



Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission

Monthly Legislative Update

MARCH 2016

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Table of Contents

Top Advocacy Items 2-3

Top State News 3-5

MORPC Legislative Tracking 6-8

Top Federal News 8





TOP ADVOCACY ITEMS

<i>Priority</i>	<i>Status</i>
Promote Energy Efficiency and an Abundant Supply of Safe, Reliable, and Affordable Sources of Energy for our Growing Region	<p>On February 26, 2016, members of the Regional Policy Roundtable and the Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC) held a joint meeting, at which members of the Executive Committee were invited to participate. Members at the joint meetings, reviewed and discussed Energy Mandates in Ohio and further discussed the possibility of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) reaching a position on the recommendations provided by the Ohio Energy Mandates Study Committee.</p> <p>Commission members will vote on a resolution, at the March 10th Commission meeting, that supports and approves positions for MORPC.</p>
Seek Federal Funding for Regional Projects	<p>MORPC is analyzing the recently-passed FAST Act to determine the opportunities that the bill may provide for funding projects in our region. One area of interest is the FASTLANE program that provides more than \$4 billion in competitively awarded grants over the bill's five-year period. A Notice of Funding Opportunity has just been issued for this program. Applications are due on April 14.</p> <p>Additionally, the latest \$500 million round of TIGER grants was announced. Applications for funding from it are due on April 29.</p>
Explore Possibility of Passing Legislation to Increase Local Government License Plate Fees for Funding Infrastructure	<p>MORPC's License Plate Task Force continues its work with statewide organizations to identify next steps in advocacy.</p> <p>Meetings with members of the Central Ohio General Assembly delegation have identified additional supporters.</p>
Establish MORPC as Top MPO Resource for Ohio Congressional Delegation on Transportation Issues	<p>The U.S. Department of Transportation announced its first-ever Smart Cities grant program. Medium-sized cities (populations of between 200,000 and 850,000 residents) will compete for a single grant worth potentially \$50 million to address the challenges caused by the potential of rapid growth. MORPC worked with the City of Columbus to help prepare its proposal which was submitted last month. Additional key partners in the Columbus grant application include The Ohio State University and Batelle.</p> <p>Additionally, MORPC's staff participated in the Columbus Region Coalition's Capitol Hill visits last week.</p>



TOP ADVOCACY ITEMS

<i>Priority</i>	<i>Status</i>
Work With Our Regional Partners to Identify Significant Projects and Grant Opportunities to Benefit the Region	<p>In preparation for this year’s state capital bill, the Columbus region has assembled a diverse group of community and cross-sector leaders and organizations to analyze projects in the Columbus region and communicate the merits of those projects to the Administration and General Assembly. The primary goal of this group is to ensure the capital budget maximizes the economic impact to our region and state.</p> <p>MORPC’s proposed project – a regional data lab – was recommended for funding by this regional group.</p>
Secure Additional Resources for the Clean Ohio Program	<p>Governor Kasich is expected to allocate up to \$100 million to the Clean Ohio fund in the introduced version of the state capital bill. If this occurs, MORPC will work with the Clean Ohio Coalition to safeguard the funding as the bill moves through the legislative process.</p>

TOP STATE NEWS

Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a proposed rule that would require stores accepting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food stamps to stock a healthy variety of foods.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODAg) is encouraging farmers to apply for part of the \$17.5 million in funding available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

Attorney General

Ohio has joined a pair of multimillion dollar settlements with Natixis Funding Corp. and Societe Generale over allegations the companies rigged bids and defrauded local governments and nonprofits as part of municipal bond deals.

Ballot Issues

Attorney General Mike DeWine Friday rejected the petition language for a proposed constitutional amendment that would automatically register Ohioans to vote when they apply for, renew, update or replace their driver’s licenses. DeWine said that while the summary of the proposed amendment states that it will register citizens “who are eligible to vote in Ohio,” the amendment text itself applies prospectively to register any person “who will be eligible to vote in the next statewide primary or general election.” This distinction may mislead potential signers as to who would be registered to vote as a result of the amendment, he said.



TOP STATE NEWS

Economic Development

JobsOhio is reporting record numbers for employment growth and corporate investment in 2015. Advanced manufacturing topped agency projects in new job growth, while bio-health expansion led targeted industries as a percentage of its total state workforce. Food processing was not far behind. The development agency's 2015 review and 2016 strategic plan reports 10 percent growth in new jobs and private investments compared with Calendar Year 2014. JobsOhio projects expect to create 23,602 new positions and retain more than twice that many, with the commitment to keep 54,233 existing jobs in Ohio. Retained payroll of \$3.1 billion nearly tripled new jobs payroll of \$1.1 billion. Capital spending estimates came in at \$6.7 billion.

Elections

The U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Ohio's law on false statements in political campaigns is an unconstitutional restriction on free speech, upholding the decision of a lower court.

Elections 2016

According to the Ohio Supreme Court, the Judicial Votes Count website has been updated to provide voters with information on the judicial candidates on the March 15 primary ballot. Ohio voters will determine 145 judicial seats this year, including three Ohio Supreme Court seats, 27 seats on Ohio courts of appeals, and 115 seats on common pleas courts.

Energy

Members of the Ohio Conservative Energy Forum (OHCEF) asked legislators to embrace an "all-of-the-above" energy policy and called for an end to the freeze on clean energy standards set in 130-SB310 (Balderson). OHCEF Executive Director Mike Hartley said the group's primary objective for the day was to make the case for conservative support for a "forward-thinking" energy policy, according to the organization.

The regional transmission organization (RTO) responsible for the wholesale electric markets of 13 states in the upper Midwest and mid-Atlantic says neither incumbent utilities nor policymakers in Ohio have the authority to enact power purchase agreements (PPA) that could introduce consumer-unfriendly "re-regulation," as Ohio critics charge, but could also circumvent the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) power to ensure fair markets for all RTO states.

Environment

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) terminated two Central Office employees and demoted one Northeast District Office employee following an internal investigation of its response to the village of Sebring's water issues.

Highlighting the economic and natural resources benefits of the Great Lakes, a coalition of business, environmental and local government groups urged all of the remaining presidential candidates to support Great Lakes restoration efforts. Their platform asks the presidential candidates to maintain at least \$300 million per year in federal investments to protect and restore the Great Lakes.



TOP STATE NEWS

General Assembly/Statehouse

The Senate reshuffled leadership and seated a new member in reaction to Sen. Chris Widener's (R-Springfield) retirement last month. Sen. Larry Obhof (R-Medina) was elected Senate president pro tem, succeeding Widener, and Sen. Gayle Manning (R-North Ridgeville) rose to take Obhof's old position as majority whip. Rep. Bob Hackett (R-London) was seated as Widener's replacement in the 10th Senate District.

Governor

Gov. John Kasich announced the appointment of Scott Milburn as his deputy chief of staff, effective Feb. 29. Milburn, who led communication efforts on Kasich's first gubernatorial campaign in 2010, served as communication director in the governor's office until last summer, when he left for a similar role with Kasich's campaign for president. Jai Chabria has left the governor's office and now has a new position at the Ohio Republican Party.

Local Government

The Ohio Municipal League (OML) Board of Trustees announced the appointment of Kent Scarrett as the organization's new executive director, succeeding Susan Cave. After 22 years as executive director, Cave had announced her intent to retire last October.

Marijuana

Sens. Dave Burke (R-Marysville) and Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Heights) concluded their planned stops on a listening tour to hear from Ohioans about medical marijuana with an event in Toledo. The senators said they heard from hundreds of Ohioans who gave a broad spectrum of opinions on the subject. According to Yuko, they included families of children with intractable seizures, veterans with PTSD, individuals with MS, individuals recovering from addiction, people with intractable and chronic pain, cancer survivors, members of law enforcement, various health professionals and concerned citizens.

The Marijuana Policy Project (MPP) unveiled the detailed language of a proposed constitutional amendment that would legalize medical marijuana in Ohio. If passed, Ohioans with "debilitating medical conditions" could get a medical marijuana card and purchase marijuana from a licensed dispensary, or grow their own. The group officially filed the issue with the attorney general Thursday.

Public Safety

The Ohio Department of Public Safety's Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) announced that it is accepting applications for the Ohio Community-Police Relations Grant Program. Grant recipients can receive up to \$30,000 to fund initiatives designed to improve relationships between communities and law enforcement agencies serving them.

The Ohio Second District Court of Appeals recently upheld legislation that put restrictions on traffic cameras, including requiring a law enforcement officer to be present to witness any violations. Springfield had sued the state over provisions enacted in 130-SB342 (Seitz), claiming it violated the home rule provision of the Ohio Constitution.

Taxation

A new study shows the state's sales tax holiday created in 130-SB243 (Bacon) boosted Ohio sales tax revenues by \$4.7 million while saving shoppers \$3.3 million in taxes. The report, "Economic Analysis on the Effects of Back-to-School Sales Tax Holiday in Ohio," was presented to the Senate Ways and Means Committee during sponsor and proponent testimony on SB264 (Bacon), which would make the August holiday an annual, permanent event.



MORPC LEGISLATIVE TRACKING

- HB12** TIF-INCENTIVE DISTRICTS (BUTLER, JR. J, BURKLEY T) To establish a procedure by which political subdivisions proposing a tax increment financing (TIF) incentive district are required to provide notice to the record owner of each parcel within the proposed incentive district before creating the district, and to permit such owners, under specific conditions, to exclude their parcels from the incentive district by submitting a written response.
Current Status: 2/16/2016 - House Ways and Means, (Third Hearing)
Recent Status: 2/9/2016 - House Ways and Means, (Second Hearing); 3/17/2015 - House Ways and Means, (First Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA131-HB-12>
- HB182** JOINT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS (SCHURING K) To revise the law governing the creation and operation of joint economic development districts (JEDDs) and enterprise zones.
Current Status: 2/23/2016 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways and Means
Recent Status: 2/10/2016 - PASSED BY HOUSE; Vote 95-0; 2/10/2016 - Bills for Third Consideration
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA131-HB-182>
- HB222** PUBLIC TRANSIT EMPLOYEE-ASSAULT (DRIEHAUS D, PERALES R) To increase the penalty for assault when the victim is an employee of an Ohio transit system whom the offender knows or has reasonable cause to know is such an employee engaged in the performance of the victim's duties; to permit the court to impose a fine of up to \$5000 and a six-month or lifetime prohibition from riding an Ohio transit system for assault committed in such specified circumstances; to authorize Ohio transit systems to post a warning sign indicating that abuse or assault of staff will not be tolerated and might result in a felony conviction; and to increase the penalty for evading payment of the known fares of a public transportation system.
Current Status: 2/23/2016 - House Judiciary, (Second Hearing)
Recent Status: 6/9/2015 - House Judiciary, (First Hearing); 5/26/2015 - Referred to Committee House Judiciary
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA131-HB-222>
- HB233** REDEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS (SCHURING K) To authorize municipal corporations to create downtown redevelopment districts and innovation districts for the purposes of promoting the rehabilitation of historic buildings, creating jobs, encouraging economic development in commercial and mixed-use areas, and supporting grants and loans to technology-oriented and other businesses.
Current Status: 2/23/2016 - Senate Ways and Means, (Third Hearing)
Recent Status: 2/17/2016 - Senate Ways and Means, (Third Hearing); 1/20/2016 - Senate Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA131-HB-233>
- HCR7** TAX EXEMPT MUNICIPAL BONDS (SPRAGUE R) To urge the President and the Congress of the United States to preserve the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds.
Current Status: 2/23/2016 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways and Means
Recent Status: 2/17/2016 - ADOPTED BY HOUSE; Vote 93-0; 2/17/2016 - Bills for Third Consideration
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA131-HCR-7>



MORPC LEGISLATIVE TRACKING

- SB48** BICYCLE HELMET REQUIREMENT (SKINDELL M) To require bicycle operators and passengers under 18 years of age to wear protective helmets when the bicycle is operated on a roadway and to establish the Bicycle Safety Fund to be used by the Department of Public Safety to assist low-income families in the purchase of bicycle helmets.
Current Status: 2/10/2016 - Senate Transportation, Commerce and Labor, (First Hearing)
Recent Status: 2/18/2015 - Referred to Committee Senate Transportation, Commerce and Labor; 2/11/2015 - Introduced
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA131-SB-48>
- SB75** AGRITOURISM-ZONING (JONES S, PETERSON B) To limit the authority of a board of county commissioners or board of township trustees to prohibit agritourism through zoning, to apply current agricultural use valuation to land used for agritourism for property tax purposes, and to establish immunity in a civil action for agritourism providers.
Current Status: 1/20/2016 - Referred to Committee House Agriculture and Rural Development
Recent Status: 11/17/2015 - PASSED BY SENATE; Vote 30-1; 11/17/2015 - Bills for Third Consideration
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA131-SB-75>
- SB152** GEOGRAPHIC EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS (UECKER J) To enact section 9.49 and to repeal sections 153.013 and 5525.26 of the Revised Code to prohibit a public authority from requiring a contractor to employ a certain percentage of individuals from the geographic area of the public authority for the construction or professional design of a public improvement.
Current Status: 2/16/2016 - House State Government, (Fourth Hearing)
Recent Status: 2/3/2016 - BILL AMENDED, House State Government, (Third Hearing); 10/14/2015 - House State Government, (Second Hearing)
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA131-SB-152>
- SB192** TRAFFIC LAW REVISION (BALDERSON T) To provide that when a motor vehicle passes a bicycle the safe passing distance to the left is three feet, and to alter the protocol for proceeding into an intersection that has malfunctioning traffic lights.
Current Status: 2/10/2016 - Senate Transportation, Commerce and Labor, (Second Hearing)
Recent Status: 12/9/2015 - Senate Transportation, Commerce and Labor, (First Hearing); 9/15/2015 - Referred to Committee Senate Transportation, Commerce and Labor
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA131-SB-192>
- SB235** INCREASED VALUE-PROPERTY TAX (BEAGLE B, COLEY W) To enact section 5709.45 of the Revised Code to exempt from property tax the increased value of property on which industrial or commercial development is planned until construction of new commercial or industrial facilities at the property commences.
Current Status: 1/20/2016 - Senate Ways and Means, (Second Hearing)
Recent Status: 12/8/2015 - Senate Ways and Means, (First Hearing); 11/10/2015 - Referred to Committee Senate Ways and Means
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA131-SB-192>



MORPC LEGISLATIVE TRACKING

SB251 DRONE USE-LAW ENFORCEMENT (SKINDELL M, JORDAN K) To regulate the use of drones for gathering evidence and information by law enforcement officers in Ohio.
Current Status: 1/20/2016 - Referred to Committee Senate Government Oversight and Reform
Recent Status: 12/8/2015 - Introduced
State Bill Page: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA131-SB-251>

TOP FEDERAL NEWS

In February, the Congressional fiscal year (FY) 2017 budget process began in earnest, as President Barack Obama released his budget. President Obama proposed a 10-year saving plan, which includes some spending tax cuts and a \$3 trillion tax increase on wealthy individuals and some businesses. In addition, Obama proposed a \$10-a-barrel fee on crude oil, which would help pay for more than \$300 billion in infrastructure improvements. Obama's proposed budget is virtually dead on arrival.

Congress is moving quickly. The House and Senate Budget committees held budget hearings with various committees marking up their "Views and Estimates." Congressional members seek to speed up the budget and appropriations process this year with the goal of passing all 12 individual appropriations bills before FY 2017 begins on September 1, 2016.

The U.S. Senate Commerce Committee is expected to unveil its version of a comprehensive multi-year FAA reauthorization bill in the next several days and might consider the legislation this month. The Senate has held off on taking action on reauthorization, watching progress on the House bill closely, but the House bill has stalled. Instead, House leaders are pushing forward with a short-term (three-month) extension while a compromise is reached. The Senate is expected to agree with an extension while work on a longer-term bill is finished.



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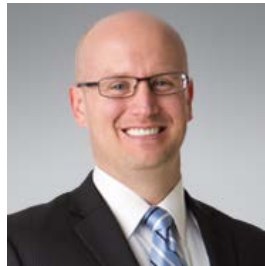
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