

Group Calls for Public Transportation, Safe School Routes Funding in Transportation Budget

With the General Assembly expected to begin debate on the FY24-25 transportation budget next month, Greater Ohio Policy Center (GOPC) this week released its recommendations focusing on two programs.

First, GOPC said lawmakers should invest at least \$75 million per year in public transportation, or \$150 million over the biennium.

The group noted that the current transportation budget is relying on a combination of General Revenue Funds (GRF) and federal highway “flex funding” to get a net allocation of \$70 million for public transit agencies. However, because there is a requirement that local agencies provide matching funds to draw down federal funds means the funding is inaccessible to small, rural systems, GOPC said.

GOPC said it is recommending that instead of using “flex funding” for transit, lawmakers should favor 100 percent GRF spending.

The group is also asking lawmakers to match Ohio’s \$5 million in federal funding for the “Safe Routes to Schools” Program with \$5 million from the GRF for a total of \$10 million per year. GOPC said the program is popular and oversubscribed and is protecting the lives of children.

“Since FY20, the Ohio General Assembly has invested a record \$141.5 million in Ohio’s public transportation agencies,” GOPC said in its “white paper” on the subject. “This has been an important down payment for Ohio’s future, but now is not the time to pull back support for public transportation funding.”

GOPC added, “Ohio has made notable progress by investing in public transportation, diversifying our transportation network, and emphasizing public safety in roadway construction and design. This work has greatly enhanced opportunities for multi-modal transportation system access in both large cities and smaller legacy cities throughout Ohio. Likewise, the adoption of the Walk.Bike.Ohio plan by [the Ohio Department of Transportation] – Ohio’s first-ever statewide active transportation policy - must be followed-up with critical investment in active transportation policies and projects.

“The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law enacted by Congress in 2021 presents an even greater opportunity for Ohio to invest in a transportation network that is designed to accommodate all users, is financially sustainable, and above all else, addresses local needs.”

To read the “white paper” in its entirety, go to www.hannah.com >Important Documents and Notices>Library.

Story originally published in *The Hannah Report* on January 23, 2023. Copyright 2023 Hannah News Service, Inc.