



State Rep. Kent Smith
Transportation and Infrastructure Testimony on HB 83
April 26, 2017

Chairman Green, Vice Chairman Greenspan, Ranking Member Sheehy and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to explain why the upcoming Opportunity Corridor project should be named for the legacy of Carl and Louis Stokes.

In doing so let me briefly extoll the virtues of Congressman Louis Stokes and Cleveland Mayor Carl Stokes.

First Congressman Louis Stokes who passed away at the age of 90 on August 18, 2015. Before Congressman Stokes, of Cleveland, joined Congress he worked as an attorney. He was active in civil rights legal proceedings which included arguing before the US Supreme Court in Terry vs Ohio which helped define the legal parameters of police search and seizure activity.

When Congressman Lou Stokes was first elected in November 1968, he became the first African American from Ohio to serve in the US House. He was elected another 14 times, serving a total of 30 years. In his final three terms, he represented me and my fellow Euclid, Ohio residents.

That being said, the history of Louis Stokes cannot be told without also mentioning his brother Carl Stokes. Carl Stokes served here, in the Ohio House of Representatives. Carl Stokes was first elected to the Ohio House in 1962. He later became the first black mayor of a major American city when he was elected Mayor of Cleveland in 1967, one year before Louis Stokes was elected to Congress. Carl Stokes was also a United States Ambassador, a municipal judge in Cleveland and was the first black anchorman of a television news show in New York City.

Yet it was his Mayoral election that was so historic. In 1967, Carl Stokes, the great grandson of a slave defeated Seth Taft, the grandson of a United States President at a time when US Census data says the City of Cleveland was two-thirds white. This year, 2017, is the 50th anniversary of Carl Stokes being elected Mayor of Cleveland.

So Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee, in honor of the 50th anniversary of the election of Mayor Carl Stokes, we would ask this Committee favorably discharge House Bill 83 which would rename the upcoming Opportunity Corridor the Carl and Louis Stokes Opportunity Corridor.

Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to explain our hope for this legislation and the importance of it being enacted into law sometime this year. We would be happy to answer any questions at this time.