

# Testimony



Support

## Ohio House Bill 2

### Ohio Transportation Budget

2/23/09

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#### A Transportation Crossroad

Ohio—a crossroad of the nation—is at a transportation crossroad. Making smart investments now can pay future dividends to our economy; to the quality of life in our communities; and to our air, land, water, and energy resources.

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#### Transportation Assets



Ohio is blessed with many transportation assets, including:

- » an Interstate Highway system that puts Ohio shippers within a day's drive of 50% of the U.S. population
- » a railroad network that places Ohio in the top 10 of nearly every freight rail measure including total track miles, total tons shipped, and total employment and wages
- » 716 miles of navigable waterways along our north and south “coasts,” helping rank Ohio 4th in the nation in total maritime tonnage shipped
- » 24 urban and 36 rural transit agencies that deliver half a million Ohioans every weekday to work and other destinations

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#### Serious Challenges

These are enviable assets but Ohio also faces serious challenges:

- » aging transportation infrastructure
- » fluctuating fuel prices
- » a projected 67% rise in freight traffic in the next 20 years in the U.S.
- » flattened fuel tax revenues and growing construction material costs
- » dependence on imported oil
- » health and other impacts from harmful air emissions, highway noise, and traffic congestion
- » too few communities that are “friendly” to walkers, bicyclers, and transit riders

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#### Solutions



The Transportation Budget (Ohio House Bill 2, as introduced) offers solid progress in three important areas for our economy and our environment: multi-modal and inter-modal transportation, public transit, and passenger rail.

Multi- and inter-modal transportation uses more than one mode of transportation to move freight and people in time-, cost-, and energy-efficient ways. ODOT proposes to reduce its emphasis on major new highway construction

and increase emphasis on system preservation and multi-modal transportation projects.

H.B. 2 proposes to reorganize ODOT with a new Division of Multi-Modal Planning to (1) direct statewide multi-modal planning efforts; (2) coordinate activities in rail, public transit, aviation, maritime, roadway and bridges, and safety and other services with federal, state, and local partners; and (3) conduct research in these areas.

The bill also proposes innovative funding mechanisms to encourage the state and local communities to invest in multi-modal capacity through expanded

toll authority, Transportation Innovation Authorities, and the New Generation State Infrastructure Bank Program.

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## Public Transit Delivers

Each weekday, nearly half a million Ohioans rely on a transit bus or train to commute to work or school, visit a doctor, or travel to an important destination.

Public transit delivers more than just a safe, convenient, and reliable commute. It also saves commuters money;

stimulates jobs and local economic growth; offers mobility choices, especially to rural residents and the elderly and handicapped; reduces highway congestion; encourages efficient land use; and reduces fuel consumption, lessening America's dependence on foreign oil and improving air quality.

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## Stepping up Transit Investment



Despite its many benefits, public transit is under-funded in Ohio. We rank 12th in transit ridership but only 28th in per capita funding. Ohio invests only \$1.58 in per capita state spending on transit. Compare that to funding in nearby states: IL, \$63.29; PA, \$61.25; MI, \$20.73.

State transit funding has fallen drastically in recent years, from \$43 million in 2000-2001 to \$16 million in 2006-2007.

H.B. 2 includes \$10 million in federal funds for each Fiscal Year for "Green

Fleets." To qualify, participating local transit agencies must replace or improve existing transit vehicles to increase fuel efficiency, reduce emissions, or use alternative fuels, as appropriate.

Given the millions of annual transit riders, this is a worthy investment in quality of life. Ohio should not, however, neglect other diesel fleets for emission clean up, especially heavy trucks and construction equipment. The General Assembly should also continue funding for the Diesel Emission Reduction Grant Program.

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## Investing in the Ohio Hub and "3-C"



The Ohio Transportation Budget proposes a bold but thoughtful move toward a network of fast, frequent, and reliable passenger trains and increased capacity for moving more freight by rail. It proposes to authorize the start-up of passenger rail service to link Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, and Cincinnati, the first step of the Ohio Hub Plan.

Preliminary estimates indicate that Ohio will need \$250 million for the equipment, rail line improvements, and station construction to complete the full 260-mile 3-C Corridor.

This is a significant investment.

Like any investment, its benefits must be weighed against its costs. According to an analysis prepared for the Ohio Rail Development Commission, when fully built, the Ohio Hub system will yield a benefit/cost ratio of at least 1.8:1.

According to the study, the Ohio Hub will create 16,700 permanent jobs; generate more than \$3 billion in development activity near stations; create an annual \$80 million impact on state tourism by generating 320,000 overnight trips; create a potential benefit for freight operations in the range of \$3 billion to \$6 billion; and generate an annual fuel savings of approximately 9.4 million gallons of fuel.

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