

Sue Krejci - Testimony for Ohio House Economic & Workforce Development Committee 10/17/2023

Good afternoon Chair Swearingen, Vice Chair Santucci, and Ranking Member Upchurch and the members of the Economic & Workforce Development Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Sue Krejci, and my 74-year-old mother has lived on Boston Road for more than 35 years. I also grew up there, and I am strongly supportive of HB 276.

Last March, language was added to the transportation bill on the day of the vote, with no warning to Brunswick or its representatives. This language applies to exactly one area in the entire state of Ohio and forces an I-71 interchange to be built between Route 82 in Strongsville and Route 303 in Brunswick. This same approach was undertaken in 2017, but the governor at that time did a line-item veto, citing conflicts with ODOT rules and federal regulations. It was disappointing to see the same playbook employed again by the same representative.

I'm sure many of you are not familiar with this area, but Strongsville is a city of 50,000 people - 40% bigger than Brunswick's population of 35,000. Not only is Strongsville's median household income is over \$20,000 higher than Brunswick's, but Strongsville has retail that blows Brunswick out of the water, including a large shopping mall and a Costco - both on SR 82 near the highway ramps. Yet when Strongsville sought to build another interchange to help their traffic issues, they chose to put it on Boston Road, a residential two-lane road which is half in Strongsville and half in Brunswick... nearly 3 miles beyond their commercial corridor and resulting traffic backups.

The justification from the representative responsible was that 43% of the traffic using the SR 82 / Howe Road intersection is from Brunswick, but Strongsville's feasibility [study](#) shows on page 59 that only about 8% of those exiting at Route 82 continue southbound on Howe Road into Brunswick. 8%. That's a long way from 43%, and certainly not enough to impact Strongsville's traffic issues.

The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), Northeast Ohio's metropolitan planning organization, determines where interchanges are built. NOACA has done multiple studies over the years, and all have all shown that a potential interchange at Boston Road will NOT meaningfully improve traffic on Route 82 in Strongsville OR Route 303 in Brunswick.

Despite this and the fact that NOACA's Executive Director & CEO Grace Gallucci testified that "this approach infringes on the decision-making authority of local elected officials," the bill passed and was signed into law.

The representative responsible for the language explained his motivation for this unorthodox approach to a news outlet on March 30, stating that "The intersection of Route 82 and Howe Road is in most years the highest or no better than the second highest accident area in the region. There's times when the 82 exit ramp will back up all the way to the Turnpike ramp, which is almost a full mile."

Strongsville's own feasibility study - done by a Strongsville firm - shows that regardless of proposed interchange design, "the SR 82/Howe Road intersection typically resulted in poor/failing level of service throughout each scenario" (page 195). An interchange in this area will not fix the problems at this intersection. In fact, per Appendix K, a Boston Road interchange is actually projected to slow traffic on I-71 north of 82 - the exact area the gentleman described as already having backups up to a mile. This interchange would only make that worse, not better.

But ironically, because of the language that is now law, an interchange is **required to be built, even though it will not resolve the safety issues at Route 82/Howe Road** - its whole ostensible purpose. This is a huge waste of potentially \$50 - \$100 million of taxpayer funds (did I mention there's also a 50+ year old jet fuel pipeline that lies alongside Boston Road that will need to be moved at a minimum cost of \$5 million+ ?).

To meaningfully impact traffic on SR 82 with an interchange, they probably need to be looking to place it north of SR 82 before the backups begin - but this is not even an option now, as it falls **outside the narrow criteria defined by the language in this new law**.

I understand that this was done with the intention of solving a problem - and it's a solution that looks good on paper. But traffic engineering is complex, and things aren't always what they seem at first glance. Unequivocally, Strongsville's own study shows the truth - a Boston Road interchange will not improve safety at the SR 82 and Howe Road intersection, and will negatively impact traffic on I-71.

Perhaps even more importantly, this law sets a dangerous precedent, that someone from another community in another county can bypass the normal channels and decide something should be built in your community without your consent.

I urge you to support HB276 and let these things be determined by the proper channels. Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions.