

Ohio House Finance Committee

House Bill 23

Interested Party Testimony

Mark Lammon

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Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee:

My name is Mark Lammon, and I am the Executive Director of Campus District, the neighborhood representing Cleveland State University, Sisters of Charity Health System, Cuyahoga Community College, and the Superior Arts Improvement District.

Thank you for the opportunity to share concerns with language that has been added to HB23, the 2024-2025 Transportation Budget.

The language reads: “Compels ODOT to establish for the uniform application of the construction of bicycle lanes. Prohibits a bicycle lane in the middle of a street or highway in a municipality with a population over 300,000.”

This language would jeopardize the Superior Midway, so I’ll provide some background on the project. The Superior Avenue Midway, a City of Cleveland project, will provide a safe, convenient, and comfortable link for people biking along Superior Avenue between E. 55th Street and Public Square. The Superior Midway, a 2.4 mile, center of the roadway, curbed and landscape-buffered bike facility, is the result of almost 12 years of planning, community engagement, and study. You can learn more about the project at MidwayCLE.org.

I would like to highlight several key project developments over this timeframe:

- The Superior Midway is part of a transformational vision for a stress-free, physically-buffered bike network which will connect neighborhoods to each other and to key regional assets.
- The project takes advantage of Cleveland's former streetcar rights of way which, when removed, left behind excessively wide streets which encourage speeding and unsafe driving behavior.
- The Midway concept originated in 2011 as a grassroots idea advanced by serious bicyclists concerned about how to make cycling in Cleveland safer.
- In 2015, the city of Cleveland received a grant from NOACA to study the feasibility of the concept.

- The completed study determined the Midway concept to be feasible, identifying 65+ miles of potential Midway corridors.
- In 2017, Cleveland's Midway Cycle Track Plan received the 2017 American Planning Association of Ohio's Planning Award.
- The project has been awarded \$19.6 million in federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding, \$8.3 million in 2018 and an additional \$11.3 million in 2022.
- A Traffic Study, as required for roads like Superior that are part of the National Highway System, Ohio's Priority System and a Federal Aid Primary roadway, was conducted in 2020 and the Midway project was determined to be a valid concept.
- Additional safety studies were conducted due to Superior being one of Cleveland's highest crash corridors.
- The Midway represents a cutting-edge design which will position our city and state as 21st century, active transportation leaders.

While this project is unique in many ways, it would not be the first center-aligned protected bicycle facility. A local example would include Big Creek Parkway, and broader examples would be the Queens Boulevard Protected Bikeway, Sands Street, and Allen/Pike Streets in New York City - the latter which exist in a population zone that far surpasses the level indicated in this amendment. In fact, the Federal Highway Administration provides guidance on center-of-the-road protected bike lanes in their *Separated Bike Lane Planning and Design Guide*.

The Midway project in Cleveland follows a growing trend of building protected bicycle facilities to improve safety, promote active transportation & health, and spark economic development.

As our streets continue to be unsafe, specifically for people biking and walking, it is important that local governments have the ability to respond to local issues that contribute to unsafe roadways. Local municipalities and counties understand what's needed on our roadways. According to the Federal Highway Administration's in their guidance on bicycle lanes as a proven safety countermeasure, "Bicycle lane design should vary according to roadway characteristics (e.g., motor vehicle volumes and speed) in order to maximize the facility's suitability for riders of all ages and abilities." The language added to HB23 is not rooted in any real engineering principles or safety concerns -- it is an attempt to stop a bikeway project that has years of planning, design, and community support.

We are urging the Ohio House Finance Committee to remove this language.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit this written testimony regarding Bike Cleveland's concerns with the current HB23.