

Kaptur T&I Testimony 4.12.21

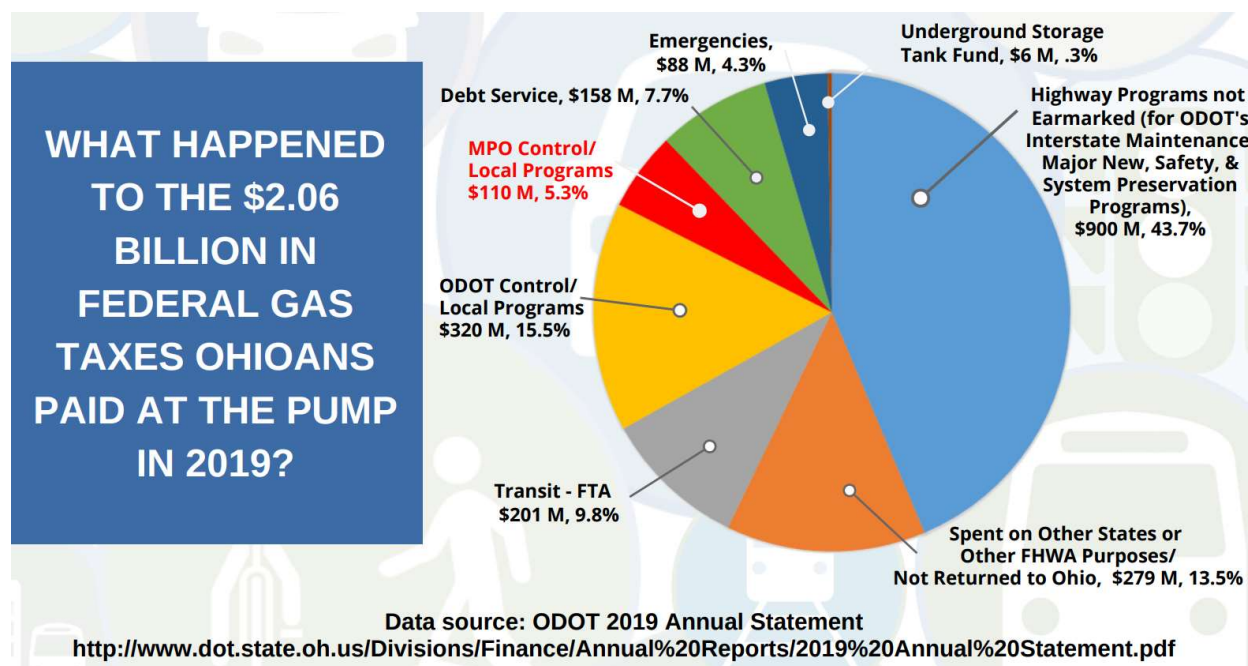
Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves

Let me express my deep appreciation for your invitation to testify before the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Our nation is in transition, and your committee is at the helm in ensuring transportation investments are prioritized for 21<sup>st</sup> century needs. Today I will highlight the need for the surface transportation to support investments in four areas (1) regional funding equity; (2) workforce development in electric vehicle transition; (3) emerging technologies such as Hyperloop; and (4) Amtrak's long distance routes.

### 1) Regional Funding Equity, Support Local Control of Funding

*Recommendation: Support Higher Allocations for Metropolitan Planning Organizations in H.R. 2*

The redrafted H.R. 2 should support increased local funding. In Ohio, the MPO's receive a sliver of overall federal support. State DOTs have the largest allocation of Ohio gas tax dollars. These MPO's are plugged in to the local decision-making, and have a critical role to the future of regional development.



Graphic produced by the Northeast Ohio Regional Coordinating Agency (NOACA)

Nationally, the urban and rural divide is dramatic. According to a 2018 analysis by CRS which reviewed the percentage of Good, Fair, and Poor Ride Quality, the 2016 average "good" ride quality in urban areas was 27% and in rural areas, 49%. This difference, a 22% better ride quality in rural areas means rural gas tax users are getting a better return on their investment.

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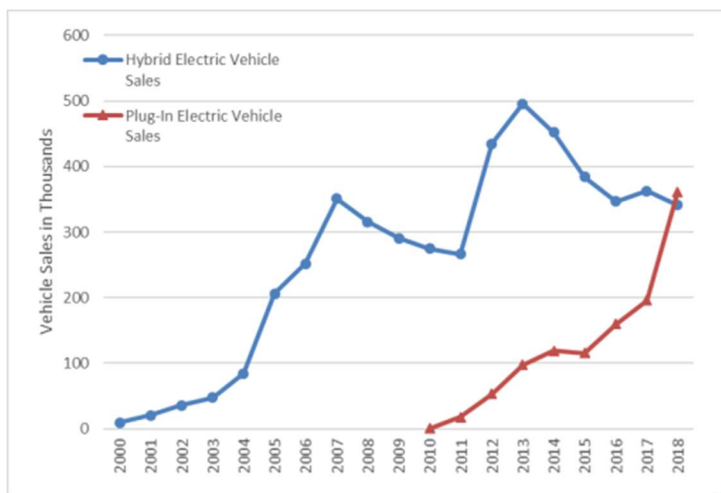
In a state like Ohio, where the population and a large share of the gas tax dollars are produced in urban centers, the equitable solution is to localize a larger share of funding decisions. The updated surface transportation bill should allocate an increased share of funds to MPO's, which would allow more funding decisions according to local needs.

## 2) Workforce Development, Electric Vehicles

*Recommendation: Explicitly Mention EV Transition in the FTA workforce development mission*

I support a strategic focus for workforce development at the Department of Transportation. With the Build Back Better agenda, this administration has begun to refocus on the importance of electric transition.

The data on this issue is clear, the transition has already begun— huge segments of the market are changing, and electric and hybrid vehicles are the future in all sectors of the market. From nearly zero EV vehicles sold in 2010, to 400,000 produced in 2018. And with new infrastructure proposals from the Biden Administration, I am hopeful that a new day is here.



**Source** 2018 CRS Report,. 2000-2018 U.S. Annual Hybrid Electric Vehicle and Plug-In Electric Vehicle Sales, : Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), *Transportation Energy Data B*

Nonetheless, we have tremendous work to accomplish. Last year, your committee recognized the short-sited perspective of DOT on workforce development, and specifically included workforce development provisions. I support Sec. 2601., the National transit frontline workforce training center in H.R. 2. This center will be a first step in preparing frontline transit workers for the transition to, and adoption of 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies across our transportation system. However, frontline worker assistance is just a first step. The issues facing transit agencies are enormous and require a systematic approach for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

In 2019, the GAO issued a report indicating that no transit specific workforce development strategy exists. It pointed out that FTA had not developed transit-specific workforce

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projections, and that the workforce development strategy lacks a strategic or wholistic approach. GAO's conclusions are even more troubling when you drill down into the transition for electric vehicle adoption. Transit agencies and the working men and women at the front lines, the skilled workforce rebuilding the buses, operating the switches, and maintaining the infrastructure of the agencies, face real questions that we must begin to confront. There is an existential threat posed by the transition to electric vehicles for transit agencies. The structure of transit agency maintenance system, the workforce development pipeline, and the skills-based knowledge for the workforce is vulnerable during the upcoming fleet transition.

These transit agencies, the unions and our nation need a strategic vision for helping transit agencies prepare for this future. I am therefore hopeful that the committee will be more explicitly include electric vehicle transition into the workforce challenges faced by frontline workers. I encourage the committee to more explicitly recognize that NHTSA and FTA must provide guidance, and a roadmap for agencies to build a more resilient workforce that can confront this transition.

### **3) Emerging Technologies**

*Support the NETT Council and Hyperloop Technologies*

The Department of Transportation has also stood up an exciting New and Emerging Technologies (NETT) Council. This office has a cross cutting purpose and deserves congressional support. This office provides a strategic and long-term opportunity to support technologies like Hyperloop. Progress is at hand. For instance, last year, the Department of Energy conducted a study on the grid impacts of installing a Hyperloop system. I believe DOT has an important regulatory and leadership role to help guide Hyperloop ensure that one day, a commuter passenger can travel from Downtown Toledo to downtown Chicago in a matter of minutes.

### **4) Amtrak**

*Include a Policy Statement Opposing Cuts to Amtrak Long Distance Routes*

I also applaud the committee for including my floor amendment last year expressing the concern for proposed cuts to long distance Amtrak routes. Yes, in emergency funding, Congress supported the long-distance routes. But since the surface transportation lasts into the outyears, Congress must support long-distance routes to ensure they continue to operate during the entire period of the surface transportation bill. These routes offer a critical connection for countless communities, long distance travelers and the represent future for both big and small cities alike.