

Week in Review

Monday, March 17, 2025

ADDICTION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

OneOhio Recovery Foundation directors commenced strategic planning for the agency's next round of opioid settlement funding Wednesday after more than \$45 million in awards during the 2024 grant cycle concluded in February. Supported by a projected \$1 billion in Big Pharma payouts over most of two decades, OneOhio funded 245 public and private substance abuse programs in 19 statewide regions last year with an initial allotment of \$51 million. As the foundation prepares its next grant cycle, Chairman Don Mason stressed the importance of lessons learned from OneOhio's inaugural funding for statewide prevention and treatment of and recovery from substance abuse.

AGRICULTURE

State officials have announced four more concerts at the 2025 Ohio State Fair. On Monday, July 28, contemporary Christian artists Tauren Wells and special guest Josiah Queen will join the Ohio State Fair concert lineup. Rapper T-Pain and special guest DJ Montay will perform on Wednesday, July 30. Up-and-coming country artist Warren Zeiders will bring the Relapse Tour to the Ohio State Fair on Friday, July 25. On Tuesday, July 29, fairgoers can see Leanne Morgan in the WCOL Celeste Center for an evening of comedy.

ARTS, SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

The General Assembly should amend the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) sports facility law to allow increased state support for "transformational sports mixed-use development districts," Haslam Sports Group (HSG) Chief Administrative Officer Ted Tywang told the House Arts, Athletics and Tourism Committee on Tuesday. HSG is asking the state to provide \$600 million in revenue bonds to help fund a new Cleveland Browns stadium in the Northeast Ohio suburb of Brook Park.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Attorney General Dave Yost announced Friday that he and a coalition of 37 state attorneys general and the Justice Department proposed a final package of remedies "to end Google's illegal monopoly over Internet search engines and to restore competition to benefit consumers." After completion of discovery, the federal district court told both sides to submit a revised proposal by March 7. This is the plaintiffs' final proposal on remedies before the court decides what to enforce. The remedies continue to include a ban on any payments to Android partners and Apple to be the default search engine on any device or browser, divestiture of Chrome, and the opening up of safe channels for data sharing to allow rivals to compete. Google will still be permitted to pay for placement and promotion of Google products in the App Store.

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost is joining 15 other states in calling on Congress to pass

the broadly bipartisan "Nationwide Consumer and Fuel Retailer Choice Act" of 2025 to make E15 gas with 15 percent corn-based ethanol available year-round in all U.S. states.

FY26-27 BUDGET

Senate Finance Committee Chair Jerry Cirino (R-Kirtland) laid out an HB96 hearing schedule that begins the weeks of March 31 and April 7 with testimony from state agencies in his committee, pauses for spring break, moves to breakout hearings in six other standing committee the weeks of April 28, May 5 and May 12, and comes back to Senate Finance Committee for public testimony the week of May 26, culminating in a projected Senate floor vote the week of June 12.

The House Finance Committee continued taking public testimony throughout the week, with Chair Brian Stewart (R-Ashville) reminding witnesses that budget amendment submissions were due Friday, March 14. The committee tentatively plans to hear more public testimony after adopting a sub bill Tuesday, April 1, then take up an omnibus amendment Tuesday, April 8 and take HB96 (Stewart) to the floor Wednesday, April 9.

BUSINESS/CORPORATE

The National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) recently released its February "Small Business Economic Trends" survey regarding hiring efforts, saying 38 percent of respondents had job openings they couldn't fill during the month. That was up 3 percentage points from January and is the highest level since August 2024. The survey also found 31 percent sought skilled workers, up by 2 percentage points.

The Ohio Department of Development (DOD) announced Monday it had launched its new "CyberSECURE" program to help small businesses improve cybersecurity and prepare for upcoming changes in federal contracting requirements. The program is part of Gov. Mike DeWine's CyberOhio initiative. DOD is partnering with Ohio APEX Accelerators and the state's Small Business Development Centers to provide up to 60 hours of free, one-on-one consulting so companies can improve digital security, establish or maintain their presence in the national defense marketplace, and navigate new Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) 2.0 requirements. The U.S. Department of Defense (USDOD) is implementing CMMC 2.0 and will require companies seeking government contracts to be federally certified in cybersecurity. CMMC 2.0 is meant to enforce protection of sensitive unclassified information shared by USDOD with its contractors and subcontractors.

The Ohio Chamber of Commerce's Women in Business Summit Thursday included a discussion on the future of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts, with panelists detailing how new federal policies and legal challenges have left those initiatives in flux for businesses that hold government contracts. The panel included Kristine Woliver, partner at Squire Patton Boggs; Eric Kearney, director of corporate responsibility and opportunity at the Ohio Chamber and a former Senate minority leader; and Lynnise Smith, executive director of the Women's Business Enterprise Council in the Ohio River Valley. Anna Staver, Statehouse reporter for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, moderated the discussion.

Intel announced late Wednesday that its board of directors had appointed Lip-Bu Tan as CEO effective Tuesday, March 18. He succeeds interim co-CEOs David Zinsner and Michelle (MJ) Johnston Holthaus. The two took over following the departure of Pat Gelsinger in December.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Members of the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee (CIIC) have capped a quiet 135th General Assembly with a biennial report calling for expanded inmate work opportunities inside and outside adult prisons and improved data collection and transparency at the Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS). The 48-page report states that constituent contacts' top three concerns were medical care, grievance procedures, and supervision, with the most inquiries/complaints addressing Southern Ohio Correctional Facility, a maximum-security prison (Level IV); Mansfield Correctional Institution, a close security prison (Level III); and Trumbull Correctional Institution, a mixed, minimum- (Level I), medium (II), and close-security (III) prison.

The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) is launching a building campaign to replace Lebanon Correctional Institution (LeCI) outside Cincinnati with a new prison on 1,900 acres surrounding the 65-year-old penitentiary. The Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) has issued a request for qualifications (RFQ) for the \$30 million Phase I of the multi-year construction plan.

EDUCATION

Citing the importance of its programs to the board's function of making sure 1.6 million Ohio children are served by well qualified instructors, State Board of Education (SBOE) Superintendent Paul Craft updated the board at its regular meeting Monday on budget testimony he gave to the House Education Committee last month. (See *The Hannah Report*, 2/18/25.) Gov. Mike DeWine's executive budget had proposed \$2 million to cover the Rapback program, which provides ongoing criminal records monitoring for Ohio's more than 360,000 licensees, who hold about 490,000 credentials, the highest number of any profession licensed by the state of Ohio and more than the next-highest at the Board of Nursing, which he said has about 300,000.

Gov. Mike DeWine's executive budget proposal would direct the Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and State Board of Education (SBOE) to work together to study the feasibility of having the board join most other state professional licensing bodies in using the Ohio Professional Licensure System, aka eLicense Ohio. State Superintendent Paul Craft told *Hannah News* the two agencies have been discussing the possibility for a month, and their respective information technology staff have met on the topic.

The State Board of Education will take nominations until the end of the month for the 2026 Ohio Teacher of the Year awards. To be eligible for consideration, a nominee must have a professional Ohio teacher license; be completing at least their 10th year of teaching in PreK-12; be employed full-time at a traditional district, charter school or career center; work directly with students at least half the time; not be a previous recipient of a Teacher of the Year recognition; and plan to continue actively teaching. Nominations are open until Monday, March 31.

The Ohio School Safety Center announced that registration is now open for the School Safety Summit set for Monday and Tuesday, June 9-10. It will be held at the Greater Columbus Convention Center. The two days feature a variety of breakout sessions addressing ways to keep schools safe including addressing bullying, developing listening skills, making a targeted threat assessment, learning self-defense techniques, assessing security and many other topics.

Sponsors of bus safety legislation presented their latest version to the House Transportation Committee Tuesday, with sponsor Rep. Bernard Willis (R-Springfield)

saying they are at a point where they have a bill that has a focus and a priority to get done. HB3 (Willis-Thomas) is the latest bill seeking to incorporate a number of recommendations by Gov. Mike DeWine's Ohio School Bus Safety Working Group, which he formed after a bus crash killed a student in Willis' district. Willis told the committee that the most asked item by districts are high-quality cameras for the buses that can take images to be used as corroborating evidence for a violation around a stopped bus.

ELECTIONS

The secretary of state's office published this week a list of 352,389 inactive voter registrations eligible for removal from the Statewide Voter Registration Database as part of the office's annual voter list maintenance program. "Ohio leads the nation in ensuring an accurate voter registration list," said Secretary of State Frank LaRose. "This careful and deliberate process makes sure that every eligible voter can cast their ballot while removing outdated registrations that could compromise election integrity. Ohioans deserve transparency and accuracy in this process, and through the hard work of our county boards of elections, that's exactly what we deliver.

Secretary of State Frank LaRose recently put out a call for Ohioans to consider becoming a poll worker in the upcoming Tuesday, May 6 election. Ohioans will be asked to vote on one statewide issue, Issue 2, which would reauthorize the state's public infrastructure capital improvements program and issue \$2.5 billion in bonds. "Our elections depend on thousands of people from across the 88 counties of our state who show up at the polls to help their friends and neighbors vote," said LaRose. "These are literally the frontline workers of our democracy, and Ohio is the national role model for election administration because of their service. I'm issuing a call to duty for patriotic Ohioans to help us keep our elections secure, accurate, and accessible by becoming a poll worker."

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported Friday the nation added 151,000 jobs in February, with the unemployment rate ticking up slightly from 4.0 to 4.1 percent. Employment increased in health care, financial activities, transportation and warehousing, and social assistance. There was a drop in federal government employment. BLS added that the unemployment rate has remained in a narrow range of 4.0 to 4.2 percent since May 2024 and that the number of unemployed people was little changed in February at 7.1 million.

Ohio's unemployment rate increased from a revised 4.5 percent in December to 4.6 percent in January and 800 jobs were lost during the month, according to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) on Friday. The national unemployment rate was 4.0 percent.

ENERGY/UTILITIES

The Ohio Supreme Court held oral arguments this week in the case of the proposed Kingwood Solar facility in Greene County, which focuses on the applicability of a law on local veto power over such facilities to Kingwood, which had applied to the Ohio Power Siting Board before 134-SB52 was in effect.

Public hearings on FirstEnergy's new distribution rate case are scheduled to begin in early April in Cleveland and to continue through the month in Akron and Toledo, followed by an evidentiary hearing at the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) in Columbus on Monday, May 5.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

Ahead of Gov. Mike DeWine's "State of the State" address to a joint House and Senate session Wednesday, House Democratic Leader Allison Russo (D-Columbus) said Monday she expected the governor to discuss his budget priorities, but Democrats want to hear more from him about property tax relief. Speaking to reporters, Russo said many of DeWine's budget priorities are already well known as lawmakers have pored over the budget for the past several weeks.

Publicly-funded child care (PFCC) should be available to families with incomes up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level, Senate Minority Leader Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood) said Tuesday. "It's something that we will be discussing and advocating for as we go forward," Antonio told reporters during a Statehouse meeting ahead of Gov. Mike DeWine's "State of the State" address on Wednesday. "Frankly, if we can increase vouchers to 400+ percent of the federal poverty level, then certainly we should be able to increase the threshold for some of our lowest-income folks to be able to access child care. I mean, it seems to me to be a no-brainer," Antonio said.

While noting they weren't necessarily against a child tax credit, House Speaker Matt Huffman (R-Lima) and Senate President Rob McColley (R-Napoleon) pointed to some issues with the executive proposal after the governor's "State of the State" address on Wednesday. Under Gov. Mike DeWine's proposal, a new refundable child tax credit would be available to lower-income families, and would be paid for with a significant increase in tobacco taxes. "You have to be careful about basing any long-term spending on a cigarette tax, because it's going to be a declining source of revenue. It's been a declining source of revenue for years, and I would suggest that if the cigarette tax were increased even more than what it is, it's probably going to be an even more rapidly declining source of revenue," McColley told reporters.

Senate Minority Leader Nickie Antonio (D-Lakewood) and House Minority Leader Allison Russo (D-Upper Arlington) responded to Gov. Mike DeWine's "State of the State" address in a press conference Wednesday, saying they support DeWine's efforts to create "pro-family" policies but are still calling for property tax relief and fully funded public education.

In other legislative action, House Transportation Committee reported out SB24 (Johnson-Huffman), to designate the 1905 Wright Flyer III as the state airplane; HB27 (Callender-Troy), a bridge naming bill; and road naming bills HB38 (Fowler Arthur) and HB50 (King);

House Public Insurance and Pensions Committee reported out HB80 (Stewart), the Industrial Commission budget; and HB81 (Stewart), the Bureau of Workers Compensation budget; Senate Local Government Committee reported out SB101 (Blessing), regarding liens filed with a county recorder;

GOVERNOR

Gov. Mike DeWine emphasized key proposals from his FY26-27 executive budget and a few newer ideas Wednesday in his annual "State of the State" address, while also indicating how he will start to use the talents of new Lt. Gov. Jim Tressel. Coming just weeks after the unveiling of the executive budget and before either chamber's competing proposal emerges, the speech focused largely on the initiatives DeWine hopes to see enacted and funded in his final biennial spending plan. Among the new elements in the speech were plans for "Ohio's Workforce Playbook," the first major project to which DeWine has assigned Tressel, a former Youngstown State University president and Ohio State University head football coach.

Judicial appointments made during the week include the following:

- Gov. Mike DeWine Friday announced the appointment of Zachary Zoz to the Fairfield Municipal Court. Zoz, of Fairfield, will assume office on Monday, March 31 to finish the term held by Judge Joyce Campbell, who retired. Zoz will need to run for election in November to retain the seat.
- Gov. Mike DeWine Tuesday announced the appointment of Leah Dinkelacker to the Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas, General Division. Dinkelacker, of Cincinnati, will assume office on Monday, March 24, 2025, and will be taking the seat formerly held by Justice Megan Shanahan. Dinkelacker will serve the remainder of the unfinished term and will need to run for election in November 2026 to retain the seat.

Appointments made over the week include the following:

- D. Geoffrey Vince of Westlake (Cuyahoga County) to the Cleveland State University Board of Trustees for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending May 1, 2027.
- William G. Ebbing of New Albany (Franklin County) reappointed to the Miami University Board of Trustees for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending Feb. 28, 2034.
- Tyeis L. Baker-Baumann of Celina (Mercer County) and Douglas L. Fortkamp of Sidney (Shelby County) reappointed to the Edison State Community College Board of Trustees for terms beginning March 7, 2025, and ending Jan. 17, 2031.
- Mary Grace Pattison of Rocky River (Cuyahoga County) to the Ohio Higher Educational Facility Commission for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending Jan. 1, 2033.
- William J. Seitz III of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) to the Board of Tax Appeals for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending Feb. 8, 2031.
- Candy S. Rinehart of Springfield (Clark County) reappointed to the Board of Nursing for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending Dec. 31, 2028.
- Megan McCombs Heydlauff of Upper Arlington (Franklin County) to the Children's Trust Fund Board for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending July 2, 2027.
- Randi M. Thomas of Oxford (Butler County) Randall W. Leite of Hilliard (Franklin County) reappointed to the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood for a term beginning Feb. 7, 2025, and ending July 30, 2026.
- Lisa A. Morrison of Medina (Medina County) to the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending Dec. 31, 2025.
- Solomon J. Curtis of Dresden (Muskingum County) reappointed to the Wildlife Council for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending Jan. 31, 2029.
- S. Craig Beam of Sabina (Clinton County) reappointed to the Ohio Thoroughbred Race Fund Advisory Committee for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending Jan. 31, 2028.
- C. Michael Kerns of Findlay (Hancock County) to the State Veterinary Medical Licensing Board for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending Dec. 31, 2026 and Eric D. Gordon of Zanesfield (Logan County), Daniel J. Wallon, Jr. of Columbus (Franklin County) and Susan J. Pohler of Columbus (Franklin County) to the State Veterinary Medical Licensing Board for terms beginning March 7, 2025, and ending Dec. 31, 2027.
- Matthew A. Jones of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) reappointed to the Third Frontier Commission for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending April 1, 2027; Jonathan K. Stock of Westerville (Delaware County) reappointed for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending Sept. 28, 2027; and Brian T. Faust of Springboro (Warren County) reappointed for a term beginning April 2, 2025, and ending April 1, 2028.
- Jon Paul Rion of Yellow Springs (Clark County) reappointed to the Ohio Public Defender Commission for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending Jan. 12, 2029.
- Christopher N. Protsman of Kettering (Greene County) reappointed to the Ohio Organized Crime Investigations Commission for a term beginning Feb. 10, 2025, and ending Sept. 3, 2027.
- Rusty Orben of Upper Arlington (Franklin County), Allen W. Behnke of Lima (Allen County), Robert K. Keener II of Mogadore (Summit County) and Michael H. Fitchet of Conneaut (Ashtabula County) reappointed to the State Emergency Response Commission

for terms beginning March 7, 2025 and ending Jan. 13, 2027.

- Triffon P. Callos of Cincinnati (Hamilton County) to the Ohio Casino Control Commission for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending Feb. 21, 2029 and Scott P. Borgemenke of Dublin (Franklin County) reappointed for the same term.

- Jacquelynn J. Costa of Stow (Summit County), Chad F. Budreau of Columbus (Franklin County) and G. Matthew Delp of Lewis Center (Delaware County) to the Ohio AMBER Alert Advisory Committee for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending Feb. 6, 2027 and Erin J. Pettegrew of Hilliard (Franklin County), Ronald E. Raines of Galena (Delaware County), Brent L. Currence of Carroll (Fairfield County), Brian L. Castner of Powell (Delaware County), Kathryn Wolfe Farmer of Bluffton (Allen County), Paul R. Jellison of Wilmington (Clinton County), Leslie J. Prater of Ridgeway (Logan County) and Harry W. Trombitas of Dublin (Franklin County) reappointed for the same term.

- Matthew O. Hafey of Orient (Pickaway County) to the MARCS Steering Committee for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.

- Todd C. Beresford of Moreland Hills (Cuyahoga County) reappointed to the Self-Insuring Employers Evaluation Board for a term beginning March 7, 2025, and ending Aug. 22, 2028.

- Lisa L. Walters of Lancaster (Fairfield County) to the Financial Planning and Supervision Commission for Madison Township for a term beginning Jan. 27, 2025, and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.

- Rick A. Carfagna of Westerville (Delaware County) and H. Douglas Talbott of Powell (Delaware County) reappointed to the Sunset Review Committee for terms beginning Feb. 3, 2025, and ending Dec. 31, 2026.

HANNAH NEWS MEET THE FRESHMEN

Hannah News profile series on new legislators featured Rep. Matt Kishman (R-Minerva), who said working in a grocery store can be excellent training for a career in politics. "It's almost like you're an elected official working in the grocery business, because you're very hands-on with your customers," Kishman said.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Opponents again showed up in droves Tuesday to urge House lawmakers to reject or rework the sweeping higher education proposals in SB1 (Cirino), as the legislation charts a quick course through the General Assembly. The House Workforce and Higher Education Committee fielded opposition testimony for the legislation Tuesday. Hundreds of people either showed up to testify or submitted opposing remarks, many of whom had also attended a packed and lengthy Senate committee hearing when opponents had their say in that chamber. The House set up overflow space in an adjoining hearing room and in the Statehouse crypt. Cheers and jeers could be heard from the adjoining room as the audience reacted to committee members' questions and witnesses' answers.

Ohio State University and the University of Cincinnati (UC) are among 60 institutions of higher education that have received letters from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) warning them of possible enforcement actions for failing to address "antisemitic harassment and discrimination."

Concerns about Wittenberg University's resource base to support its educational programs prompted institutional accreditor the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) to give the university a "financial distress" designation in February following a U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) audit.

HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS

In a presentation to the Senate Housing Committee, Nadir Settles, global head of the impact investing team for Nuveen Real Estate, described his company's activities around a number of different kinds of developments that include affordable and market rate housing as well as mixed use locations.

A new report released Thursday shows a deficit in the number of affordable and available rental units for Ohio's extremely low-income (ELI) renters. The "2025 Gap Report" says Ohio made modest progress to reducing the shortage of affordable housing in the past year, despite continuing headwinds. Released jointly by the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) and the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO), the report shows a shortage of 264,083 rental units available to the 438,108 ELI renters in the state. A year ago, the report found a shortage of 267,382 units.

MARIJUANA/HEMP

Leaders representing local governments across the state delivered testimony to the House Finance Committee on Wednesday asking the committee to amend the portion of budget bill HB96 (Stewart) that would shift tax revenue from the sale of marijuana from local governments to the state. "Those who voted in favor of Issue 2 and local government officials who chose to allow dispensaries in their communities did so with the understanding that they would receive a portion of the tax dollars that will be garnered through the sale of marijuana," said Lexi Lausten, trustee chair of Anderson Township in Hamilton County. "We respectfully ask you to ensure that funding for host communities is included in HB96."

MEDICAID/MEDICAID REFORM

Unlisted witness Department of Medicaid Director Maureen Corcoran appeared before the Senate Medicaid Committee Tuesday morning to testify in support of SCR5 (Koehler). This was ahead of the committee's reporting the resolution out. The resolution urges the federal government to support Ohio's bid to institute work requirements for the Medicaid expansion population. Other in-person witnesses Tuesday included interested parties Rea Hederman Jr. of the Buckeye Institute and Zach Reat of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks, and proponent Beau Euton of FGA Action. Kathryn Poe of Policy Matters Ohio, Danielle Spires of the Ohio Poverty Law Center and Sarah Hudacek of Advocates for Ohio's Future submitted opponent testimony.

OHIO HISTORY

Ohio Commission for the U.S. Semiquincentennial (America 250-Ohio) Executive Director Todd Kleismit recently gave an update on the budget during his monthly "Todd Talks" webinar series, saying testimony he gave to two committees was well-received. Kleismit took part in budget testimony before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee and briefed the House Arts, Athletics and Tourism Committee on how their work relates to tourism.

PENSIONS

Ohio public pension funds made progress last year in efforts to drop lingering investment ties to companies doing business in Iran and Sudan, and one newly achieved full divestment. The Ohio Retirement Study Council (ORSC) reviewed the pension systems' annual divestment reports at its meeting Thursday. The council began Thursday with the

election of Rep. Adam Bird (R-Cincinnati) as chair and Sen. Mark Romanchuk (R-Ontario) as vice chair. The chair position alternates between the House and the Senate each General Assembly.

PEOPLE

The Ohio Justice and Policy Center announced Michaela Burriss is the organization's new policy director. She replaces Kevin Werner, who joined Ohioans to Stop Executions. "We are thrilled to have Michaela on board," said Gabe Davis, CEO of the Ohio Justice and Policy Center. "She brings a passion for justice to her work, and her extensive experience in legislative affairs, public policy, and community engagement will be invaluable as we continue to serve Ohioans who are finding their way after incarceration."

STATE GOVERNMENT

The Controlling Board on Monday approved \$4.3 million in additional funding to provide security for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Parliamentary Assembly session set for Dayton. The event is scheduled to take place from Wednesday, May 21 through Monday, May 26, according to the three items requested by the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS). The Controlling Board approved the items as late additions to the agenda on Monday.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

The Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission Friday reminded mobile phone users everywhere to be aware of a resurgence in fraudulent texts from scammers requesting payment for unpaid tolls through fake websites. The fraudulent texts are being sent randomly to mobile phone users in various area codes and attempt to impersonate the website addresses of toll agencies across the country.

The Senate Transportation Committee Wednesday accepted a substitute version of transportation budget HB54 (Stewart), removing a number of House additions including the creation of an airport improvement fund. Committee Chair Tom Patton (R-Strongsville) said the substitute version includes 40 amendments, pared down from the 140 amendments that were submitted by senators. He said many are technical amendments or clarifications, including seven from the Office of Budget and Management (OBM). Patton said the amendments do not include the use of General Revenue Funds, which he said was a decision of leadership to have as part of the operating budget discussions.

Just two in-person witnesses testified on the Senate's version of transportation budget bill HB54 (Stewart) on Thursday, which didn't surprise Senate Transportation Committee Chair Tom Patton (R-Strongsville). "One of the things that we made real clear is that we're not going to spend GRF money in the transportation budget. Once that was made totally clear, that took away the expectation level of a lot of legislators and their interested parties, their constituents," Patton told reporters after the committee meeting.

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) is asking Ohioans to weigh in on the future of transportation for the state. ODOT is accepting public comments on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) for 2026 through 2029. The plan identifies the multi-modal transportation improvement projects that are scheduled for some phase of implementation throughout the state over the next four years.