

From the GLR ASHE Political Information Network

2020 May PIN Update

The ASHE PIN wishes all of you to stay safe in this uncertain time. With many of us working from home and social distancing, the traffic volumes have dropped as much as 60% on the nation's roadways. This drop in traffic has reduced air pollution and spurred wildlife to take to the streets. It has also reduced the motor fuel users fee that is collected by our federal and state governments. While Congress has passed the CARES act to provide stimulus to businesses to help them in this time of quarantine, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials has asked Congress for a \$50B appropriation to state governments to use on highway programs. However, the \$3 trillion HEROES Act passed by the House last week only included a \$15B appropriation that would allow the money to be used not only for broad highway and bridge capital projects but also for administrative and operations expenses, including salaries of employees (including those employees who have been placed on administrative leave) or contractors, information technology needs, and availability payments. Nearly all of the \$15B would be distributed to the states via the standard federal-aid highway funding distribution formula, which means Ohio would get \$500,600 from this aid. While the House has passed this legislation, Senator Mitch McConnell has said that infrastructure will not be part of Congress's next coronavirus relief package, even as President Trump has pushed for it to be included. He said he was interested in passing an infrastructure bill, it was "unrelated" to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Without his support, Coronavirus stimulus funding for infrastructure is unlikely. Many states are reacting similarly to Ohio, which needs to balance their budget. They are pushing construction and design projects alike out a few months to the next fiscal year. However, the true nature of the impact of the drop in motor fuel tax won't be felt until the third quarter of 2019 unless highway stimulus is passed by Congress. Several organizations are conducting write in campaigns for this to happen.

What can ASHE do about this? Email your Congressional Representatives and let them know that the transportation industry needs stimulus monies to prevent an industry slump.