
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Review Advisory Council (VETOED)

- Would have altered the membership of the Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) by doing the following:
 - Reducing the number of members appointed by the Governor from six to five;
 - Increasing the number of members appointed by the Senate President from one to two;
 - Increasing the number of members appointed by the Speaker of the House from one to two; and
 - Making the Director of Transportation a nonvoting member.

Connect4Ohio Program

- Establishes the Connect4Ohio Program to be administered by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), for purposes of making it easier for Ohio workers to commute from their homes to employment centers.
- Requires ODOT and TRAC to work together to prioritize the following projects:
 - Completing existing corridor projects, particularly those that benefit rural counties;
 - Eliminating traffic impediments along highways, particularly within rural counties;
 - Providing funding at 100% of the project cost when appropriate; and
 - Providing matching community funds that are required for TRAC approval of a project.
- Requires the ODOT Director to establish any necessary procedures or requirements for purposes of the program.
- Appropriates \$500 million for the program.

Ohio Wayside Detector System Expansion Program

- Establishes the Ohio Wayside Detector System Expansion Program, administered by the Ohio Rail Commission.
- Allows Class II and Class III railroad companies doing business in Ohio to apply for competitive grants under the program for wayside detector system projects, including projects related to installation, equipment, power sources, and employee training.
- Excludes Class I railroad companies from eligibility for program grants.
- Requires the railroad company to fund a percentage of the wayside detector system project, based on the size of the railroad company, with the Commission providing the remaining portion.
- Requires the Commission to establish any procedures and requirements necessary to administer the program.

FlyOhio tethered drones pilot program

- Requires ODOT's Office of Aviation to conduct a pilot program to field test the use of tethered drones over rural campsite areas and urban or suburban areas.
- Requires the Office to gauge the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of using tethered drones to provide data and information to emergency responders, public safety professionals, and infrastructure security professionals.
- Requires the Office to examine both mobile and permanent tethered drones, including deployment in all weather and hazard conditions through the purchase and use of tethered drones by the Mandel Jewish Community Center in Cleveland at its main campus site and at the Center's Camp Wise in Geauga County.
- Requires the Office of Aviation to issue a report of its findings on July 1, 2024, and July 1, 2025, after which the pilot program is abolished.
- Earmarks up to \$247,500 for the pilot program.

Transportation Review Advisory Council (VETOED)

(R.C. 5512.07; Section 755.20)

The Governor vetoed a provision of the act that would have altered the membership (but not the total of nine voting members) of the Transportation Review Advisory Council by doing the following:

- Reducing the number of members appointed by the Governor from six to five;
- Increasing the number of members appointed by the Senate President from one to two;
- Increasing the number of members appointed by the Speaker of the House from one to two; and
- Making the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) Director a nonvoting member instead of a voting member.

To effectuate the alterations to Council membership, the act would have required the following to occur by December 2, 2023:

- The Governor to remove one person from the Council who was previously appointed;
- The Senate President to appoint one additional person who serves the remaining term of the member removed by the Governor; and
- The Speaker to appoint one additional member to serve a five-year term from the date of appointment.

Under continuing law, the Council reviews the written project selection process for proposed new transportation capacity projects submitted to it by the ODOT Director. The Council may approve the process or make revisions to it.

Connect4Ohio Program

(Sections 411.10, 411.30, 513.10, and 755.30)

The act establishes the Connect4Ohio Program, administered by ODOT. The purpose of the program is to assist in creating seamless transportation connections throughout Ohio and, by doing so, make it easier for Ohio workers to commute from their homes to employment centers. For the program, a rural county means a county that does not contain a municipal corporation with a population exceeding 55,000 residents, according to the most recent federal decennial census.

As part of the program, ODOT and TRAC must work together to provide funding for unfunded projects included in TRAC's Tier 1, 2, and 3 list published March 29, 2023. The provision of funding must prioritize:

1. Completing existing corridor projects, especially those benefiting two or more connected rural counties;
2. Eliminating traffic impediments (e.g., traffic lights and stops) along highways, particularly along highways within rural counties;
3. Funding certain projects at 100% of the project cost, when appropriate, particularly for projects located in a rural county or that extend between two or more connected rural counties; and
4. Providing any necessary matching funds to receive TRAC approval for construction projects that are related to the program and its purpose.

The ODOT Director must establish any procedures and requirements necessary to administer the program. The act appropriates \$500 million for the program.

Ohio Wayside Detector System Expansion Program

(Sections 411.10, 411.11, 513.10, and 749.10)

The act establishes the Ohio Wayside Detector System Expansion Program, administered by the Ohio Rail Commission. Under the program, a Class II or Class III railroad company that does business in Ohio may apply for competitive grant funding to use for wayside detector system projects. Class I railroad companies are not eligible for program grants. Wayside detector systems are the electronic devices or series of connected devices that scan passing trains, rolling stock, on-track equipment, and their competent equipment and parts for defects. Defects include hot wheel bearings, hot wheels, defective bearings, dragging equipment, excessive height or weight, shifting loads, low hoses, rail temperature, and wheel condition. A recipient railroad company must use the program's grant funds to help install, purchase equipment and upgrades for, improve a system's power sources for, and train employees on wayside detector systems.

The act requires a recipient railroad company to fund a percentage of the wayside detector systems project, based on the size of the railroad company. The Commission then provides the remaining portion of the cost. Specifically, a Class II company must fund 40% and a Class III company must fund 15%. The federal Surface Transportation Board makes the Class determinations, which are based on the size of the company.

The Commission must manage the program by establishing any necessary procedures and requirements to administer it. This may include grant application procedures, application evaluation criteria, award processes, and any conditions for expenditure of grant funding awarded under the program. The act appropriates \$10 million for the program.

FlyOhio tethered drones pilot program

(Sections 759.10, 411.10, and 411.60)

The act requires ODOT's Office of Aviation to conduct a pilot program to field test the use of tethered drones. Specifically, the tests must gauge the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of using tethered drones to provide data and information to emergency responders, public safety professionals, and infrastructure security professionals. The tests must occur over rural campsite areas and urban or suburban areas.

Under the program, the Office must examine both mobile and permanent tethered drones, including deployment in all weather and hazard conditions. The purchase and use of tethered drones must occur through the Mandel Jewish Community Center in Cleveland at its main campus site and at the Center's Camp Wise in Geauga County.

The act earmarks up to \$247,500 in FY 2024 for the pilot project, and allows up to 3% of this amount to be used to pay administrative and reporting costs of the pilot project. Any unexpended amount remaining after FY 2024 is reappropriated in FY 2025. The Office of Aviation must issue a report of its findings on July 1, 2024, and July 1, 2025. After submission of the 2025 report, the pilot program is abolished.