



MID-OHIO REGIONAL
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March 24, 2023

Representative Jay Edwards
The Ohio House of Representatives
77 South High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Representative Edwards,

I write this letter in advance of the conference committee on House Bill 23 to urge you to reinsert language providing \$10 million per fiscal year to Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs). This amendment was championed by our colleagues at the Ohio Rural Development Alliance (ORDA). RTPOs are a critical resource for rural and Appalachian communities to plan and implement transportation improvements, and their current funding level does not adequately serve their increasing needs.

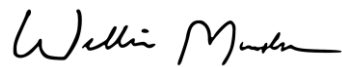
Before RTPOs, planning was coordinated directly between counties and ODOT, hindering collaboration around shared regional goals. There are now six RTPOs operating across the state, allowing local elected officials, planners, businesses, local transportation organizations, and other stakeholders to collaborate and strategically plan for the future – all while taking that burden off the shoulders of ODOT. They provide a range of services to local governments with small staffs, including transportation and economic development planning activities.

While Governor DeWine's budget does provide a modest increase to their state funding, it is nowhere near enough for RTPOs to live up to their full potential, let alone meet current demand. The work that RTPOs are now undertaking – including active transportation plans, thoroughfare plans, economic development, strategic planning, and more – are above and beyond traditional cyclical planning. In our RTPO – the Central Ohio Rural Planning Organization (CORPO) - we have many communities that have expressed interest in more planning support to accommodate infrastructure improvements and growth. Furthermore, we received over \$5 million in funding requests from CORPO members but could only secure a small fraction of the funding. For reference, the statewide annual appropriation for RTPOs is currently less than \$2 million. Demand for RTPO services continues to grow, but we cannot provide services at the level they need without this additional support.

As a point of further clarification, this amendment should not be conflated with the \$1 billion rural highway fund from the House's version of the bill. An increase in the RTPO line item will be needed with or without the rural highway fund, and both provisions should be considered independently on their own merits.

As you enter the next phase of the transportation budget negotiations, we strongly encourage you to restore this support for our rural and Appalachian communities. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at wmurdock@morpc.org or 614-465-6446.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Murdock". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

William Murdock, AICP
Executive Director
Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission