



2025 Summer General Assembly Special Districts & Authorities Caucus Notes Friday, August 8, 2025

Call to Order/Welcome/Introductions – The Special Districts & Authorities Caucus met on Friday, August 8, 2025, at 8:45 a.m. in Heritage Hall Room 154 at the Owens Community College Toledo area campus in Perrysburg, Ohio. Chris Smally, director of Wood County Park District and the caucus member lead moderator, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Introductions were made around the room.

Caucus members in attendance included:

Lucas Camuso-Stall, Director, Government Relations & Advocacy, Toledo Lucas County Public Library
Maggie Clausing, Grants Coordinator, Metroparks Toledo
Meghan Gallagher, Regional Business Development Coordinator & Account Manager, Ohio Turnpike & Infrastructure Commission
Cher Johnson, Chair, Wood County Port Authority
Laura Koprowski, CEO, TARTA
Senghor Manns, President/CEO, Lucas Metropolitan Housing Association
James Rossler, Member, Wood County Port Authority
Chris Smalley (Moderator), Director, Wood County Park District

Other guests in attendance included:

Jon Drummond, Project Manager, Fishbeck
Laurie Adams, Managing Principal, DGL Consulting Engineers

TMACOG staff in attendance included:

Raj Nagisetty, Transportation Planner
Amira Nur, Transportation Planner

Caucus Overview – Chris Smalley gave an overview of the caucus.

Discussion of Topics/Issues – Caucus members discussed the following topics:

Topic 1 – New State Budget

- TARTA appreciates that the OWMP \$30 million operating budget doesn't require an 80-20 match. They have applied for funding for the new fiscal year.
- The Toledo-Lucas County Public Library is experiencing significant impacts following the new budget, which shifted to line-item appropriation, providing less funding than traditionally received, with 40% of the library operating funds coming from the state budget. Despite 6,000 residents opposing library funding cuts, legislators moved forward with funding cuts.
- Metroparks Toledo is keeping track of vetoes and is relieved that they passed a levy before provision changes.
- Wood County Port Authority is unaffected by changes in the state budget.

Topic 2 – Funding Sources and Partnerships

- After redirecting the conversation to recent successful partnerships, Chris Smalley began by sharing that he found success through the development of the Wood County trail.
- The Wood County Port Authority saw success in partnerships through transportation. They are currently looking to open a corridor in Rossford between Buck Road and I-75. The port authority finds that cooperation is not an issue, finding funding is.
- Laura Koprowski advises the group to be proactive about finding resources. Specifically, being more visible to legislators and having more voices advocating for the same issues. We shouldn't wait for the budget year; we should be continuously advocating for funding. TARTA is pleased that TMACOG is being active in this area.
- Meghan Gallagher noted that placing a levy on the ballot comes with significant consequences and that the public may not fully understand the amount of planning that goes into the process.
- Moving forward, LMHA wants to be less dependent on the current administration and instead rely on partnerships and collaborative resources.
- The group suggested that having a resource for terminology exchange would be helpful for their grant writers, as well as knowing which agencies are asking for changes.
- There is a change in the funding applicant review process: political appointees will be reviewing applications.

Topic 3 – Regional updates on projects & initiatives

- In an update on housing, the former Park Hotel facility will provide housing to transitional age youth. LMHA expects approximately 45 residents to move in once development is finished.
- Glass City Riverwalk: The team is working through the RAISE agreement, which is still under review. They are also working through vocabulary changes at the request of the Department of Transportation. They're in the process of applying for state funding for a new University-Parks Trail bridge.
- After taking down the rail bridge over the Maumee River, the Wood County Port Authority is now ready to present a preliminary plan to put a multiuse path across the Maumee River.
- Library: After the locally passed operation levy was approved by over 70%, and the bond issue passed with 60% approval, \$130 million is being allocated effectively. The Alexis Road branch will replace an older library for North Toledo residents.
- Although the local community is eager to see the library expand and offer more services, its success contrasts with challenges at the federal level.
- Road failures on the Ohio Turnpike during the winter season require road work. Additional signage has been added, and speed limits in construction zones have been adjusted: 50 mph near the bridge replacement project east of Elmore, 55 mph when workers are present, and 65 mph when no workers are on site.
- TARTA is undergoing projects that are critical to its operation, including replacing their Central Avenue campus, construction of a shared parking lot with Toledo Fire Department, which are multimillion-dollar expenses. TARTA hit its highest ridership record of 200,000 rides on their fixed routes. The agency has plans to increase frequency on routes, shortening services that are not used and increasing where there is demand. TARTA and the Toledo-Lucas County libraries have partnered to distribute blast passes to get more youth riding buses in the summer. With nearly 3,000 passes registered, local organizations are helping with program costs. TARTA is addressing safety issues created by offering free fares.

- Will new Amazon development affect Route 10? TARTA may need to dedicate a larger or additional bus for those rides.
- Laura Koprowski provided an update to the group on ODOT funding for WorkLink, a partnership between TMACOG, TARTA, and GLCAP to find workforce mobility solutions in Wood County.

Topic 4 – TMACOG’s Resilience Improvement Plan & Active Transportation Plan updates

- Raj Nagisetty updated the group on TMACOG’s Resilience Improvement Plan, which is designed to highlight the regional perspective on vulnerable assets and the impact of extreme weather conditions. The project will assess how infrastructure is affected and identify which areas are most susceptible to adverse weather conditions. TMACOG plans to share the model with stakeholders and regularly update it to monitor improvements and vulnerabilities.
- Raj Nagisetty gave the group an update on TMACOG’s Active Transportation Plan.
- TMACOG staff plan to provide a template resource to help municipalities develop their own ATPs and identify areas where pedestrian and bike infrastructure is feasible.

What legislative action might be helpful?

- How are you working to attract and maintain population in Northwest Ohio? Brain drain and population decline are impacting all stakeholders. Columbus receives support from policy to fuel its growth. What are legislators doing so that Toledo sees similar growth?
- We lack jobs and affordable housing to attract people here. These factors would bring growth to Northwest Ohio and attract industry so that people have options to raise families here. Despite this, Toledo has amenities that attract people to spend money and time here.
- Our region needs amenities like good transit, schools and maintained parks to retain residents. One of the region’s strengths is the impressive inventory of rail to trails and bike routes.
- What are legislators doing to ensure infrastructure development happens in a timely and efficient manner? What are their plans to improve efficiency in the development of roads, interchanges and multi-use paths? The current process for development is overly complicated.

Questions for State Lawmakers Panel Discussion – The caucus chose two potential questions for the legislative panel discussion:

1. How are you helping to maintain or even expand the population in our region?
2. What are you doing to increase the ease of infrastructure improvements in our region?

New Business Next Steps – There was no other business discussed.

Adjourn – Chris Smalley thanked everyone for attending the caucus and the session was adjourned.