to lead in smart mobility. It could especially hurt our region, where the Smart Columbus initiative leaders are collaborating with automotive industry, business leaders, and local governments to deploy EV technology. 21 states already levy a registration fee for electric vehicles. Most vary from $50 to $150. If it is higher, EV owners will be penalized with a lump-sum, up-front fee that will make expansive assumptions about the number of miles they drive, the efficiency of their powertrain, and their ability to easily afford a $200 or $175 up-front fee. Furthermore, the fees on hybrids – $100 in the House and $75 in the Senate – are overly burdensome considering hybrid drivers would have to pay both the motor fuel user fee when they fill up their tank and an annual fee. Out of fairness, we recommend a $150 fee for EV’s and a $50 fee for hybrids.

Thank you for your consideration of these items of concern and opportunity. We look forward to continuing our important work together.

Please do not hesitate to contact me, at 614-233-4101 or atwmurdock@morpc.org with any questions or when MORPC can be of assistance.

Kind Regards,

William Murdock
MORPC Executive Director