OHIO CONTRACTOR

September • October 2026



CLAIMS & FACTS REGARDING DATA CENTERS

Ohio Among Leaders in Construction of Information Facilities

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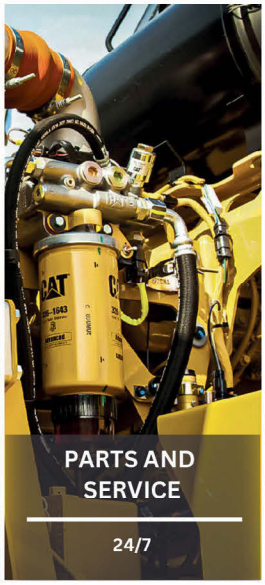
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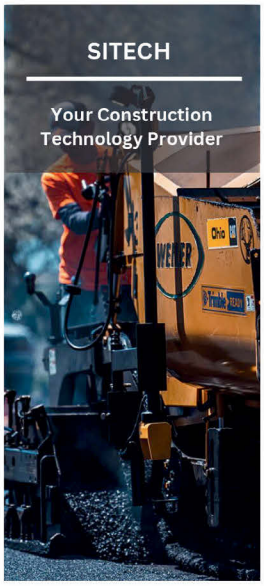
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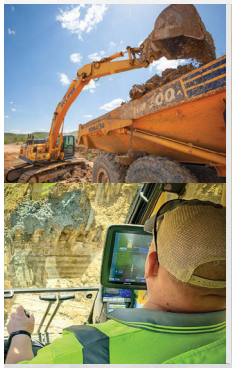
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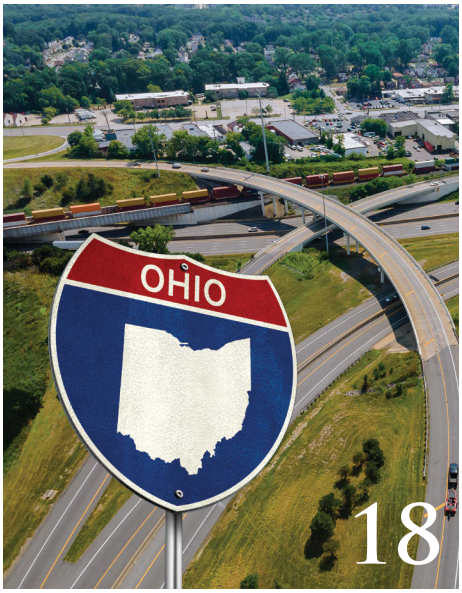
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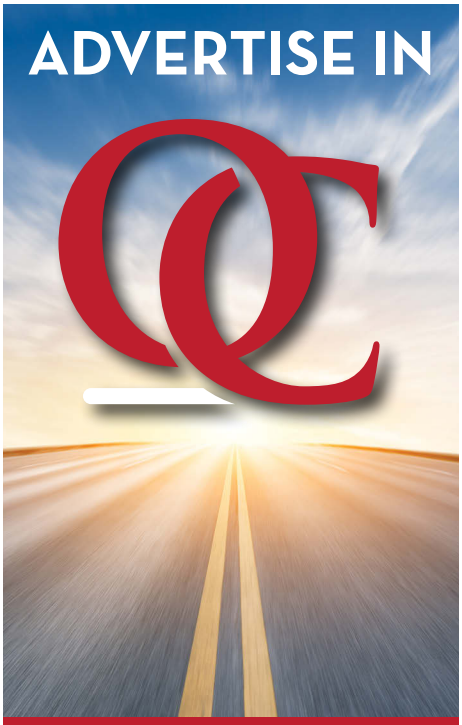
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Roadside Safety: Everyone Deserves to Go Home



Chris Runyan
OCA President

Those of us who have spent our careers in the heavy/highway construction industry understand there are inherent risks in the work we do. We work around heavy equipment, changing conditions and, perhaps most dangerously, traffic moving only inches away from the men and women doing their jobs.

We train our employees. We provide personal protective equipment. We design traffic control plans and continually look for better ways to separate workers from traffic. But there is one risk we can never completely control – the actions of motorists traveling through our work zones.

The statistics demonstrate just how serious that risk remains.

In 2024, 850 people lost their lives in work zone crashes across the United States. Speeding continues to be a significant factor in fatal work zone crashes, and workers on foot remain particularly vulnerable. Nationwide, more than 500 roadside workers – including construction workers, law enforcement officers, first responders and tow truck operators – have been killed since 2020.

And sometimes statistics become painfully personal.

Earlier this year, 25-year-old Kokosing Construction employee Jordan Thomas was struck and killed when a vehicle entered a closed section of I-70 in Downtown Columbus. Jordan went to work that night expecting to return home. He never did.

That is why efforts now underway in both Washington, D.C., and Columbus are so important to OCA and our members.

At the federal level, Senators Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada and Dave McCormick of Pennsylvania have introduced the bipartisan **Safer Roads for Those Who Serve Act of 2026 (S. 4245)**. The legislation would improve the collection and analysis of roadside worker injury and fatality data, require states experiencing increases in worker injuries and fatalities to address those trends in their highway safety planning, expand public awareness of Move Over laws and roadside dangers, continue research into worker safety and incorporate roadside-worker safety considerations into certain federal infrastructure programs.

Our national partners are helping lead the advocacy effort. The Associated General Contractors of America has led a coalition of national transportation, construction, safety and infrastructure organizations urging Congress to advance S. 4245 as part of the next surface transportation reauthorization. The American Road & Transportation Builders Association has likewise made stronger work zone protections an important part of its federal reauthorization recommendations.

Ohio has an opportunity – and a responsibility – to act as well.

Substitute House Bill 82, now named the **Trenton Gallaway Work Zone Safety Act**, would strengthen Ohio law governing traffic offenses committed in construction zones. Among its provisions, the substitute bill expands the traffic violations subject to construction-zone penalties and strengthens requirements governing the posting of construction-zone signs. It requires signage for construction zones regardless of their expected duration or length and establishes requirements for signage both approaching and within construction zones when workers are present.

These are practical steps intended to change driver behavior and provide

greater protection to the men and women whose workplace happens to be alongside moving traffic.

OCA members have been directly involved in advocating for H.B. 82. During testimony before the House Public Safety Committee, representatives of our industry stood alongside organized labor, safety organizations and, most importantly, family members of workers who have paid the ultimate price. OCA Legislative Director Michelle Holdgreve testified in support of the legislation, as did representatives of OCA member companies. The committee ultimately reported the substitute bill favorably by a 10-0 vote.

That brings me to a question I have difficulty answering:

Why is passing legislation addressing roadside safety so difficult?

Perhaps part of the answer is that highway construction workers are largely invisible to the public until a motorist encounters a work zone. Perhaps it is because most drivers believe the person speeding, texting or failing to pay attention is someone else. Or perhaps, as is too often the case in the legislative process, even issues on which there appears to be broad agreement must compete with hundreds of other priorities for attention.

Whatever the reason, none of those explanations is particularly satisfying when a family has lost a son, daughter, husband, wife, father or mother simply because they went to work alongside one of our highways.

There will always be legitimate discussion about the details of legislation – what penalties are appropriate, how laws should be enforced and which safety measures will be most effective. That discussion is part of the legislative process. But disagreement over details should not prevent us from agreeing on the objective.

We can continue improving our training, traffic control, positive protection and technology such as speed enforcement cameras – and we must. Contractors have an obligation to do everything reasonably possible to protect their employees. But there comes a point where the construction barrel ends and personal responsibility begins. And drivers bear that responsibility.

And government has a responsibility to establish and enforce laws that recognize the extraordinary risk faced by people whose workplace is within inches of moving traffic.

The question should not be whether we can eliminate every work zone accident. We cannot. The question should be whether we have done everything reasonably within our power to prevent the next one.

For the families who have already lost someone, legislation comes too late. For the thousands of men and women working behind the barrels today, it does not.

They should not have to lose another coworker before we decide their safety deserves our attention.

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When Transportation Funding Becomes an Election Issue



Michelle Holdgreve
OCA Legislative Director

If there was ever a reminder that elections matter to Ohio's transportation construction industry, the events in the last several weeks were a big indication.

With gasoline and diesel prices rising sharply, both candidates for governor unexpectedly called for a temporary suspension of the state's motor-fuel tax of 38.5 cents per gallon for gasoline and 47 cents/gallon for diesel. And within days, members of the Ohio General Assembly returned to Columbus from their extended summer recess to act on just that.

For OCA, we have routinely opposed such revenue pauses as those funds are the backbone of state and local transportation spending. Ohio's motor-fuel tax is not simply another source of state revenue. It provides critical funding for the Ohio Department of Transportation as well as counties, municipalities and townships to build, maintain and repair roads and bridges.

OCA understood and was sympathetic to the desire to provide Ohioans with some relief at the pump. Our priority throughout the discussion was to make sure that relief did not come at the expense of Ohio's transportation program.

That concern stemmed from early discussions of the tax suspension that suggested ODOT could absorb the cost through "surplus" funds. OCA strongly pushed back on that idea. ODOT does not have hundreds of millions of dollars sitting unused. While ODOT may have a significant "cash balance," that amount pales in comparison to the amount of outstanding obligations ODOT has. The latest information shared by ODOT was that they had $1.5 billion in cash and a little more than $5 billion in outstanding contracts and other obligations.

While it took some considerable convincing and a strong position from Gov. Mike DeWine, ultimately, lawmakers decided to protect and fund transportation programs without interruption.

The legislation approved by the General Assembly and signed by Gov. DeWine suspends Ohio's motor-fuel taxes for 90 days (October 4-January 2) while providing $725 million in replacement funding. The replacement dollars come from General Revenue funds, allowing state and local transportation programs to remain whole.

OCA was actively engaged throughout the process. We communicated with legislative leaders, kept members informed and testified before the Senate General Government Committee to make clear that no transportation project should be delayed or disrupted because of the suspension.

This episode also offers a larger lesson for our industry.

Transportation funding became an issue in the race for Ohio governor almost overnight. A revenue source the industry relies upon every day was suddenly at the center of a statewide political debate. Fortunately, the final result did not impact transportation investment. But it is a reminder of how quickly public policy – and the political environment surrounding it – can affect our members, their employees and the work they perform.

This November, Ohioans will elect a new governor, members of the Ohio House and part of the Ohio Senate, along with a United States Senator and every member of Ohio's delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives. The people elected to those positions will

make decisions about transportation funding, workforce issues, economic development and many other policies that directly affect Ohio's construction industry.

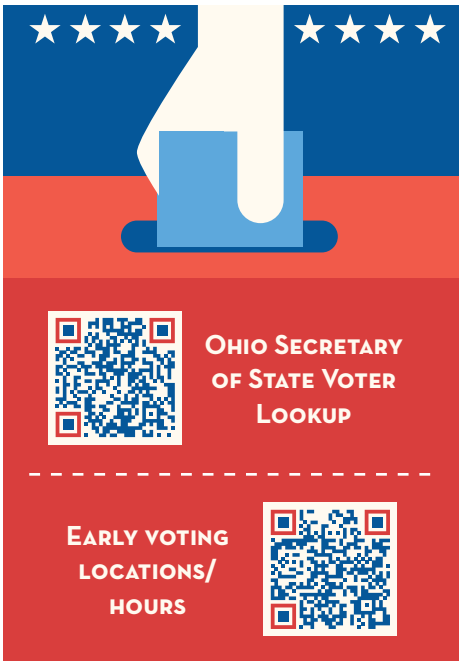
Regardless of party or candidate, OCA members should understand what is at stake, learn where the candidates stand on issues important to our industry – and most importantly, **vote**.

Early voting began October 6, and Election Day is November 3. Take a few minutes now to make your voting plan:

- **Check your voter registration and find your Election Day polling location**, which can be found at the Ohio Secretary of State Voter Lookup website at: https://voterlookup.ohiosos.gov/voterlookup.aspx

- **Find your early voting location and hours,** which can also be found at the Ohio Secretary of State website, at: https://www.ohiosos.gov/directories/early-voting-locations

The events of the past few weeks demonstrated just how closely elections, public policy and transportation funding are connected. Our industry has a significant stake in the decisions made at the Statehouse. Make sure your voice is part of the process.







FEATURE

OHIO'S RACE FOR GOVERNOR

ACTON, RAMASWAMY VYING TO BECOME STATE'S 71ST LEADER

★ *Candidates' Name Recognition Overshadows Political Experience* ★



Despite neither having been elected to public office, Ohio's main gubernatorial candidates in the 2026 election are well recognized at the state and national levels.

November's election to decide Ohio's 71st governor matches Democrat Amy Acton, who served as the state's Health Director during the COVID-19 pandemic, against Republican Vivek Ramaswamy, who has been a national figure since his anti-woke corporate messages in 2021 and his run for U.S. President in the 2024 election.

Ohio is one of 36 states selecting their next governor on November 3. Those states choosing their next state leader are currently divided at 18 Democratic and 18 Republican governors. According to Ballotpedia, entering the 2026 election there are 26 states administered by Republican governors and 24 guided by Democratic governors.

Among Ohio's 70 previous state leaders, there have been 27 Republicans and 20 Democrats who have held office – as well as 17 governors affiliated with other parties, such as Democratic-Republican, Whig and Union. Republicans have held Ohio's highest office the past 16 years under Mike DeWine (since 2019) and John Kasich (2011-2019). Ted Strickland (2007-2011) was the most-recent Democrat to hold the office of Ohio Governor.

Both Ramaswamy and Acton will mark notable achievements if elected Ohio Governor.

By securing the most votes, Ramaswamy, at age 41, will become one of the youngest to be elected Ohio Governor. The 59th Ohio Governor, William O'Neill, was 40 years, 11 months old when he was sworn into office Jan. 14, 1957.

Acton would become the first woman to be elected Ohio Governor. Nancy Hollister, one of four women to serve as the state's Lieutenant Governor, was appointed as Ohio's 66th governor – serving 12 days from Dec. 31, 1998-Jan. 11, 1999 – when Gov. George Voinovich left office at the end of his second term to begin serving in the U.S. Senate.

Let's learn more about Ohio's 2026 gubernatorial candidates and their running mates:



Amy Acton – Democrat

A native of Youngstown, Amy Acton, 60, has spent more than half her life in the public health and wellness field. She became known statewide when she was appointed by Gov. DeWine to lead the Ohio Department of Health (DOH) in 2019 – which coincided with the early days of the COVID pandemic.

During the pandemic, Acton became widely recognized as she joined Gov. DeWine in daily press briefings to provide virus data and safety measures. Acton's demeanor in providing guidance in mitigating COVID earned her national praise – as she received a COVID Courage Award from the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation and was named by USA Today as Woman of the Year for Ohio.

Acton received her medical degree from Northeastern Ohio University College of Medicine and her master's degree in public health from The Ohio State University. She taught at the OSU College of Medicine and Nationwide Children's Hospital's Research Institute's Center for Injury Research & Policy.

A central Ohio resident since beginning her medical training and residency, Acton worked for the Columbus Foundation as a community outreach and grants

management officer from 2017 until joining the DeWine Administration. Among the Foundation's focuses are combating youth homelessness and enhancing women's health.

Following service as Ohio's DOH Director, Acton returned to the Columbus Foundation and helped start its Center for Human Kindness, where she worked with CEOs, mayors and community advocates in promoting community health. She resigned from the Foundation in 2021 when she briefly considered running for the U.S. Senate.

Prior to announcing her run for governor in January 2025, Acton provided keynote addresses throughout Ohio and served as President/CEO of RAPID5 – a central Ohio non-profit focusing on wellness by connecting hiking and bike trails to water corridors.

Her gubernatorial campaign centers on affordability and supporting the working class, which includes medical debt, prescription costs and healthcare relief. In January, Acton selected David Pepper as her running mate.

Acton, who was uncontested in May's primary, resides in Bexley with her husband, Eric, a public-school teacher. The couple has six children.



David Pepper

A fifth-generation Cincinnatian, David Pepper has worked as a lawyer, writer, political activist, elected official, adjunct professor and chair of the Ohio Democratic Party.

Pepper, 55, graduated magna cum laude from Yale University and earned his juris doctorate from Yale Law School. Working as an attorney with Cincinnati law firms Squire Sanders Boggs and Blank Rome, he focuses his practice on commercial, business and appellate litigation.

He entered public office on his first try – winning a seat on Cincinnati City Council and serving from 2001-05. Over the next 10 years, Pepper served on the Hamilton County Commission – including as president from 2009-2010; ran for Ohio Auditor and Ohio Attorney General in 2010 and 2014, respectively; and was elected Ohio Democratic Party Chair – serving from 2015-2021.

A fiction and political writer, Pepper has authored several novels and is an adjunct professor teaching classes in election and voting rights at the University of Cincinnati School of Law.

Pepper and his wife, Alaina, have two children and reside in Cincinnati.



Vivek Ramaswamy – Republican

A Cincinnati native, Vivek Ramaswamy, 41, has made a name for himself at the national level not only as a leading conservative voice but also in the biotech field.

The Harvard University alumnus, where he graduated summa cum laude in biology, began his career as a biotech investor. Prior to turning 30, Ramaswamy had added a law degree from Yale University and became Founder/Executive Chairman of Roivant Sciences – a biopharmaceutical company. Along with leading large biotech initial public offerings (IPOs), the first-generation American was featured on the Forbes cover at age 30 due to his work in drug development.

Ramaswamy became well-known outside the biotech field in the 2020s. Leading up to him writing New York Times bestseller "Woke, Inc.," he was recognized as a "prominent national commentator on stakeholder capitalism, free speech and work culture."

While he initially considered representing Ohio by running for U.S. Senate in 2022, his first political run came in 2023. Ramaswamy ran as the youngest presidential candidate in the 2024 Republican primaries – appearing in five national debates. Though he dropped out of the presidential race, Ramaswamy impressed on the national stage. His support of Donald Trump led him to briefly serve as a co-leader for the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) – which was tasked with cutting wasteful federal spending.

Ramaswamy, who brings a political message of lower taxes and improved education, healthcare, jobs and public safety, announced he was running for governor in February 2025 and selected Rob McColley as his running mate in January.

In May's primary election, Ramaswamy earned the Republican nomination for governor by receiving 82.5% of the votes in defeating northwest Ohio business owner Casey Putsch.

Ramaswamy resides in the Columbus area with his wife, Apoorva, who is a throat surgeon at Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute at The Ohio State University as well as an assistant professor at OSU. The couple has three children.



Rob McColley

In his more than a decade of government service in the Ohio House and Senate, Rob McColley has earned the confidence of both his constituents and fellow state legislators.

McColley, 42, majored in finance and graduated with a business degree from The Ohio State University and later earned his juris doctorate from the University of Toledo College of Law.

Prior to his political career, which began in the Ohio House of Representatives in 2015, McColley worked with the Community Improvement Corporation of Henry County, where he oversaw economic development and worked to improve workforce development among manufacturers and high school students.

Following two years in the Ohio House – where he was named Assistant Majority Whip, McColley was appointed to the Ohio Senate in 2017. Sen. McColley has served in the Ohio Senate for nine years. Reelected in 2024, Sen. McColley was unanimously selected Ohio Senate President in January 2025.

McColley and his wife, Denise, have three children and reside in Napoleon.





CLAIMS & FACTS REGARDING DATA CENTERS

Ohio Among Leaders in Construction of Information Facilities

Heading into November's midterm elections, the political divide wasn't necessarily whether you were Democrat or Republican but more along the dividing line of whether you were pro- or anti- data centers.

In September 2026, according to market intelligence company Cleanview, more than 1,300 data centers were operating in the U.S. – with more than 2,200 others being constructed or planned for construction. Cleanview specializes in tracking the nation's development of power and data facilities.

As Ohio is known for being "The Heart of it All" due to its geographic location making it both a transportation and commerce hub, the state is also becoming a home for data hubs. According to Data Center Geeks, as of August 2026, Ohio ranked among the top five states in the nation for data centers with 240 – trailing only Virginia (651), Texas (513), California (296) and Georgia (274).

A data center is a facility housing a centralized network of computers, servers and information storage. These large warehouse-looking facilities typically contain rows of computer servers, data storage systems and networking equipment, along with the power and cooling infrastructure needed to operate them. The number of data centers is increasing with growing use of digital technology, as every action – from movie streaming, sending emails, online shopping, training artificial intelligence models and more – relies on data center operations.

With many more data centers being planned for construction – which according to the Office of Ohio's Consumers' Counsel could be an additional 80 coming to the state by 2030 – the state's construction industry is joining economic development groups, chambers of commerce, policymakers, professional services, technology companies and others leaning toward the pro-data center sector.

Ohio leads the nation when it comes to data center-related ballot measures in the 2026 elections. While California, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Nevada and Wisconsin also are combining in the 38 ballot initiatives this year, Ohio will have 20 measures for voters to decide in November's midterm elections.

In June, Ohio's Business Roundtable released "Data Centers in Ohio, Fact vs.

Fiction" to dispel claims from current-day NIMBY (not in my backyard) groups that "data centers consume staggering amounts of water, drive up residential electric bills, create few jobs, benefit from tax giveaways at residents' expense" and more.

Founded in 1992, the Ohio Business Roundtable's mission is to improve the state's business climate. A nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy group, the Roundtable works with Ohio's legislative leaders to make the state more business friendly and competitive nationally and internationally by addressing economic challenges and implementing policies to strengthen competitiveness. The organization consists of more than 120 company presidents/CEOs – of which more than one-third lead Fortune 1000 companies. (For more information, visit the group's website at www.ohiobrt.com.)

The Data Centers in Ohio, Fact vs. Fiction study looks at claims in eight areas that fuel the anti- and pro-data center debate: Jobs, Water, Energy, Property Tax & Abatements, School Districts, Sales Tax Incentives, Noise and Economic Impact.

Here is a look at each area's "claims" and "facts" according to the report:

JOBS

Claim: Data centers don't create jobs

Facts: The physical footprint of a data center is anywhere from 200,000 to 500,000 square feet. According to the report, a 250,000 square-foot data center requires 1,500-2,000 construction workers over the 12- to 18-month building period. Once online, data centers require an operating staff of 25-50 full-time employees and an additional staff of 25-50 people providing security and maintenance.

In addition, data center servers are on a 5- to 6-year replacement cycle, which "regenerates" construction work throughout the facility's existence.

From 2016-2023, employment at Ohio data centers grew 70.5% – which was faster than the national rate of 60%. Forecasts show that the national employment in the areas of computing infrastructure providers, data processing, web hosting and related services will grow another 20.3% by 2034. A Great Lakes Data Center study by the University of Virginia estimates "Ohio data centers will add $4.7 billion in GDP and 37,200 jobs by 2030.

WATER

Claim: Data centers consume millions of gallons of water per day and dump waste into nearby watersheds

Facts: The days of high-water use as a result of evaporative cooling used in data center designs are going to the wayside, as the broader industry is shifting to "closed-loop" and "direct-to-chip" liquid cooling methods. Microsoft, which operates more than 500 data centers across the world, has committed to going to a "zero-water evaporative closed-loop design" of its data centers by 2030.

Closed-loop data centers and other water-saving efforts are already planned and being used in Ohio. While data center adversaries claim multi-million gallon-per-day water usage, a 400,000-sf data center planned for New Albany will operate – after initial setup – on 30,000 gallons a day for restroom and kitchen use – which is comparable to the daily use of a fast-food restaurant. Recycled water programs for Ohio's data centers are already being advanced as part of a statewide effort. Also, this year in Ohio, two state representatives introduced legislation tracking data center water usage.



DATA ON DATA CENTERS

- The U.S. is home to nearly 40% of the world's data centers. Other nations among global leaders in data centers are: 2. United Kingdom, 3. Germany, 4. France and 5. China.
- The first data center in the U.S. dates to 1945 with the Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer (ENIAC) at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Ohio's first "data center" is believed to have been in the mid-1960s with the invention of a prototype air conditioner to regulate temperature/humidity for early IBM computing facilities.
- With the size being compared to a large big-box retail store, the average U.S. data center site is 225 acres, while "hyperscale facilities" can be on 1,000 acres or more.
- Since 2020 nearly half (46%) of private office construction in the U.S. has been for data centers.

Regarding the claim of data center waste dumping in watersheds, "most onsite cooling water is potable (i.e. safe for drinking) and recirculates through the loop; there is no industrial discharge stream comparable to chemical manufacturing and food processing."

ENERGY

Claim: Data centers are driving up electricity bills for Ohio residents and putting the cost of new generation onto everyday ratepayers.

Facts: While data centers are large electricity users – as Ohio's data center demand is projected to double (5.3% to 11% of state demand) by 2030 – state and national initiatives would help shield residents and everyday ratepayers from rising energy costs.

In Ohio, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) approved the AEP Ohio Data Center Tariff in July 2025, which requires data centers using more than 25 megawatts of electricity "to pay for 85% of contracted capacity for 12 years even if they use less." In addition, "exit penalties" equal to three years of minimum charges have also been implemented for data center owners as additional ways to protect residential ratepayers.

At the national level, the White House Ratepayer Protection Pledge was implemented this March, which requires "hyperscalers" (large-scale cloud service providers) and AI companies to "build, bring or buy the energy they need" in order to protect American consumers from price hikes attributed to data center infrastructure.

PROPERTY TAX & ABATEMENTS

Claim: Data centers don't pay property taxes – they receive 100% abatements that shift the tax burden onto residents.

Facts: Real estate taxes on land cannot be deducted in Ohio. Land under data centers pay from Day 1 and continues to being paid for – even if there is an allowance in building taxes. during a building tax abatement. Data center buildings in central Ohio are appraised upwards of 375% more than the typical industrial or manufacturing building. The report also points out that "Ohio's agricultural land is taxed far below market value" in the Current Agricultural Use program.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Claim: Data centers strain school districts and starve them of revenue.

Facts: The claim that data centers increase housing demand and headcount in school districts is unfounded, as data centers have low employment headcount per square foot. So, they do not produce the housing demand or enrollment growth that residential development or manufacturing development does. All revenue flowing in from data centers to schools is without offsetting costs.

Data centers are also proving to be good stewards, as owners are funding direct school programming – such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) events, Space Nights and other certification pathway programs.

SALES TAX INCENTIVES

Claim: Ohio's data center sales tax exemption is an unjustified $141 million-per-year giveaway. Without exemption, the data centers would still come.

Facts: Attracting data centers to a state or region is competitive. While Ohio is one of 36 states having a data center sales tax exemption, it is one of only a few where it is not automatic. For an Ohio data center developer to qualify for a tax exemption, it must work with local economic development officials and JobsOhio prior to applying to the Ohio Tax Credit Authority. The Ohio Tax Credit Authority's decision on whether a data center project receives full, partial or no exemption is determined through Ohio Department of Development guidance.

It is ill-advised to believe data centers would continue to call Ohio home if the state did not provide tax incentives. Without exemptions, recurring property and income taxes, payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT), New Community Authorities (NCA) charges and payroll revenue would not benefit Ohioans due to future projects going to other states.

NOISE

Claim: Data centers are loud industrial sites that disturb neighborhoods at all hours.

Facts: Noise levels from data centers range from 60 decibels – about the sound level of normal conversation or a window air conditioner – to 90 decibels – the sound level of a gas-powered lawnmower or hairdryer. The high-end sound level of a data center can be traced usually to facilities built prior to updated noise mitigation actions that include equipment-level acoustic treatment and within modern Ohio zoning and design reviews.

Ohio communities are building noise mitigation into their zoning approvals for data centers. So, many data center noise complaints "typically stem from absent or weak local ordinances – not from the technology itself."

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Claim: Data centers create no real economic value. They take farmland, drain utilities and leave little behind for the community.

Facts: In a little more than a decade, Amazon Web Services (AWS) has invested nearly $40 billion into Ohio through data center construction and operations – including almost $17 billion more than it initially committed. In one county alone, the AWS venture has meant a $4.1 billion total investment that has resulted in $645 million in GDP contributions and more than 2,350 full-time jobs. In addition to communities having the ability to capture revenue beyond conventional property tax (see sales tax incentive section), data centers "catalyze" further development and can bring utility and road infrastructure investments benefiting subsequent projects in the same corridor.

Often overlooked is the level of recurring revenue from construction income tax, as the city collects municipal income tax on those wages.

NATIONAL SECURITY, AI RACE & LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

In addition to the eight claims in its report, the Ohio Business Roundtable looks at how the state can play a role in the nation's AI race and the importance of having data centers within the state's boundaries.

When it comes to national security and the global AI race, data centers serve as "the physical backbone of artificial intelligence," according to the Data Centers In Ohio, Fact vs. Fiction report. With AI expansion having such a critical role in the nation's competitive race with China, "Ohio sits at the center of this national footprint as a leader in data center investment." The Roundtable report also warns that any disruptions to Ohio's future decisions regarding data centers "directly affects whether America wins the AI race, and whether Ohio is on the inside of that race or outside of it."

When it comes to AI and "cloud economy," location matters. According to the Ohio Business Roundtable report: "... Physical proximity to data centers is itself an economic asset." Latency – which is the time it takes, usually measured in milliseconds, between a user's action and a system's response – is critical in AI computing. Companies are relocating their headquarters, research and development and digital operations near "clusters" of data centers to decrease what is referred to as the "latency penalty."

According to the Roundtable report: "The data centers Ohio has attracted are not a self-contained economic prize; they are the substrate on which the next generation of Ohio's broader corporate growth will be built."

When it comes to the state being at the heart of it all with its growing inventory of data centers, the Ohio Business Roundtable writes: "Ohio is not at a crossroads – it is at a launching pad. The infrastructure, the investment and the momentum are already here. The only question now is how much of the future Ohio is ready to claim."



GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS
FOR OHIO'S CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

The good news for Ohio construction workers is that the demand is there. However, the bad news for the state's construction companies is that the number of workers they need isn't.

Statistically, Ohio should be in a good spot in meeting the current demands of the largest road construction program in history and the current data center boom.

As:
- Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that Ohio has traditionally been among the top states in number of construction industry workers.

Coupled with:
- The Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) reports that Ohio ranked third nationally for year-over-year job growth for construction workers from April 2025-April 2026.

Still, Ohio needs skilled trades workers. The state's heavy/highway construction industry faces an estimated shortage of 14,000 skilled workers – with many estimates being much higher. Additionally, projections show a need for tens of thousands of skilled workers are needed to build the 80 to 100 data centers planned for construction in Ohio through 2032.



For Ohioans, Benefits from IHS are of 'Epic Proportions'

However, Report Finds Assets of 70-year-old System are Diminishing

This year, being the U.S. Interstate Highway System's 70th anniversary should be reason enough for celebration. But when you add in the benefits that this iconic road system has for Ohioans, it turns into a colossal shindig of epic proportions.

A study by The Road Information Program (TRIP) touts the benefits that traveling on the interstate has in way of safety, reliability and – yes – cost savings, as well as ailments forming on the 70-year-old transportation network.

The U.S. Interstate Highway System (IHS) is celebrating its 70th anniversary in 2026, marking seven decades since President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956.

> ***"More than any single action by the government since the end of the war, this one (the Interstate) will change the face of America with straightaways, cloverleaf turns, bridges and elongated parkways. Its impact on the American economy – the jobs it would produce in manufacturing and construction, the rural areas it would open-up – was beyond calculation."***
>
> **– President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1963**

Released this June, TRIP's report, "Saving Lives, Time & Money: Maintaining the Enduring Value of America's Greatest Infrastructure Achievement, the Interstate Highway System at 70," provides an overall national look as well as individual states – including Ohio – on how the IHS provides "improved access," "reduces congestion" and "annually reduces total vehicle delays," along with the system's rising congestion, pavement and bridge concerns.

In Ohio, the benefit of using interstates equates to savings of approximately 47.2-million hours of travel – which is fifth most of any state – and 13 million gallons of gasoline consumption – also fifth-most in the U.S. Collectively, these savings in travel time and motor-fuel consumption add up to an annual savings of nearly $2.4 billion for Ohioans – which is the seventh-most of any state.



What Makes a Highway an Interstate?

While highways and Interstates are both major roadways connecting cities and states, there are key differences. According to website "thisvsthat," highways are typically smaller, two-lane roads with traffic lights and intersections, while Interstates are larger, multi-lane highways designed for higher-speed travel with limited access points. Here are other varying attributes of highways and Interstates:

	HIGHWAY	INTERSTATE
Definition	A main road intended for travel by the public between important destinations	A controlled-access highway system in the United States
Regulation	Regulated by individual states	Regulated by the federal government
Numbering	May have various numbering systems depending on the region	Numbered with a prefix "I" followed by a number
Speed Limit	Speed limits vary depending on the location and type of highway	Speed limits typically higher than regular highways
Interchanges	May have intersections, traffic lights, or roundabouts	Interchanges are typically grade-separated

(Source: thisvsthat.io/highway-vs-interstate)

Along with savings at the gas pump, the nation's 46,876-mile interstate system provides an estimated $65 billion annual benefit because of improved traffic safety and reduced traffic congestion. The TRIP report (tripnet.org/reports/americas-interstate-highway-system-at-70-2026) highlights:

- Travel on the nation's Interstate highways is nearly two-and-a-half times safer than travel on all other roadways due to improved roadway safety features resulting in an annual benefit of $28 billion in reduced costs because of fewer serious/fatal traffic crashes.
- The IHS reduces traffic congestion by providing more efficient/reliable travel, which provides $37 billion annually in benefits due to reduced delays and fuel consumption.

TRIP is a national transportation research nonprofit based in Washington, D.C.

The first "interstate route" in Ohio was a 12.4-mile-long portion of I-280, which was built from 1955-1959, which today serves as a connector of I-75 to I-80/I-90 southeast of Toledo in Wood County. I-280 was originally part of the Detroit-Toledo Expressway.

Ohio's more than 1,500 miles of interstate ranks fifth-most of any state, including Texas with 3,233 miles, California (2,456), Illinois (2,169) and Pennsylvania (1,759). Ohio's 1,572 IHS miles includes portions of nine primary routes – I-70, I-71, I-74, I-75, I-76, I-77, I-79, I-80 and I-90 – and 13 auxiliary/spur routes – I-270, I-271, I-275, I-277, I-280, I-470, I-471, I-475, I-480, I-490, I-670, I-675 and I-680 – which as a whole provide safer travel compared to the state's other roadways systems.

According to TRIP, as a result of the interstate system's "built-in-safety features like median barriers, paved shoulders, a minimum of four lanes and complete separation from cross traffic and rail lines," an estimated 263 lives were saved in Ohio in 2024. Regarding Ohio's interstates saving the eighth-most lives of any state, TRIP writes: "The fatality rate, per 100-million vehicle miles of travel (VMT) on Ohio's Interstate highways in 2024 was 0.46, compared to 1.22 on non-interstate routes." This reduction in accidents is estimated to not only save lives but also provide Ohio with an annual economic benefit of $1.1 billion due to fewer serious and fatal traffic crashes.

More efficient and reliable travel on Ohio's Interstate routes provides a $1.3 billion benefit to the state because of reduced delays and fuel consumption.

Too Much of A Good Thing

While the IHS provides a $65 billion annual benefit to the U.S., its increasing use is unfortunately becoming more and more a liability. In its study, TRIP looks at the Transportation Research Board's (TRB) report to Congress that found the interstate system is heavily congested and aging. "According to the 2019 TRB Report," TRIP writes, "the Interstate System has a persistent and growing backlog of physical and operational deficiencies as a result of age, heavy use and deferred investment, and is in need of major reconstruction and modernization."

Ohio's interstate travel from 2000-2024 grew 15% – which was much less than the nation's interstate VMT of 29% in that five-year span – however, nearly half (47%) of Ohio's urban interstate system is considered congested during peak hours. TRIP reports that the Interstate System includes "2.6% of all roadway lane miles in the U.S., (but) carries 24% of the nation's vehicle travel." It adds that over the IHS's 70 years of service, the nation's VMT has increased 426%.

Continual travel on the IHS is impacting pavement and bridge conditions. TRIP reports that 9% of Ohio's Interstate pavement was considered in poor/mediocre condition (tying for 26th in the nation), while 2% of its IHS bridges were rated in "poor" condition (tied for 20th lowest in the U.S.).



The IHS's Road Ahead

"... The Interstate Highway System," according to TRIP, "is suffering from severe wear and escalating congestion. To meet future demands, the system urgently requires sweeping modernization, capacity expansion and foundational reconstruction.

"... While pavement smoothness on most segments of the Interstate system is acceptable, the crumbling foundations of most highway segments need to be reconstructed, and that continued resurfacing – rather than addressing underlying foundational issues – is resulting in diminishing returns and results in shorter periods of pavement smoothness." To meet the nation's current and future IHS needs, TRIP referred to TRB's recommendations, writing: "The TRB report concludes that the annual investment into the Interstate Highway System should be increased approximately two-and-half times, from $23 billion in 2018 to $57 billion annually over the next 20 years."

Along with increased funding, TRIP's IHS recommendations are:

- The foundational reconstruction of Interstate highways, bridges and interchanges
- Improvement to roadway safety features
- System right-sizing, including upgrading of some roadway corridors to Interstate standards
- Adding needed additional highway capacity on existing routes
- Adding additional corridors
- Modifying some urban segments to maintain connectivity while remediating economic and social disruption

"The Interstate Highway System at 70 continues to provide tremendous benefits to Americans, saving lives, time and money," said TRIP Executive Director Dave Kearby. "It is absolutely vital that we preserve these transportation benefits for future generations of Americans, but this will require that the funding needed to rebuild and modernize our Interstate highways is provided."

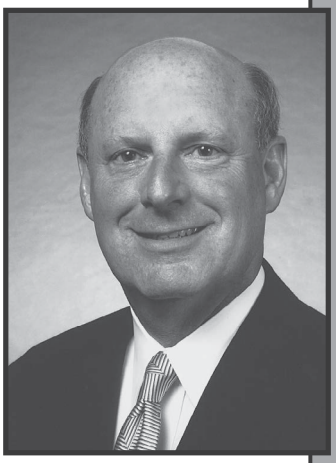
TRIP's discussion of IHS reconstruction, expansion and modernization is timely, considering the work going on in Congress on the next federal transportation program. The current transportation program, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), expired September 30. With limited actions in passing a successor to IIJA, the current transportation program has been extended through a short-term continuing resolution by Congress to December 11.



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ODOT's Bidding Results for State FY 2027

WINNING BIDS

Reported June 1- September 17, 2026

Here is statistical information on recent ODOT projects awarded by districts and contractor affiliation:



79 PROJECTS // $173.3 MILLION

SFY 2027 SUMMARY – JUNE 1 - SEPTEMBER 17, 2026

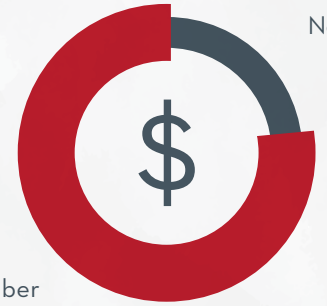
PROJECTS AWARDED BY CONTRACTOR AFFILIATION



Non-Member
31.1%

OCA Member
68.9%

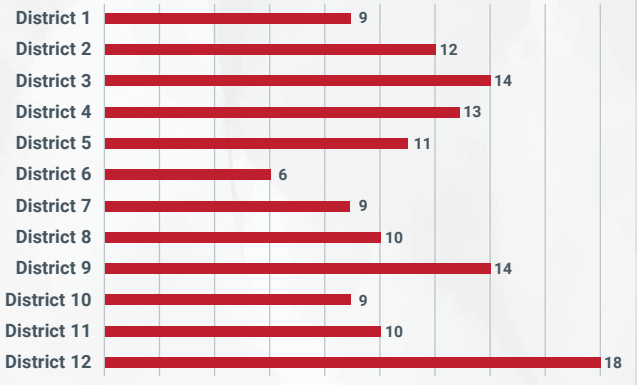
AWARD DOLLARS BY CONTRACTOR AFFILIATION



Non-Member
22.9%

OCA Member
77.1%

PROJECTS AWARDED BY ODOT DISTRICT



AWARD DOLLARS BY ODOT DISTRICT





OCA PRESIDENT AWARDED ARTBA'S NELLO TEER AWARD

OCA President Chris Runyan was honored by the **American Road & Transportation Builders Association** (ARTBA) at its recent national convention with the **Nello L. Teer Jr. Award**.

Runyan, who has led OCA since 2007, received ARTBA's highest honor of its Contractors Division. The honor, which Runyan shared as 2026 recipient with **Associated Pennsylvania Constructors** (APC) Executive Vice President **Robert Latham**, recognizes individuals having made outstanding contributions to ARTBA's Contractors Division and the transportation construction industry.

Runyan and Latham, who has led APC since 2001, are both retiring at the end of the year following long-time service to their respective associations and heavy/highway industry.

The Nello L. Teer Jr. Award, which was presented at the 2026 ARTBA National Convention, September 27-30 in Kohler, Wis., was established in 1988. The honor is named after the contractor and past ARTBA Chairman.

ARTBA, headquartered in Washington, D.C., is a national association representing the U.S. transportation construction industry and advocating for infrastructure investment and policy to ensure safe and efficient movement of people and goods. OCA serves as an ARTBA state chapter. To learn more about ARTBA, visit www.artba.org.

GEDDIS CELEBRATES 80TH BUSINESS YEAR

Geddis Paving & Excavating Inc. recently celebrated 80 years of service in northwest Ohio.

A third-generation family-owned contractor, Geddis Paving & Excavating is headquartered in Toledo and provides road construction, site development, paving, excavation and material recycling services.

Founded in 1946 by **Robert Geddis Sr.** as Geddis Brothers Paving, the company has grown from "a single backhoe, a dump truck, and a handshake," into having completed projects for municipalities, schools, healthcare organizations, manufacturers, commercial developers and private businesses throughout the region. Today, the company is led by **Robert Geddis Jr.**, and third-generation family members are also involved in the business.



City of Toledo Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz (second left) presents a proclamation to (from left) Geddis Paving & Excavating's Vice President Benjamin Geddis, Owner Robert Geddis Jr. and President Steve Oliver for the company's 80 years of service.

The anniversary celebration was highlighted at an August event that brought together employees, customers, vendors, subcontractors, local elected officials and invited guests. At the event, the company was honored with the **State of Ohio Award** by State Senator **Theresa Gavarone** and a **City Proclamation** by Toledo Mayor **Wade Kapszukiewicz** celebrating its 80th Anniversary

Geddis Paving & Excavating Inc. has been an **OCA** member since 2010. To learn more about the company, visit www.geddispaving.com.



Geddis Paving & Excavating company leadership (from left) Kurt Rasmussen, VP Operations; Benjamin Geddis, CFO/VP; Robert Geddis Jr., Owner; Steve Oliver, President; Richard Crace, VP Estimating; and Kyle Reinhart, PM.

REPORT STUDIES INFRASTRUCTURE IN DETERMINING BEST STATES TO LIVE

When it comes to overall infrastructure, **Ohio** ranks 31st in the nation according to a recent **U.S. News & World Report** ranking.

A late-September report used to compile U.S. News & World Report's annual ranking of the best states to live looked at three areas of infrastructure – transportation, energy and internet access. Infrastructure was one of eight categories used in the study to determine best states to reside, with others being: Education, Healthcare, Economy, Opportunity, Fiscal Stability, Natural Environment and Crime & Corrections.

According to U.S. News & World Report, "Infrastructure has a big impact on the quality of day-to-day life. Whether you're struggling to get around because of poor road quality, unreliable public transportation, or your neighborhood experiences frequent power outages, weak infrastructure can make everyday life more difficult."

In determining each area of infrastructure used in the report, transportation metrics included commute time, bridge and road quality and public transit usage; energy variables that were studied included average retail electricity price, power grid reliability and renewable energy usage; and internet access criteria included broadband subscription internet and broadband internet.

Ohio's ranking of 31st overall for infrastructure included being 16th in transportation, 32nd in energy and 39th in internet access.

Nevada and West Virginia were ranked best and worst, respectively, for overall infrastructure.

Here are the top and lowest three-ranked states and how Ohio's neighboring states rated in the U.S. News & World Report Rankings:

Top States

	Transportation	Energy	Internet
1. Nevada	9	7	2
2. Oregon	4	4	17
3. Nebraska	5	3	22

Lowest States

	Transportation	Energy	Internet
50. West Virginia	49	49	49
49. Mississippi	46	47	48
48. Alaska	12	27	26

Neighboring States

	Transportation	Energy	Internet
22. Indiana	13	27	26
28. Kentucky	17	30	30
31. Ohio	**16**	**32**	**39**
42. Michigan	38	37	38
43. Pennsylvania	47	36	34
50. West Virginia	49	49	49

For full 50 state rankings, visit www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/infrastructure.

If you are an OCA member and have news about your business or company regarding in-state staff changes or honors, and would like it to appear in Ohio Contractor, send the information by email to editorial@triad-inc.com, or by calling 800-288-7423.



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