



## **Revitalizing Ohio's Transportation Economy Priorities for Transportation in 2007 and Beyond**

Presented by  
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### **INTRODUCTION – OARC IS AN ACTIVE PARTNER IN TRANSPORTATION DECISION MAKING IN OHIO**

The Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC) represents regional organizations throughout Ohio that partner with state and local governments in providing a world class transportation system for Ohioans. OARC is uniquely positioned to continue to be an active partner with the new state of Ohio administration and contribute to a review of transportation policy in Ohio and the Ohio Department of Transportation. OARC is comprised of 21 agencies serving 1525 municipalities and representing 10.5 million residents of communities around the state. Most of Ohio's regional councils are federally mandated Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). OARC members are local elected officials who determine regional transportation priorities and allocate federal transportation dollars in their area. Our members are well versed in all areas of transportation. They are supported by professional staff involved in transportation system evaluation, monitoring, planning and programming. Our members are both a resource for transportation planning and well-informed end-users of the system.

Following is the OARC overview of Ohio transportation issues with specific policy recommendations. OARC is ready to work with ODOT and the State of Ohio administration to fully develop the potential of our transportation system for the benefit of all Ohioans. We look forward to continuing a strong and positive partnership.

### **TRANSPORTATION IS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PARTICULARLY IN OHIO**

Ohio's transportation system is a vital service and a key part of Ohio's economic livelihood. Each day people and goods must travel dependably and efficiently throughout the state and between Ohio and the rest of the world; but in Ohio,



because of our strategic location on the continent, the transportation and logistics industry also accounts for significant employment. Many thousands of Ohioans make their livelihood directly involved in delivering transportation services. Logistics and distribution, freight brokerage, air, pipeline, rail, transit, marine, and trucking companies all take advantage of the competitive advantages of Ohio's transportation system. Our investments in transportation enable expansion and development in every corner of the state. Truly, transportation investment *is* economic development in Ohio.

### **TRANSPORTATION IS A MULTI-FACETED, MULTI-MODAL BUSINESS IN OHIO**

Ohio's transportation system is strong both because of our state's strategic location and because we utilize all modes of transportation available. Ohio has an excellent network of highways that connect us to all areas of North America. This system must be maintained and improved: but, as distribution logistics emerges as a major economic sector we cannot afford to ship all our "eggs in one basket." Other modes are valuable and need to become more interconnected and made more efficient. Along Lake Erie and the Ohio River, water-borne commerce brings wealth to the state from the east coast, gulf, and ports world-wide. At key locations throughout the state, Ohio's airports move freight and people to all corners of the world. Three Class I railroads (NS, CSX, and CN) and several regional carriers allow rail to serve Ohio's businesses and they have a great potential to move passengers efficiently. Transit systems serve the citizens of urban and rural Ohio alike. State government's decision-making must likewise be multi-modal and comprehensive as we consider transportation policy and investment.

### **A STRONG MULTI-MODAL SYSTEM NEEDS STRONG, STABLE, MULTI-MODAL FUNDING**

We face a time of challenges to our funding system. Funding from traditional financing mechanisms developed in a bygone era is declining just as Ohio must increase its investment in every facet of this system. It is essential that Ohio maintain its current edge and take advantage of new opportunities to become a center in the global marketplace. Municipal governments need help to maintain and improve U.S. and state highways within their borders. Revising tax policies, while important, will not be enough. State leaders must help facilitate creative public-private partnerships to invest in all modes of transportation. To prosper on the world stage we must have an efficient and dependable integrated transportation system and that will require that Ohio develop a new way to fund investments and manage the business of transportation investment at the state level.

## OARC RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the challenge of providing an efficient, integrated transportation system, to maintain and improve upon Ohio's leadership in the transportation and logistics industry, and to utilize the strengths of all modes and connections throughout Ohio and to link Ohio to the rest of the world, OARC recommends the following:

1. Funding Recommendations – Current transportation funding and funding mechanisms are not sustainable in the long term. We need to develop new mechanisms to fund transportation. Specifically,
  - **Ohio's state government needs to establish a system to provide long-term stable and adequate funding for all transportation modes.** A multidisciplinary, bi-partisan, blue ribbon panel must be empowered to do in-depth research on how to replace the outdated gasoline consumption tax and replace it with a true user fee that asks Ohioans to pay more when they use the system more, that collects funding from all modes, and that allows for public agency partnering in investments in modes other than highways.
  - **ODOT should develop a cooperative program to provide even greater assistance with maintenance and reconstruction of numbered highway routes within municipal boundaries.** The current Urban Paving program is a big step in the right direction but it needs to be expanded to include complete reconstruction where warranted. The state needs to be a partner in providing highway system connections within municipalities and urban regions where more than 70% of Ohioans live.
  - **The state should continue to sub-allocate project funds to regions and support regional planning programs.** ODOT has supported its partners at MPOs throughout the state and realizes that regional agencies have a wealth of knowledge of local transportation issues and needed improvements. We appreciate and strongly urge that the practice of sub-allocating federal transportation project funds to urban regions and small MPOs continue and that local officials continue to make decisions on how best to improve the system in their regions. We appreciate and strongly urge continuing support of regional planning with the pass-through of federal planning (PL) and research program (HPR) funds beyond the minimum level required in federal law and continued help in meeting the non-federal match requirements with state funds.

2. Jobs and Economic Development - Transportation provides an excellent tool to create jobs and direct how and where development will take place.
  - **Evaluate transportation investments to ensure they will truly improve Ohio's economy.** Ohio is among the most urbanized states in the union. The urban areas continue to be the driving force of the state's economy because they already have a trained labor force and infrastructure in place. Reinvesting in these areas is the most effective use of scarce government resources and will best serve the citizens of Ohio. Investments should avoid moving jobs and economic energy from fully serviced areas to neo-serviced areas.
  - **Coordinate all state investment to ensure economic development goals are achieved.** All investments by the state should be coordinated and leverage the investments the public and private sector have already made. The Turnaround Ohio initiative that establishes a Governor's Office of Urban Development and Infrastructure and creates an Ohio Development and Redevelopment Plan can ensure this coordination and take advantage of the areas that already have the infrastructure and labor force to serve them.
  - **Continue transportation investments to restore Ohio as a leader in logistics, manufacturing, and technology.** ODOT reports freight moving in Ohio by truck, rail, water, and air will increase from 950 million tons in 1998 to 1,380 million tons in 2020. Continued investment in Ohio's roads and its intermodal facilities will lower transportation costs, making Ohio more attractive not only to the logistics industry, but also to manufacturing which provides 20% of Ohio's wages.
  - **Coordinate state investments in all modes with those of the private sector and local governments.** Ohio's state government must help facilitate creative public-private partnerships to invest in all modes of transportation and develop mechanisms to allow public agency participation and funding in these partnerships
3. ODOT organizational issues - ODOT has made great strides in becoming a more effective organization to fulfill its mission. Many of these changes should be maintained and others are needed. Specifically,
  - **ODOT must continue its focus on efficiency and should continually reinforce its emphasis on maintaining existing systems as cost-effectively as possible.** ODOT has made great progress at streamlining its administration and highway project development and delivery, reducing overhead and staffing while delivering a larger program.

- **ODOT needs to expand its emphasis beyond a highway-only focus and establish a credible presence in all modes and direct attention to multi-modal connections.** The twenty-first century economy requires a holistic logistics focus for freight and a seamless integrated system for passengers. ODOT needs a freight division with a freight coordinator and a strong public transit division. The State of Ohio needs to identify additional state funding for public transit. Each mode (e.g. air, rail, transit) needs to be credibly represented in the organization of ODOT and integrated into policy, planning, and programming for Ohio.
  - **Ohio needs to advance the “Ohio Hub Plan” and support the “Midwest Regional Rail Compact” for improved passenger rail throughout the state and to destinations in surrounding states.** Passenger rail presents an opportunity to reduce congestion on highways and air systems and is very effective for passenger movement in high-density corridors. With funding and completion of these two systems Ohioans would receive high quality service competitive with highway and air for many destinations.
  - **The LPA process that allows local jurisdictions to take a greater role in design and delivery of federal and state-funded projects must be maintained.** It has allowed flexibility and responsiveness in delivering projects for Ohio.
  - **The partnership between ODOT and the Ohio Department of Public Safety to deliver a new safety focused program should continue and be expanded.** This partnership has allowed transportation agencies to utilize the accident data of ODPS and engineering expertise of ODOT to address problems.
4. Planning and Project Selection – ODOT has opened its processes for planning and project selection to greater public scrutiny and subjected these decisions to planning analysis. It has realized the benefit of working cooperatively with MPOs around Ohio. Many of these changes should be maintained and others are needed. Specifically,
- **The Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) should be maintained.** TRAC is a great step forward in linking rational planning analysis to investment priorities for major new projects in Ohio. The TRAC should be maintained but the process needs to be more flexible and, again, more multi-modal. TRAC’s focus needs to expand to include consideration of major projects that are in other modes, and resist focusing primarily on interstate projects included in “Governor Taft’s Jobs and Progress Plan.”

**ODOT needs a strong “complete streets” focus and policy.** ODOT has taken initial steps to include the consideration of bicycle and pedestrian issues in the design of all transportation projects and we encourage an even stronger “complete streets” policy to include all users of a facility in the design of projects (bicycle, pedestrian, transit, auto/truck all use the public right of way).

- **ODOT needs to increase its efforts to encourage meaningful cooperative stakeholder involvement in the project development process, especially on major projects that affect large numbers of residents and businesses.** Cooperative involvement will allow local stakeholders to be part of project decisions which will enable coordination with local capital improvement programs and facilitate consensus building. Efforts to develop consensus early in the project development process can prevent controversy that sometimes arises when projects begin to affect residents and businesses.
- **ODOT needs to allow MPOs to be involved in the initial phases of project development beyond systems planning for large multi-jurisdictional projects.** These complex major projects require broad support and collaborative processes that MPOs are well suited to provide by the nature of their ongoing regional focus.

**CONCLUSION: OHIO’S REGIONAL COUNCILS ARE UP TO SPEED, AND READY TO HELP MAKE OUR TRANSPORTATION FUTURE BRIGHT**

The Ohio Association of Regional Councils is well-informed, well-prepared to implement transportation initiatives, and vitally concerned with the growth and development of Ohio’s transportation system. We welcome collaboration at all levels and look forward to a continued productive partnership with the Ohio state administration and the Ohio Department of Transportation as we work to fully develop the potential of our state’s transportation system.