



MORPC'S LAME-DUCK SESSION PRIORITIES

STATE PRIORITIES

EXPAND RESIDENTIAL BROADBAND

Access to high-speed internet is the great social equalizer of our time. COVID-19 has shed light on this inequality, with far too many Central Ohioans lacking access to high-quality internet. Recent studies indicate that nearly one million Ohioans lack access to reliable, high-speed internet, with approximately 300,000 rural households having no broadband options at all. MORPC supports passage of House Bill 13. This necessary legislation would establish the state's first Residential Broadband Expansion Program, to support expansion to unserved residences around the state. The program will distribute \$20 million in grants during state FY21.

SUPPORT A STATE CAPITAL BUDGET

The capital budget is enacted every two years and offers the opportunity for Central Ohio local governments, businesses, and community groups to secure funding toward projects of regional significance through the legislative process. Although its introduction has stalled, a capital budget is a unique opportunity to respond to the pandemic and assist in the revitalization of our region. MORPC strongly urges members of the Ohio General Assembly to move swiftly and pass a state capital budget.

SUPPORT REMOTE MEETING FLEXIBILITY

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, local governments have had to adapt quickly. Having the ability to hold public meetings virtually has become a vital option for local governments to function effectively. MORPC encourages the Ohio General Assembly to pass legislation that offers local governments the ability to hold public meetings remotely and in perpetuity, and to use new forms of technology to better assist residents in need.

WHAT IS A LAME-DUCK SESSION?

A "lame duck" session is one that takes place after the election has been held, but before the current members of the U.S. Congress or Ohio General Assembly have reached the end of their terms. If a bill does not pass during the current session (2019-2020), it must go back to the start of the legislative process in the next session (2021-2022). Therefore, there is currently an incentive to pass legislation before the end of the year.

With the 2020 election winding down, the 133rd Ohio General Assembly and the 116th United States Congress still have much work to accomplish during this lame-duck session. MORPC will assertively advocate on behalf of our local government members on the following legislative priorities.



MID-OHIO REGIONAL
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CURB DISTRACTED DRIVING

Distracted driving is a growing trend that has caused an increase in deaths and injuries on our roads. Senate Bill 285 broadens the existing texting-while-driving prohibition in the Ohio Revised Code to prohibit using an electronic wireless communications device (EWCD) while driving and makes the use of an EWCD while driving a primary offense. MORPC supports SB 285 because it would measurably improve transportation safety and equity and advance Vision Zero efforts. We believe it is critical to provide law enforcement the necessary tools to deter distracted driving, while also including measures that ensure people are not specifically being targeted. Doing such will save lives and make our roads safer for everyone. We must make the use of wireless devices behind the wheel as unacceptable as drinking and driving is today.

REPEAL HOUSE BILL 6

We were all surprised in the news earlier this year and in the events that allegedly transpired in the passage and protection of HB 6. MORPC seeks to advance and expand the integration of energy efficiency, conservation, and renewable energy for a healthier, more resilient, and cost-effective energy portfolio. It is in this vein that we opposed HB 6 last year and support its repeal today. We support Senate Bill 346 – to repeal HB 6 – because HB 6 is poor public policy and it taints the very work of the Ohio General Assembly and the work of countless public servants across the state.

SUPPORT TRAILS AND A RARELY USED TOOL

Trails are integral to a community's quality of life and offer numerous benefits to residents, visitors, and businesses. The Central Ohio Greenways trail network improves connectivity for Central Ohioans of all ages and abilities, whether they use them by choice or out of necessity. House Bill 476 would expand veto authority for property owners when a park district or a public agency that is not elected would appropriate eminent domain for a trail. In the Ohio Revised Code, park district commissioners are appointed by the local probate judge. If a property owner should oppose the appropriated eminent domain, they have the ability to write an objection to the probate judge, who then can veto the appropriation. Local governments and park districts rarely use eminent domain for trails. However, when it is for the greater good of a local community, it can be a necessary tool of last resort. Enactment of HB 476 would deter the ability of communities to utilize eminent domain for this vital part of our transportation system. Therefore, MORPC strongly opposes HB 476.

FEDERAL PRIORITIES

SUPPORT A ROBUST COVID-19 RELIEF PACKAGE

Local governments have been on the frontlines of our nation's local public health emergency response and are facing unprecedented revenue shortfalls. MORPC's top federal priority during this lame-duck session is the passage of a relief package that provides robust and dedicated dollars to local governments.

CARES FLEXIBILITY AND EXTENSION

Flexibility for use of funds going forward is very important and is equally matched with the need for additional resources for the response. Furthermore, communities need more time to utilize these recovery dollars. We encourage the U.S. Congress to extend the deadline to spend CARES dollars to June 30, 2021 to ensure every community can implement these dollars effectively.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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