



# Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission Monthly Legislative Update

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**MORPC**  
MID-OHIO REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

**Joseph Garrity**  
Director of Government Affairs  
(614) 233-4127  
jgarrity@morpc.org

## What's Happening

### *Federal Advocacy*

- » **Central Ohio Defense Group:** On January 16, 2019, leaders of the Central Ohio Defense Group met with our Congressional Delegation regarding potentially harmful defense cuts that would jeopardize the 8,000 jobs at the Columbus Defense Supply Center.
- » **Hyperloop:** On January 22, MORPC team members accompanied Virgin Hyperloop One officials in Congressional meetings to discuss the appropriate federal agency to regulate and fund hyperloop infrastructure.
- » **MORPC Leaders Visit Congress:** This week, the officers and senior staff of MORPC visited our Congressional Delegation's offices on Capitol Hill to share MORPC's 2019-2020 Public Policy Agenda and other regional priorities. The timing of this visit is especially critical as the federal Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill is set to expire in 2020.

### *New ODOT Director*

Jack Marchbanks of Columbus has been announced as the new ODOT Director.

### *House Committee Assignments*

Rep. Scott Oelslager of North Canton will chair the House Finance Committee, Speaker Householder announced.

### *Ohio's Biennial Operating Budget*

The state's Biennial Operating Budget will be introduced around March 15. We expect more resources to be proposed for local government programs targeting families, the opioid crisis and economic development. However, significant increases in the local government fund are not highly likely.

### *Biennial Transportation Budget*

This month, the Biennial Transportation Budget will rapidly make its way through the House and the Senate by March 31. It is possible the Transportation Budget could propose a gas tax increase due to a Governor's Panel's recommendation.

### *State Transportation Funding Advocacy*

During the two days of hearings of Governor DeWine's Advisory Committee on Transportation Infrastructure, MORPC Executive Director William Murdock provided in-person testimony representing OARC and written testimony on behalf of MORPC. Murdock offered common-sense funding options on how the state can address the transportation funding crisis. You can view William's testimony at [morpc.org/govaffairs](http://morpc.org/govaffairs). Also, new ODOT Director Marchbanks announced that ODOT does not have funds to build any new major projects and will instead focus on road maintenance. Therefore, the Committee ultimately recommended an increase in the gas tax. It would be the first state gas tax increase since 2005.



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# Legislative Update

## ***FY18-19 Budget***

According to preliminary figures released by the Office of Budget and Management (OBM), Ohio's revenue continues to come in over estimates. November's tax revenues were 3.3 percent over estimates or nearly \$66.3 million over, which brought the month's total tax receipts to over \$2 billion. For the year, the state is running 1.8 percent over estimates or \$166.9 million. Total receipts so far this fiscal year — which began July 1, 2018 — are \$9.5 billion. This total is a half-billion more than this time last year when the state had brought in just over \$9.0 billion.

As a new General Assembly is sworn in and a new administration prepares to take the reins of state government, Ohio's revenues came in under estimates for the month of December — the first time that has happened since FY19 began on July 1, 2018. However, Office of Budget and Management (OBM) Director Tim Keen told Hannah News that there is nothing in the report that concerns him: "We are on plan and somewhat over performing for tax receipts." December saw the monthly revenues miss the mark by 2.0 percent or \$38.2 million while the year-to-date total remains over estimates by 1.1 percent or \$128.7 million, according to OBM's preliminary figures.

## ***FY20-21 Budget***

Gov. Mike DeWine has until March 15 to announce his proposed two-year state operating budget. The bill will begin in the Ohio House before making its way to the Senate for consideration prior to the end of the fiscal year on June 30. However, the transportation budget will be introduced before then because it must be passed by the General Assembly by the end of March so it can go into effect by the beginning of Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 on July 1, 2019.

## ***Federal***

U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) announced that he is moving the location of his Washington, D.C. office from Room 713 in the Hart Senate Office Building to Room 503 — the location previously occupied by John Glenn when he served in the U.S. Senate.

## ***General Assembly/Statehouse***

Senate Democrats re-elected Sen. Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Heights) as minority leader. They also elected Sen. Cecil Thomas (D-Cincinnati) as assistant minority leader; Sen. Sean O'Brien (D-Cortland) as whip; and Sen. Sandra Williams (D-Cleveland) as assistant whip.

As the first Democrat African American woman from Franklin County to serve in both the House and Senate of the Ohio Legislature, a former Columbus City Councilwoman and the CEO of a prominent health care system in the area, one might be hard-pressed to find a more prominent central Ohio public servant than Sen. Charleta Tavares (D-Columbus). While term limits may prevent Tavares from returning in the 133rd General Assembly, she told Hannah News during a recent interview that she has no intention of leaving a career of public service.

Rep. Larry Householder (R-Glenford) reclaimed the speaker's gavel during the first day of session, marking a rare split vote for leadership in what is usually a ceremonial vote confirming previous caucus votes and bringing to an end, for now, a bitter leadership battle that has played out over the past year in the House. Twenty-six Democrats joined with 26 Republicans in voting for Householder, giving him a 52 to 46 vote win over Smith, who was backed by 14 Democrats, including House Minority Leader Fred Strahorn (D-Dayton). The 26 Democrats voting for Householder included Reps. Boggs, Boyd, Brent, Brown, Cera, Crawley, Crossman, Denson, Galonski, Hicks-Hudson, Holmes, Howse, Leland, Lepore-Hagan, A. Miller, O'Brien, Robinson, Sheehy, Skindell, K. Smith, Sobbecki, Sweeney, Sykes, Upchurch, Weinstein and West. The 34 Republicans who voted for Smith included Reps. Arndt, Blessing, Brinkman, Carfagna, Cupp, Dean, Gavarone, Ginter, Green, Greenspan, Hambley, Hood, Hoops, Keller, Kick, Koehler, Lanese, Lang, LaTourette, Lipps, Manchester, G. Manning, McClain, Patton, Perales, Reineke, Riedel, Romanchuk, Ryan, Scherer, Seitz, R. Smith, Stein and Stoltzfus.



# Legislative Update

Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford) announced the appointment of Jonathon McGee as chief of staff and majority legal counsel for the Ohio House of Representatives. McGee, who started immediately, has most recently been executive director of the Ohio Cable Telecommunications Association. He replaces Shawn Kasych who resigned earlier on.

Sen. Matt Dolan (R-Chagrin Falls) will chair the Senate Finance Committee, Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) announced this week. In addition, Sen. Dave Burke (R-Marysville) will serve as vice chairman and Sen. Vern Sykes (D-Akron) will serve as Ranking Minority Member.

Rep. Emilia Sykes (D-Akron) was chosen by her colleagues to serve as House minority leader in the 133rd General Assembly after a caucus meeting. She succeeds Rep. Fred Strahorn (D-Dayton), who stepped down after he was on the opposite side of most his caucus when it voted for House Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford) at the beginning of session. Rep. Kristin Boggs (D-Columbus) was chosen as assistant minority leader while Rep. Kent Smith (D-Euclid) was elected minority whip and Rep. Paula Hicks-Hudson (D-Toledo), a former Toledo mayor and serving her first term in the House, was elected assistant minority whip.

Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina) previewed what might be among the first bills introduced in his chamber, saying many will address regulatory reform, as well as another Lake Erie and waterway protection bill.

The House rounded out leadership teams for both caucuses during a session and adopted its rules for this session while seating a new member. One member of Smith's leadership team and another Republican who supported Smith for speaker were elected to leadership positions which included the following: Rep. Jim Butler (R-Dayton), who seconded Householder's nomination for speaker, was elected as the speaker pro tempore. Rep. Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati), who was set to be majority floor leader under Smith, retained that position. Also joining the leadership team were Householder supporters Rep. Anthony DeVitis (R-Uniontown) as assistant majority floor leader and Rep. Jay Edwards (R-Nelsonville) as majority floor whip, and Rep. Laura Lanese (R-Grove City) as assistant majority floor whip. Lanese had supported Smith. The Democratic leadership team officially elected consists of Rep. Emilia Sykes (D-Akron) as minority leader; Rep. Kristin Boggs (D-Columbus) as assistant minority leader; Rep. Kent Smith (D-Euclid) as minority whip; and Rep. Paula Hicks-Hudson (D-Toledo) as assistant minority whip.

## ***Governor***

John Carey will lead the Governor's Office of Appalachia as director, Gov. Mike DeWine announced.

It's official. Gov. Mike DeWine will deliver his first "State of the State" address on March 5 at noon in the Ohio House Chambers before a joint session of the 133rd General Assembly. Speaker of House Larry Householder (R-Glenford) officially issued the invitation Tuesday.

## ***Higher Education***

Two professors at the University of Cincinnati (UC) recently received a grant from the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to develop new technologies to train inexperienced snow plow drivers to handle dangerous icy roads during the winter months, the university recently announced. Jiaqi Ma and Julian Wang of UC's College of Engineering and Applied Science are the recipients of a nearly \$40,000 grant to fund their research into simulation technology that can help these drivers handle difficult scenarios.

Former Rep. Mike Duffey (R-Worthington) has joined the DeWine administration. The Ohio Department of Higher Education now lists him as senior vice chancellor.



# Legislative Update

## *Lobbyists*

The Ohio Municipal League (OML) announced the hiring of Thomas Wetmore as legislative advocate. Most recently, Wetmore worked for a political action committee as a grassroots voter outreach manager for Ohio's 2018 gubernatorial election.

## *Local Government*

The Ohio Municipal League (OML) plans to rebuild relationships between municipal governments and state leaders during the 133rd General Assembly and Gov.-elect Mike DeWine's administration, outgoing OML Board President Scott Schertzer told reporters during a press conference. That will be the top priority, Schertzer said, as there has been a "continued erosion" of relationships due to damaging cuts in local government funding and limits on home rule.

## *People*

The County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO) announced Rachel Massoud has joined the staff as a policy analyst. The Ohio Township Association (OTA) announced the hiring of Marisa Myers as director of governmental affairs and Sarah Crock as public relations coordinator. Myers was previously a legislative aide, policy adviser and majority caucus deputy policy director in the House. She has a bachelor's degree from Wittenberg University and master's degree from James Madison University. Crock is a former Legislative Service Commission fellow and communications assistant in the House. She has a bachelor's degree from Asbury University in Kentucky.

## *Sustainability*

The Ohio Diesel Emissions Reduction Grant (DERG) Program has awarded more than \$8 million to replace 26 aging diesel transit buses with newer, cleaner diesel technology or alternative fuel technology, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) has announced.

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) announced it has awarded \$188 million in loans statewide during the fourth quarter of 2018. Ohio EPA provided approximately \$795 million in financing for public works projects throughout 2018, the agency said. The projects aim to improve Ohio's surface water quality and the reliability and quality of Ohio drinking water systems.

## *Transitions*

House Transportation and Public Safety Committee Chairman Doug Green (R-Mt. Orab) released the committee's report on autonomous vehicles, the result of a 14-month study that included conversations with stakeholder groups, industry leaders and policy think tanks. The 100-page study recommended pursuing a unified framework of state and local laws regarding automated driving systems (ADS) and connected vehicle technology, as well as establishing a legislative committee on transportation infrastructure funding and an "Autonomous and Connected Vehicle Task Force" comprised of a broad range of disciplines and organizations.

The Ohio Department of Transportation's (ODOT) proposed budget for FY20-21 calls for no new funding in major new projects, and a new coalition is calling for the state to do something about it, including a possible raise in the gas tax. Government, business, transportation and regional planning councils formed the coalition, "Fix Our Roads Ohio," to lobby the state to come up with new sources of funding to address the shortfall, which the coalition attributed to the expiration of the Ohio Turnpike bond program at the end of this fiscal year.



# Legislative Update

Speaking to associations representing county commissioners and county engineers, Gov.-elect Mike DeWine said he wouldn't make promises on whether he would restore cuts to the Local Government Fund made under the Kasich administration, but said he would look at it and promised some services will get more state support. He said while he wouldn't make promises on the Local Government Fund, he will be significantly increasing the amount of money going to counties for children's services, noting that Ohio is 50th in states that send state money to children services. He also said that his administration will be looking to fund more multi-county task forces that will go after Mexican drug cartels and other suppliers of the drug crisis.

Office of Budget and Management (OBM) Director Tim Keen is heading back to the auditor's office, Auditor-elect Keith Faber (R-Celina) announced, naming Keen senior adviser and chief financial officer. It's Keen's second move from state budget director to senior adviser for the auditor; he joined former Auditor Mary Taylor's staff in 2007 after serving as OBM director in the Taft administration. In addition, Faber named Tom Ruebel as director of government relations; Alex Bilchak as deputy chief of staff; Allie Dumski as press secretary; and James Coyne as director of regional liaisons.

Sen. Randy Gardner (R-Bowling Green) becomes the new chancellor of higher education and former Rep. Dorothy Pelanda becomes the new director of agriculture according to Gov.-elect Mike DeWine. he announced these and the following other cabinet appointments: Ursel McElroy as director of aging; Jeff Davis as director of developmental disabilities; Laurie Stevenson as director of Ohio EPA; Jillian Froment remains director of insurance; Kimberly Hall as the director of job and family services; Maureen Corcoran as director of Medicaid; Lori Criss as director of mental health and addiction services; Jack Marchbanks as director of transportation; Stephanie McCloud as Bureau of Workers' Compensation administrator; Ryan Gies as director of youth services; and Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Deborah Ashenhurst as director of veteran services. In addition, Andy Wilson is the senior adviser for criminal justice policy.

## ***Transportation/Infrastructure***

Gov. Mike DeWine Monday created another study committee, the Ohio Governor's Advisory Committee on Transportation Infrastructure, to study the current conditions of Ohio's roadways and recommend options for maintaining and improving the state's transportation infrastructure before he issues his executive budget in March. He said he is asking the committee to issue its recommendations in mid-February.

Speaking at the group's first meeting, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Director Jack Marchbanks testified that, despite its status as the "state's most valuable physical asset," Ohio's transportation system is facing an "impending crisis" due to flat revenues, highway construction inflation and mounting debt payments.

The state's \$1.5 billion yearly shortfall in transportation infrastructure funding is a "crisis," Gov. Mike DeWine told reporters, saying the gap had previously been obscured by bonds guaranteed by tolls on the Ohio Turnpike. Earlier, DeWine had commented that local government officials and other Ohioans would likely be stunned when they discovered the extent of the financial difficulties the state faces with regard to transportation infrastructure. "It was a problem I knew about before I became governor, but I really did not understand the full extent of it. ... We have a serious, serious problem with regard to revenue," DeWine said, noting that funding from Ohio Turnpike bonds has run out. Asked if he would propose raising the state's gas tax, a recommendation of the advisory committee, DeWine said it's a discussion to have with Ohioans.



# Legislative Update

## *Utilities*

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio's (PUCO) adherence to its own PowerForward Roadmap on electric grid modernization is being called into question following its order on net metering — wherein smaller renewable energy systems in homes and businesses sell excess power back to the local distribution utility. The commission reversed its current policy of granting rooftop solar projects and other small generators billing credits not only for electricity they produce but also for their contribution to overall grid capacity, drawing the ire of the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC).

The Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) is drawing support this week from a wide range of energy stakeholders including the Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA) and Ohio Coal Association in testimony urging the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) to reject American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio's request for a regulated subsidy supporting 900 megawatts of proposed renewable energy.

Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) staff say the wholesale power market encompassing the state is currently oversaturated and more than adequate to handle consumers' electric needs without American Electric Power (AEP) of Ohio's 900 megawatts of proposed renewable energy. Staff argue that forcing all AEP customers to subsidize its wind and solar projects would jeopardize dozens of competitive suppliers that are already satisfying consumers' renewable demands. PUCO staff filed comments this week in AEP's ongoing dispute with the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), Ohio Manufacturers' Association (OMA), Ohio Coal Association, and Industrial Energy Users-Ohio, among other opponents of the utility's proposed non-bypassable bill rider supporting 500 megawatts of wind and 400 megawatts of solar energy.

Much happened over the week concerning the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO). Sam Randazzo was not only named to the commission, replacing Commissioner Tom Johnson, he was also named chairman after the current chairman, Asim Haque, announced he is departing the agency at the end of February.

# Your Government Affairs Team



**Steve Tugend**  
Director +Chair, Government Affairs  
(614) 462-5424  
stugend@keglerbrown.com



**Tony Fiore**  
Of Counsel  
(614) 462-5428  
afiore@keglerbrown.com



**Lloyd Pierre-Louis**  
Director  
(614) 462-5477  
lpierre-louis@keglerbrown.com



**Mike Miller**  
Of Counsel  
(614) 462-5468  
mmiller@keglerbrown.com



**Rusty Schuermann**  
Director  
(614) 462-5440  
rschuermann@keglerbrown.com



**Andy Shifflette**  
Government Affairs Advisor  
(614) 462-5491  
ashifflette@keglerbrown.com



**Bev Staten**  
Government Affairs Specialist  
(614) 462-5455  
bstaten@keglerbrown.com

