Senate Transportation Committee
March 16, 2023
Informal Hearing
Am. Sub. HB 23- Transportation Budget

Chairwoman Kunze, Vice Chairman Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Transportation Committee: My name is Nicholas Hanek and I am City Council President and Vice-Mayor of the City of Brunswick. I am providing this information today as a representative of Brunswick, the largest city in Medina County. We are in agreement with the amendment (AM0465) that would remove the provisions related to the implementation of potential Ohio Revised Code Section 5501.60 (DOT CD 35- Construction on Interstate Exit Ramps).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding our substantial concerns regarding the implementation of proposed Ohio Revised Code Section 5501.60. This proposed language would require interstate highway interchanges to exist every 4.5 miles in adjacent municipal corporations in contiguous counties meeting specific characteristics. However, while this certainly has far-reaching long-term implications in other communities around Ohio, there is no doubt that this specific provision is targeted solely toward the unwanted imposition of a highway interchange into the City of Brunswick. There is no other purpose that can be ascertained as the specific criteria do not apply- at this time- to any other community.

The only purpose of this proposed code section is to allow a Cuyahoga County suburb to impose a highway interchange into Medina County- into the middle of a residential area. This is unprecedented- and has a chilling effect as to what can be imposed into suburban and rural communities without regard for consequences. Brunswick has vocally expressed opposition to a potential interchange to NOACA, in public, and via legislation.

This proposed section of the Ohio Revised Code undermines local governance, regional collaboration, ODOT, and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requirements. It is contrary to the idea that we should seek to encourage collaboration between local governments and elected officials- and it specifically infringes on the right of Brunswick to govern its own community. Further, it has a substantial financial obligation both on the part of the State of Ohio and local communities that would be imposed without any corresponding data, analysis, or justification. It is reckless fiscal policy and the imposition of big government into suburban communities.

Beyond fiscal policy, good governance, and the erosion of local control- this will have very real and detrimental effects as a matter of implementation. This will cause highway interchanges to be put into residential communities- which has an immediate and detrimental effect with short- and long-term impacts to any community in which it is required. It will immediately cause a residential neighborhood in Brunswick to turn into a commercial corridor as property values will plummet as residential uses will be less desirable. It will bring immediate truck and heavy vehicle traffic within multiple residential neighborhoods when traffic is rerouted. It will essentially reshape the Brunswick community with long lasting negative implications.

There is no sound basis in analysis, policy, or study that shows that this will benefit either community. Any potential benefits are outweighed by the negative implication of the destruction of suburban neighborhoods in favor of highway traffic. The potential costs are tremendous- any implementation on the Strongsville/Brunswick border at Boston will require millions of dollars of investment to widen and change what is currently a hilly and country road into a road suitable for this level of traffic. In addition, there is a jet fuel line located on Boston Road that will require relocation which carries with it significant and substantial risks and costs. These costs, if we are forced- and mandated- to match, will leave Brunswick without sufficient funds to conduct our

everyday operations in addition to the substantial new burden placed upon us as we transition a residential area into a commercial corridor with new, unpredictable, costs including safety precautions and law enforcement. Our government funds would be drained while we faced new and pressing demands to patrol and deal with the implications of potential chemical spills, traffic accidents, and transient safety concerns. The neighboring township governments would also experience a drain- leading to considerations of potential annexations of rural areas into our municipality. This is an outright attack on suburban and rural areas adjacent to large counties in Ohio- I do not believe this can possibly be the intent of this legislature.

And- some effects of the implementation of this new section of the revised code are unknown as this will be a new, experimental policy. To comply with the proposed provisions- there are three potential locations that could comply within the Strongsville-Brunswick portion of I-71- one in Strongsville (Drake Road), one on the Brunswick/Strongsville border (Boston Road), and one in Brunswick (Grafton Road). Who will invest to finance, purchase, or build within a 4.5-mile corridor when it is a certainty that a highway interchange will be built at one of these locations? It will be immediately devasting to the economy of both communities and any other communities that find themselves within the proposed provisions of proposed 5501.60- as it will create uncertain conditions with a mandated negative outcome over a 4.5-mile radius along an interstate corridor. This is a reckless experiment that will turn municipalities into rest stops on a highway. Brunswick is more than that- it is a city of hard working, prideful people, with a thriving economy, and strong schools.

I am asking, on behalf of the City of Brunswick, that the provisions related to the implementation of ORC 5501.60 be wholly removed as it is bad policy for the State of Ohio and

sets a reckless, fiscally irresponsible, and dangerous precedent for communities in our state. Thank you, Chairwoman Kunze, and members of the Transportation Committee.