Ohio Municipal League

Our Cities and Villages ★ Bringing Ohio to Life

TESTIMONY

Before The

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

February 17, 2015

Introduction of Ohio Municipal League

And

Municipal Transportation and Infrastructure Needs

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ABOUT THE OHIO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

The Ohio Municipal League was formed in 1952 by city and village officials who saw the need for a statewide association to serve the interests of and promote Ohio government.

The OML is governed by a Board of Trustees of municipal officials elected by the members. Membership is voluntary. The Board is the policy-making body which appoints an Executive Director to manage the League under their general direction. The OML provides legislative representation, numerous training programs, publications, bulletins, a website, a legal advocacy program, a field representative, workers' comp group rating pools and other services to its members.

OML staff members that spend a major portion of their time on legislative activities include Edward Albright, Director of Legislative Affairs, Kent Scarrett, Director of Communications and Lobbyist and Josh Brown, Legislative Advocate.

ABOUT MUNICIPALITIES AND THEIR TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

There are 934 municipalities in Ohio. They provide a wide variety of services to their residents, businesses and those working in or traveling through their boundaries. The list of these services is extensive but all of them are designed to enhance quality of life. These services are expected, taken for granted and expensive.

Transportation

In the category of transportation, streets tend to rise to the top of municipal needs. There are over 74,000 lane miles of municipal streets in Ohio. These are in constant need of repair due to the climate conditions and use by all types of vehicles. These thoroughfares need regular resurfacing, they need the snow removed, they need to be lighted and have traffic signs and signals to control the save movement of traffic. And from time to time new streets need to be constructed to accommodate growth and economic development activities.

Funding for all of these activities in cities and villages is primarily through distribution of gas tax and motor vehicle license fees. During more recent times these sources have become less sufficient. Municipalities have been forced to use general operating fund dollars and even earmark portions of municipal income tax revenues for street maintenance and repair. A large percentage of municipal corporations have state highways within their borders. The state has increasingly left the maintenance and repair of these state highways to the municipalities so that they are required to spend more and more scarce local dollars.

Infrastructure

Transportation can also be categorized as infrastructure because after all streets and associated street needs are basic installations and facilities. However there are additional other important infrastructure needs for cities and villages.

There are over 500 municipal water supply systems in Ohio. The basic installations and facilities for these systems are purification plants, extensive underground delivery systems, reservoirs and storage tanks. Supplying safe drink water is heavily regulated by the Federal EPA and the state EPA. New regulations with deadlines appear often and are costly. A number of the water treatment and delivery systems are old and in need of constant repair. Closely linked to safe drinking water is the adequacy of sewage disposal systems and treatment plants. Like water, these systems are heavily regulated and much of the infrastructure is underground.

Many years ago there were federal funds available to construct both of the above mentioned facilities; those are no longer available. Operation of water and waste water systems is currently funded through local user fees and the capital improvements on those systems are mainly funded through local bonded indebtedness. Other infrastructure needs and expenses are related to the storm water runoff issues and solid waste disposal. Local funding sources are stretched thin. Raising local user fees can be as unpopular as raising local taxes.

While most Ohioans get their electricity through private providers Ohio's municipally owned electric companies and gas companies also provide power for businesses and residents.

SOME THOUGHTS FOR CONSIDERATION – TRANSPORTATION

…Generally, adequate transportation funding for municipal transportation related projects needs to be given a priority by the state. This policy should represent a joint agreement between local governments to effectuate a mutually efficient and effective system of transportation. To achieve this the state and local governments should explore more and better future funding sources.

… More specifically, require ODOT to pay 100% of costs for the maintenance of state highways inside municipal boundaries.

… Require direct distribution of gasoline tax and motor vehicle license fee revenues to municipalities.

… Provide for mass transit systems that more realistically serve the needs of users in today's economy.

… Provide permissive opportunities for local governments to raise revenues locally to better fund transportation.

SOME THOUGHTS FOR CONSIDERATION – INFRASTRUCTURE

…Generally, caring for a municipality's aging infrastructure falls directly in the laps of city or village tax or rate payers. The laws need to allow for more flexibility to fund these activities at the local level.

… State mandated standards, regulations and programs should not be imposed upon maintaining municipal infrastructure unless state funding is provided.

… State policy or regulations should not cause local revenues used for infrastructure (and other purposes) to be reduced.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these thoughts today. We at OML and our municipal members look forward to working with the General Assembly to find solutions.

APPENDIX I

SERVICES PROVIDED IN CITIES AND VILLAGES

(not an all inclusive list)

police	building inspections	traffic control
fire	hospitals	housing programs
emergency medical	swimming pools	tree planting & removal
water	golf courses	snow removal
sewer	community centers	garbage collection
storm water	senior citizens center	street lighting
electric	recycling	street maintenance & repair
natural gas	parks	courts
handicap ramps	cemeteries	birth certificates
leaf removal	street construction	wi-fi

APPENDIX II