



WAYNE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Ron Amstutz ★ Ann M. Obrecht ★ Sue A. Smail

Senate Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee
HB 26 – Transportation Budget – March 22, 2017
Ron Amstutz, Wayne County Commissioner

Good morning Chairman LaRose, Vice Chairwoman Kunze, Ranking Member Tavares and members of the committee. I'm Ron Amstutz, a member of the Wayne County Board of Commissioners. It's my honor to stand before you this morning in my newly minted role as an elected county commissioner. I'm here in conjunction with my partners across the state via the the County Commissioners Association of Ohio.

I'm here as a proponent of SB 26, which proposes a transportation operating budget that is crucial to the ongoing health of our transportation system, but with the desire to review with you a change that appears in this substitute version pending before you that introduces a concern with its approach to giving counties permissive authority to consider adopting an additional five dollar motor vehicle license fee.

The version that came to you from the House conforms to the longstanding approach of giving flexibility to locally elected commissioners to decide whether to enact a range of optional fees and taxes that are customized to the needs of each of our communities. When these fees and taxes are enacted they are explicitly subject to local voter referendum as one of the checks on this authority.

While we appreciate that this substitute bill retains the permissive option, we are concerned that the language in this version before you removes much of that authority by making enactment of the permissive fee subject to voter prior approval. This is concerning if we take the view that our republic is an ideal system — a republic that elects representative leaders with the accountability resting on them lead the delivery of governmental services. And this is our view.

We would like to respectfully ask this committee and the Senate as a body to amend this provision toward a middle ground between the House language and this version's language to give commissioners options of either running a process that leads to their making the policy decision or to a direct voter decision. We are all aware that we have many transportation infrastructure challenges. We know that a substantial portion of the challenge rests with you as state policy-makers. We appreciate that we are also major partners, along with our county engineers, and our municipal and township leaders in these infrastructure challenges. This provision is important as an option.

We look forward to working with this committee, the Senate, the House and the Executive toward achieving an optimum provision.