2019 - 2020
Transportation Legislative Agenda of the Toledo Region
Federal Transportation Funding Brief

As the infrastructure funding gap continues to grow, prudent investments are needed now to prevent further deterioration of our streets, highways, bridges, rail and transit systems, pedestrian and bikeway systems, airports, ports, and waterways. The public sector has a responsibility to act to improve safety, support quality of life, increase employment opportunities, and enhance economic competitiveness. The strategies and recommendations included in the Toledo Region Transportation Legislative Agenda are the consensus view of the members of the Transportation Coalition. Consultative meetings held with coalition members between October 2018 and February 2019 produced a set of legislative policy recommendations and modal policy briefs for federal, state, and local leaders. The Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments presents this agenda on behalf of the region.

FEDERAL Priorities

- After 25 years of stagnation, increase the gas tax or pursue other reforms to ensure long-term solvency of the Highway Trust Fund. Support the ability of state and local governments to plan, fund, and construct the projects that will rebuild our infrastructure and strengthen our economy. The longer repairs are postponed the more they will cost, and the cost of infrastructure is significantly higher than it was the last time the gas tax was increased 25 years ago.
- Prefer user taxes and fees such as the motor fuel tax and other fuels taxes, a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) fee, freight waybill tax, shipping container fees, impact fees, tolling, and similar strategies. Design these fees with attention to the fee per unit, the means to adjust the fee over time (such as linking to Consumer Price Index), administrative costs, and privacy safeguards.
- Where appropriate, attract private capital via public-private partnerships that feature transparent agreements and accountability through tightly monitored performance standards.
- Support changes to federal tax law to enable private individuals and corporations to contribute to construction and maintenance of public infrastructure on a tax-deductible basis. Retain the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds (i.e., governmental bonds and private activity bonds) in order to support lower borrowing costs for locally developed infrastructure projects.
- Leverage public funds and encourage private co-investment via credit assistance programs such as infrastructure banks, the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA), the Railroad Rehabilitation & Improvement Financing (RRIF) program, etc. Improve and broaden the feasibility of these and other innovative financing mechanisms by streamlining application timelines and requirements.
- Support funding for intelligent transportation systems to improve the safety and efficiency of transport, such as connected and autonomous vehicle infrastructure and technology.
- Implement a national strategic freight plan and improve flexibility to expend funds on airport, port, rail, intermodal, and other key freight investments.
- Implement America’s Water Infrastructure Act of 2018. Maintain a regular, biannual process of authorizing projects and activities related to the key missions of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- Support Harbor Maintenance Tax (HMT) revenue solutions and use HMT funds for intended purposes. Provide an exemption from the HMT for domestic and U.S.—Canadian movements for non-bulk cargo within the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway System.
- Equitably fund all modes of transportation including increasing the share allocated to public transportation (Mass Transit Account), active transportation (the Transportation Alternatives Program), and passenger rail.
- Appropriate passenger rail funding as authorized in the FAST Act.
- Continue subsidizing transportation out of general treasury funds until a permanent solution to the infrastructure funding gap is implemented.
State and Local Transportation Funding Policy Brief

As the infrastructure funding gap grows, prudent investments are needed now to prevent further deterioration of our streets, highways, bridges, rail and transit systems, pedestrian and bikeway systems, airports, ports, and waterways. The public sector has a responsibility to act to improve safety, support quality of life, increase employment opportunities, and enhance economic competitiveness. The strategies and recommendations included in the Toledo Region Transportation Legislative Agenda are the consensus view of the members of the Transportation Coalition. Consultative meetings held with coalition members between October 2018 and February 2019 produced a set of legislative policy recommendations and modal policy briefs for federal, state, and local leaders. The Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments presents this agenda on behalf of the region.

STATE Priorities

- In the absence of increased federal funding, Ohio must take state-level action to deliver locally identified projects by increasing existing revenue sources and developing new sources. Equitably fund all modes of transportation including increasing the share allocated to public transportation, railways, ports, airports, and active transportation.
- To prevent further erosion in purchasing power of the revenue from Ohio’s flat rate per gallon motor fuel excise tax, consider indexing some or all the tax. Among the other options for indexing are the Consumer Price Index, the average wholesale price of fuel, and the Producer Price Index.
- Due to increasing vehicle fuel efficiency and the growing use of alternative fuels, Ohio should consider implementing a vehicle miles traveled user fee to counteract declining revenue from traditional sources.
- Regarding the Ohio Turnpike, keep toll rate increases to a minimum. Use toll-generated revenue primarily to preserve and expand the turnpike itself. Distributions of bonds backed by toll revenue should stay within jurisdictions closest in geographic proximity to the turnpike, should produce a net gain in transportation dollars for those jurisdictions, and should be limited to infrastructure projects with a lifespan consistent with the terms of funding.
- Support the recommendations contained in the 2015 ODOT Statewide Transit Needs Study including: increased capital funding, better regionalization of transit systems, and the establishment of a bi-partisan state legislative commission to develop ways to create a reliable, dedicated, and sufficient funding stream to increase public transit services in Ohio.
- Implement the recommendations of ODOT’s Ohio Airports Focus Study.
- Continue programs such as the Ohio Bridge Partnership Program, the Clean Ohio Program, the State Capital Improvements Program, and Local Transportation Improvements Program.
- Assist municipalities with full funding for resurfacing and reconstruction on U.S. and state routes within their jurisdiction by expanding ODOT’s Urban Paving Program and creating other options.
- Continue to allow localities to impose local option taxes, such as by supporting an increase in Ohio’s base vehicle license plate fee and allowing counties and municipalities to enact permissive use plate fees.
- Support funding for intelligent transportation systems to improve the safety and efficiency of transport, such as connected and autonomous vehicle infrastructure and technology.

LOCAL Priorities

- Explore expanding use and funding of specially designated Transportation Improvement Districts (TIDs) such as those in Rossford and Lucas County.
- Support efforts to fund and operate a truly regional, seamless public transit system to serve all the greater Toledo metropolitan area including all of Lucas County. Provide cost-effective access to surrounding counties and connections to and between cities in the region.
FEDERAL Priorities

- Improve connectivity between freight modes, freight facilities, and key industrial areas where freight-intensive production is possible in the future or is occurring now.
- Continue to implement the FAST Act freight programs such as developing a National Highway Freight program that includes funding for Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects. Continue funding for the Infrastructure For Rebuilding America (INFRA) grants.
- The shortage of commercial vehicle drivers is prompting a crisis in freight transportation. Support short-term relief and long-term incentives that address workforce issues across the supply chain including reasonable hours of services and other driver regulations.

STATE Priorities

- Review existing state laws and regulations for impediments to the safe testing and deployment of connected and automated vehicles including truck platooning and alternative fuels. Avoid creating a patchwork of inconsistent state laws by working with other states to standardize transport networks and support adoption of best practices.
- Promote design standards that remove impediments to the safe flow of freight by investing in truck-friendly intersections, ramps, turning lanes, and eliminating rail/highway conflicts.
- Expand commercial truck parking initiatives to provide adequate, legal, convenient, and safe parking areas for drivers with limited hours of service, overnight parking, or trucks waiting to deliver.

LOCAL Priorities

- Address the need for efficient truck connectors in Wood County between I-75 and Fostoria, and in Monroe County between US 23 and I-75.
- Support development at Express Industrial Park by continuing to improve US 20A between Toledo Express Airport and I-475.
- Evaluate, maintain, and upgrade pipeline infrastructure and leverage supply chain links. Leverage the region’s strategic location for trans-loading oil and gas products in a safe and efficient manner to support oil and gas production and refinement, and energy independence.
- Support the initiatives of the Northwest Ohio / Southeast Michigan Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), a multi-county collaboration that leverages transportation assets and other regional competitive advantages to attract and retain jobs and investment in the region.
- Address the labor shortage in the logistics industry through development and training of CDL drivers, vehicle mechanics, and technicians with high school and community college programs.
Air Transportation Policy Brief

FEDERAL Priorities

• Support with funding, regulatory clearances, etc., the recommendations of the Airport Master Plan for Toledo Express Airport (TOL) as updated by the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority.
• Support efforts to preserve and modernize the transportation assets of the Ohio Air National Guard’s 180th Fighter Wing at TOL. Retain the Terminal Radar Approach Control facilities operation at TOL as critical to maintaining the operational integrity of the 180th’s homeland security mission, which requires immediate launch of F-16 fighter jets and close coordination with the TOL air traffic control tower.
• Support establishment of low-cost wetlands banking for public projects to allow mitigation of wetlands on a watershed basis rather than parcel-by-parcel.
• Promote the safe use of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) commonly known as drones.

STATE Priorities

• Implement the recommendations of ODOT’s Ohio Airports Focus Study.
• Improve connectivity of airports to surface modes and improve connections to I-475 via US 20A.
• Promote consistency between federal and state regulation of UAS. Prohibit drone use near critical infrastructure (specify trespass), and balance surveillance and privacy issues with opportunities for UAS economic development.
• Reinvest a higher percentage of aviation-related tax revenue back into the Ohio Airport Grant Program.
• Revise Ohio’s Legislation to make all airports within the Ohio Airport System Plan eligible for grant funding.
• Support funding for runway and other improvements to increase the airside capacity of TOL when logistics operations expand beyond its current capacity.
• Develop a grant program and low-interest loan policies designed to support training for students entering aviation-related careers at Ohio universities and community colleges.

LOCAL Priorities

• Support efforts to increase passenger traffic and attract more airlines to Toledo Express Airport.

REGIONAL Viewpoint

• Aviation is critical to a balanced cargo and passenger system. Success of the air transport mode depends greatly upon excellent connectivity to regional road and railways and upon preserving and expanding airport infrastructure. The airport division of the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority operates the City of Toledo’s two airports—Toledo Express Airport and Toledo Executive Airport. The airports support four major areas of aviation operations: passenger, cargo, general aviation, and military. Each operational area is important to the economic vitality of the airport and the northwest Ohio region.

✓ While industry experts like Boeing estimate the aviation industry will need 637,000 commercial pilots and 648,000 mechanics in the next 20 years, aviation training facilities in Ohio are reaching capacity.
FEDERAL Priorities

- Support rail-oriented public-private partnerships to leverage scarce dollars while addressing bottlenecks and moving projects forward.
- Create a rail infrastructure trust fund for the public portion of partnerships with private rail companies.

STATE Priorities

- Expand and provide dedicated funding to the Ohio Rail Development Commission to rehabilitate and expand rail line capacity and short line spurs to manufacturing and industrial locations which will support job creation and retention.
- Support funding to preserve the right-of-way of abandoned rail lines for future uses.
- Leverage the nationally significant freight rail facilities in Ohio with funding for highway-rail grade separations (over/under passes) and installation of improved crossing warning devices to correct safety and congestion problems.
- Invest in station upgrades and track improvements that support greater efficiency for both passenger and freight rail users.

PROJECT Priorities

- Support rail/highway grade separation solutions to ensure the safe and efficient flow of vehicular traffic. Possible locations include:
  - Matzinger Road at CSX/Ann Arbor combined railroad crossing in Toledo
  - Manhattan Boulevard at CSX and at Ann Arbor railroad crossings in Toledo
  - Phillips Avenue at Norfolk Southern in Toledo
  - Summit Street at CSX in Toledo
  - SR 235/SR 18 at CSX in or near Hoytville
  - A second grade separation at CSX in or near North Baltimore
- Improve intermodal access and promote satellite development at the Norfolk Southern Toledo Intermodal Terminal and at the CSX Northwest Ohio Terminal.
- Assure the maintenance of the Norfolk Southern, Wheeling, and CSX rail swing bridges over the Maumee River to prevent disruptions in the flow of both rail and marine freight.
- Improve communication and encourage dialogue between railroad companies and public agencies to ensure cooperation and proper coordination of infrastructure projects.

✓ With 13 facilities distributed across the state, Ohio is second only to Illinois in the number of intermodal terminals.
✓ At 5,187 miles, Ohio’s network of active rail lines is the fourth most extensive in the nation, behind that of Texas, Illinois, and California. Most of Ohio’s rail network is owned by private freight railroad companies.
✓ The rail network accounts for about 40% of U.S. freight movements by ton-miles (the length freight travels), and 16% by tons (the weight of freight moved).
REGIONAL Viewpoint

The Port of Toledo is a critical economic force. According to a 2018 study, Toledo’s port generated $669 million in economic activity, $513 million in personal income and local consumption expenditures, and $180 million in federal and state tax revenue.

FEDERAL Priorities

- Implement America’s Water Infrastructure Act of 2018. Maintain a regular, biannual process of authorizing projects and activities related to the key missions of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- Congress should enact H.R. 1908, to require all Harbor Maintenance Tax (HMT) revenue is spent for its intended purpose. The legislation should be perfected to ensure that Great Lakes ports receive no less than 10% of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ operation and maintenance funds each year.
- Support HMT revenue solutions and use HMT funds for intended purposes. Provide an exemption from the HMT for domestic and U.S.—Canadian movements for non-bulk cargo within the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway System.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began a multi-year Asset Renewal Program to rehabilitate and modernize the Soo Locks’ infrastructure at a total estimated cost of $181 million. The FY 2019 budget provides $2.4 million to rehabilitate the Soo Lock infrastructure; a shortfall of $20.99 million compared to the amount needed in FY 2019. Congress should provide adequate funds in the FY 2019 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill to ensure continuation of the Soo Lock Asset Renewal Program.
- Support seaport-specific funding to modernize U.S. seaports including investments in technology and upgrades to the locks in the Saint Lawrence Seaway System.
- Encourage Congress to appropriate funding to build a new large lock at the Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, to ensure the flow of vital marine freight such as iron ore.
- Establish a single federal ballast water rule by adopting standards put forth by the International Maritime Organization’s Convention for the Control and Management of Ship’s Ballast Water and Sediments.

The Toledo harbor constitutes one quarter of the total dredging in the entire Great Lakes making it the largest annual dredging project in terms of both cost and quantity dredged. Without dredging, the port will inevitably shut down to the detriment of local, regional, state, and national economies.

STATE Priorities

- Support environmentally acceptable and financially feasible policies that enable short- and long-term management of dredged material including beneficial reuse, new capacity in existing confined disposal facilities, and/or safe disposal via policies previously identified.
- Continue support for the Great Lakes Dredged Material Center for Innovation.
- Provide reliable, long-term funding of the state’s maritime ports. Within the state biennial budget: allow for tax abatements for operating terminals located within harbors recognized by the state, offer non-local share state grants for port infrastructure, and continue to fund multimodal initiatives.

LOCAL Priorities

- Support efforts to develop a major north/south and east/west maritime corridor for the City of Toledo.
- Leverage the region’s strategic location for trans-loading oil and gas products in a safe and efficient manner to support oil and gas productions and refinement, and energy independence.
Passenger Rail Policy Brief

FEDERAL Priorities

- Appropriate full funding for the rail programs at the amounts authorized by the FAST Act. These include programs for State of Good Repair ($140 million), Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements ($190 million), and passenger rail Restoration and Enhancements grants ($20 million).
- Support a viable national passenger rail system through multi-year funding for Amtrak.
- Support expansion of passenger rail service to five daily round trips in the Chicago-Toledo-New York corridor.

✓ The Federal Rail Administration predicts dramatic growth in freight and passenger rail traffic over the next two decades.
✓ Toledo is home to the busiest Amtrak station in Ohio.
✓ Every day, the station hosts 4 Amtrak trains, 2 Toledo-to-Detroit connector buses, 2 dozen Greyhound buses, and frequent Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority (TARTA) service.

STATE Priorities

- In addition to Amtrak, consider regional, short-line, or private sector passenger rail corridors to meet rail transportation needs.
- Invest in station upgrades (expansions and intermodal connections) in order to improve service reliability and be ADA compliant.
- Invest in track improvements (new passing sidings, crossover tracks, etc.) in order to improve efficiency for both passenger and freight rail users.
- Invest in a new Maumee River passenger and freight rail lift bridge (to include pedestrian/bike facilities) near the Middle Grounds to replace or supplement the current over 100-year-old swing bridge, which is a choke point for passenger and freight traffic.
- Support the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative that includes the Lake Shore Corridor from Chicago to Pennsylvania
- Advance all initiatives in the Ohio Hub plan, including the Cleveland-Toledo-Detroit corridor.
- Support funding to preserve the right-of-way of abandoned rail lines for future uses.

LOCAL Priorities

- Support economic development of the Toledo train station area that includes easier on/off access to I-75 as well as improved multi-modal (motor vehicle, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian) connections to the downtown area.
- Support the re-connection of Toledo and Detroit by passenger rail possibly by way of Detroit Metro Airport, and support connections to Ann Arbor as well as western and northern Michigan.
- Support rail/highway grade separation solutions to alleviate blocked crossings and ensure safe and efficient rail and highway travel.
- Support the reintroduction of streetcars for Toledo as another choice for urban and suburban transit.
Pedestrian and Bikeways Policy Brief

FEDERAL Priorities

- Support increased funding for the Transportation Alternatives (TA) program that addresses bikeways, pedestrian facilities, vegetation management, historic transportation facilities, environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity, and the Safe Routes to School program.

STATE Priorities

- Support creation and implementation of a statewide Complete Streets Policy.
- Implement recently passed legislation requiring that Ohio motorists pass bicyclists leaving at least three feet of clearance via a multi-faceted education campaign targeting law enforcement, motorists, and bicyclists.
- Continue and increase funding for Safe Routes to School programs and projects.
- Support renewed funding of the Clean Ohio Fund program including the Trails Fund.
- Support funding to plan and construct a signed network of bicycle-friendly street routes and multi-purpose paths that enable citizens to use bicycles as a practical means of transportation.
- Support the 2018 ODOT Active Transportation Plan.

LOCAL Priorities

- Support implementation of the regional Complete Streets Policy and toolkit including the addition of pedestrian and bicycle facilities (bike lanes or paths) with roadway construction projects. Encourage jurisdictions to adopt their own complete streets policies, resolutions, or ordinances.
- Support implementation of the regional sidewalk policy. Enforce maintenance and snow removal policies on existing facilities and develop new facilities that address major barriers created by expressways, railroad tracks, and rivers.
- Approve and support local designation of the U.S. Bicycle Route System Numbered Corridors.
- Pursue Safe Routes to School initiatives to encourage lifelong healthy and safe personal mobility habits.
- Support the usage and expansion of the ToleGO bikeshare program.
- Support only licensed and responsible scooter-share companies and programs.

REGIONAL Viewpoint

- A full range of mobility choices characterizes successful regions. Walking and bicycling are two methods of non-motorized transportation that require infrastructure in the same way that automobiles require a network of roads, signs, and signals. Investments in sidewalks and on- and off-road bicycle facilities provide safe transport and support the same trip purposes as automobiles and transit. A safe, reliable, accessible, and multimodal network links employees to their places of employment and connects people of all abilities and ages to centers of commerce and to medical, educational, and recreational activities.
FUNDING Priorities

- In 2000, the state of Ohio contributed $43.6 million in general revenue funds (GRF) to be distributed statewide to the 61 transit systems in Ohio. Today, the GRF allocation had dropped to $7.3 million.
- Current transit funding per capita: Pennsylvania $128.83, Michigan $26.78, and Ohio $0.63. Ohio needs an increase in GRF for public transit.
- Support efforts to fund and operate a truly regional, seamless public transit system to serve all the greater Toledo metropolitan area including all of Lucas County. Provide cost-effective access to surrounding counties and connections to and between major cities in the region.

FEDERAL Priorities

- Retain the federal Mass Transit Account (MTA) of the Highway Trust Fund and increase its revenues.
- Incentivize cleaner, greener fleets and fund the replacement of existing diesel buses with environmentally sustainable, alternatively fueled vehicles.
- Retain the transit commuter tax benefit at the same level as the parking tax benefit.
- Retain the alternative fuels tax credit.
- FTA should expedite the current federal grant approval process to speed project delivery and reduce costs of projects. This would include exempting routine activities (i.e., bus replacement, preventive maintenance and equipment) from the regional office approval process.

STATE Priorities

- Support the recommendations contained in the 2015 ODOT Statewide Transit Needs Study including: increased capital funding, better regionalization of transit systems, and the establishment of a bi-partisan state legislative commission to develop ways to create a reliable, dedicated, and sufficient funding stream to increase public transit services in Ohio.
- Double the General Revenue Fund contribution to ODOT Transit Funding.
- Increase ODOT budget to fund half the 20% local match required for Transit Capital Projects. This commitment will ensure that critical capital projects are completed, and federal funds available are being spent in Ohio.
- Amend ORC 306.54 to allow for a resolution to levy tax for regional transit purposes to require only a majority of the municipalities within the territorial boundaries to approve the resolution in order for it to be sent to the county board of elections.
- Expansion of Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, Medicaid, and other funding sources for on-demand rides, to address the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes.

LOCAL Priorities

- Support implementation of locally developed Coordinated Public Transportation and Human Service Transportation plans in Lucas and Wood counties to coordinate transportation services between counties and among all providers—public, private, and non-profit.
- Extend hours of service, strengthen regional connections, and offer faster, more direct routes.
- Improve productivity in service delivery by implementing one-call/one-click information for users.
- Continue adding mechanisms to coordinate under/unserved areas in Wood County.

REGIONAL Viewpoint

- Mobility should be available to all Ohioans regardless of ability, age, economic status, or federally protected class. Successful regions are characterized by a full range of safe, reliable, accessible, and reasonably priced transit services. Transit services link employees to their places of employment and centers of commerce. Transit connects people to healthy food options, and to medical, educational, religious, and recreational activities. Transit services require a viable, regional solution, without which our region will be left behind.
**FEDERAL Priorities**

- Support a sustainable approach to infrastructure funding that provides a long-term solution and addresses the growing backlog of necessary infrastructure investments.
- Enable local flexibility to use federal funds according to locally identified needs. Permit municipalities to use innovative financial techniques to manage projects.

**STATE Priorities**

- Support an increase in Ohio’s base vehicle license plate fee and allow counties and municipalities to enact permissive use plate fees.
- Continue to enable Transportation Improvement District (TID) programs as a vital tool to finance transportation projects.
- Assist municipalities with full funding for resurfacing and reconstruction on U.S. and state routes within their jurisdiction such as by expanding ODOT’s Urban Paving Program.
- Maintain the Jobs & Commerce division grant funding program and the Ohio Development Services Agency Roadwork Development (629) program.
- Continue the State Capital Improvements Program and Local Transportation Improvements Program administered by the Ohio Public Works Commission and the Ohio Bridge Partnership Program.
- Participate in a study of a new I-73/74/75 corridor connecting South Carolina to Michigan via Ohio.

**PROJECT Priorities**

- System preservation of current infrastructure.
- Widen the I-475/US 23 corridor to six lanes between Airport Highway and the Anthony Wayne Trail with a new interchange at US 20A.
- Widen I-475 between US 23 and Douglas Road to six lanes.
- Build a connection between I-75 and Stearns Road west of the City of Fostoria.
- Upgrade US 23 and Monroe Street Interchange in the City of Sylvania.
- Build a connector between the Norfolk Southern Airline Yard and I-75.
- Build a grade separation at Matzinger Road over the CSX railroad.
- Improve interchanges along the I-75 corridor including upgrading the interchange at Wooster Street (SR 64) in Bowling Green and the interchange at Cygnet Road in southern Wood County.
- Connect Fostoria to I-75.
- Invest in Intelligent Transportation Systems to support connected and automated vehicles.