

The County Road to Success and the Bridge to the Future



CEAO's Priority Legislative Issues, as adopted by the Legislative Committee, are of critical importance to counties in the state of Ohio. County Engineers are responsible for 26,346 bridges and 28,970 miles of urban and rural roadways that are vital to the continued growth and prosperity of the state. Although Ohio is ranked 35th in the nation by geographic size, it has the fourth largest interstate network. The state is within a 600-mile drive of half of the nation's population and is considered a crossroads for America's manufacturing and agricultural industries. Every trip begins and ends on a local road. CEAO is here to collaborate with all to keep Ohio's transportation network open for business.

Who we are: Ohio's County Engineers are responsible for duties in the areas of civil engineering, surveying, drainage improvements, permitting within public rights-of-way, as well as highway and bridge construction and maintenance. By Ohio statute, the County Engineer must hold dual registrations as both a Professional Engineer (P.E.) and a Professional

Surveyor (P.S.). This dual registration requirement has led to Ohio's national reputation for excellence and safety.

The professional qualification requirement of the County Engineer is critical to the citizens of Ohio. It is necessary that a County Engineer holds both a professional engineering and surveying license due to the magnitude of the duties mandated to the office. The Ohio Revised Code contains 17 separate sections relating to surveying, all duties for which the county must ultimately be responsible. Additional benefits of having County Engineers dually registered include ensuring that engineers elected have the appropriate professional education and experience. Lastly, by having the dual license expectation, real savings are realized as taxpayers only pay for one position rather than multiple employees.

The Association is promoting before the 132nd General Assembly the following proposals for legislation. They are intended to enhance the budgets of County Engineers, in part by allowing them to accomplish more with funds currently available.

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County Engineers Association of Ohio

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM



FOR THE 132nd OHIO GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Current Funding Situation in Ohio

County Engineers, although using revenues efficiently, cannot keep up with the increasing costs for improvements.

Total Current Annual

Revenue: \$450 million

Current Annual Need: \$1.12 billion

Funding Deficiency: 60%

Total Number of County Bridges

26,346

Closed 96

Posted with load limits 1,553

One lane 3,092

50 years and older 9,595

Eligible for repair 5,848

Eligible for replacement 2,029

Cost per year for bridges on a 10 year schedule: \$127.5 million

Total Miles of County Highway

28,970

Miles less than 20 feet wide (below current standards) 18,879

Between 20 and 24 feet 9,422

Greater than 24 feet 669

Cost per year to widen county roads to current standards on a 20 year schedule: \$226 million

Cost per year to pave county roads on a 10 year schedule: \$362.1 million

Cost per year to maintain county highway system : \$406.5 million

(including guardrail, pavement marking, signs, culverts, mowing, snow plowing, etc.)

CEAO Legislative Priorities

FUNDING

Gasoline Excise Tax Increase

While Congress has not increased the federal gas tax since 1993, 18 states and D.C. have raised their gas tax or adjusted their tax formula since 2013 to bring in more revenue for transportation. The last time Ohio raised its gasoline tax was in 2003. In the meantime, County Engineers have lost 50% of their buying power to inflation.

License Plate Fee Increase

Allow local authorities to expand the license plate fee by up to \$15, with revenue being split between local governments including counties, townships, and municipalities.

Hybrid/Electric/Natural Gas/Alternative Fuels Tax

Require hybrids, electric, natural gas, and other alternate fuel vehicles to pay a fair share for road use. Saving money on gasoline should not preclude one from paying for use of Ohio's roadways. The tax should be tied to construction inflation.

Other Transportation Revenue Ideas

Personal property tax on luxury vehicles, designated sales tax, levies, tolling, 3P, driver's license, rental vehicles.

EFFICIENCY IN STATE GOVERNMENT

Gasoline Tax Collection Moved from the Distribution Level to the Terminal Rack

Modify the law governing the motor fuel excise tax by changing the point of taxation (PAT) from the receipt of fuel to the removal of fuel from a Terminal Rack. This concept is in line with collection of the PAT and the federal motor fuel tax that is currently collected at the Rack by the supplier and remitted to the state and the federal government. Moving the state motor fuel tax to the Rack would reduce the number of collectors which would improve compliance with the current tax laws. This will ensure a level playing field regarding taxes for all in the industry. This move

would, in turn, have a positive impact on consumers.

Force Account

Current force account limits were last increased in June 2003 with no inflationary factors provided. These thresholds must be first adjusted to reflect the increase in the cost of construction since July 1, 2003 and then annually increased by the Consumer Price Index. **Threshold limits should reflect only that work completed by government agencies (upheld by two Ohio court cases).** The taxpayers will benefit from more efficient use of local government forces and more county road/bridge improvements without the General Assembly raising taxes.

State Prevailing Wage on County Road Projects

Eliminate state prevailing wage on county projects, or, at a minimum, raise the state prevailing wage requirement on road and bridge projects to match that of other construction projects in ORC 4115.03. (Schools constructed with non-prevailing wage showed a 20% savings).

Advertising Costs Using State/Local Funds

Eliminate newspaper project bid advertising requirement and allow counties to advertise project bids on an online county webpage.

SAFETY OF THE TRAVELING PUBLIC

Overweight Vehicle Fines

ORC 5577.99 should be amended to credit all overweight fines to the maintenance and repair of county roads, highways, bridges, or culverts, instead of to the law library.

Guardrail Standards

ORC 5591.36 guardrail mandates need revised to comply with state and federal design standards.

Road/Bridge Funds—Funding Sheriff's Deputy

ORC 5577 should be amended to make the funding of a sheriff's deputy from the highway funds permissive instead of mandatory.

EFFICIENCY IN COUNTY ENGINEERING

Bridge Definition from 10 Feet to 20 Feet

The definition of a bridge as in ORC 5501.47(B)(1)(c) should be changed to 20 feet to conform with the federal definition. Bridges less than 20 feet will remain the responsibility of County Engineers (including those on township roads).

Bridge Inspection Intervals

Due to element level bridge inspection requirements, inspection intervals should match federal law of 24 months, not 12 months (ORC 5543.20). The County Engineer has the option to inspect at more frequent intervals if necessary.

Load Restrictions

County Engineers currently have the ability to post load limit restrictions on bridges located on county or township roads. This power is essential to preserve the safety of citizens. In this vein, the County Engineer should have the ability to post load restrictions on specific roadways after the completion of an engineering analysis, as well as to create specific haul routes for cargo that would be detrimental to local highways.

OUPS Legislation

Public road rights-of-way were established for the purpose of maintaining the integrity and safety of roadways. OUPS legislation needs to allow the public agency owning the right-of-way to maintain the control of its designated use.

Stormwater Management Districts

Stormwater management districts, established under ORC 6115, need to have the ability to raise revenue to fund EPA mandates, along with constructing and maintaining stormwater systems.

Drainage Petition Bonding

Bonding requirements for petition ditches under ORC 6131 need to be increased to cover engineering and mailing costs.