

Ohio Senate  
Transportation Committee  
November 15, 2023  
Testimony of Nicholas J. Hanek

Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony to express support for the passage of Senate Bill 155 as introduced by Senator Mark Romanchuk. My name is Nicholas Hanek and I am the Council President and the Vice-Mayor of the City of Brunswick, the largest city in Medina County. We are thankful of the tireless advocacy of Senator Romanchuk on behalf of the citizens of Brunswick.

On March 31, 2023 a provision was inserted into the Ohio Revised Code (ORC 5501.60) in HB 23 that requires that a new highway interchange be forced into communities every 4.5 miles when specific characteristics are met. While ORC 5501.60 has far-reaching and legally uncertain implications- including but not limited to the known future population growth east of Columbus with the development of the Intel plant- this provision was put into House Bill 23 solely to impose an unwanted highway interchange into the City of Brunswick in the middle of a residential neighborhood. This residential road- Boston Road- sits on the border of Cuyahoga and Medina Counties.

Over the past several months, we have felt the immediate and detrimental impacts in the City of Brunswick solely due to this new revised code provision. Following the implementation of ORC 5501.60, a study was released by the City of Strongsville that showed the intentions to convert the residential neighborhood into an unlivable traffic corridor. Dozens of homes would be required to be seized by eminent domain. In the area, property values have dramatically plummeted due to the ongoing threat of their homes being forcefully taken by the government. An entire cul-de-sac of homes valued at approximately half a million dollars each would be wiped out in one version of the proposed plans and the rest of the development's value dropped to next to nothing when there is a large interchange located next door. This law has created a 4.5 mile zone between two communities in which big government has told the residents that they are totally without any value.

It is shocking and without precedent that one community can threaten to destroy another based upon a law designed to subvert all established processes. It is even more shocking that an interchange at Boston Road- the sole reason that this ORC provision was put into HB 23- absolutely does not improve in any meaningful way the traffic or safety of any residents. The study conducted by the City of Strongsville, conducted by a Strongsville based contractor and hired by the City of Strongsville, shows with certainty that an interchange imposed at Boston Road would not have any impacts on safety or help improve traffic flow. In a letter to the City of Brunswick and other municipalities, the Director Jack Marchbanks of the Ohio Department of Transportation wrote that this study “did not provide an obvious solution to reduce congestion or reduce crash frequency.”

Now- due to ORC 5501.60- the State of Ohio is under an absolute mandate to impose an interchange when it is not warranted for any reason related to safety. We are under an imminent threat that another municipality will take the very language of ORC 5501.60 to force the State of Ohio to impose this result. For months, our residents have been told that the loss of their homes is just a necessary part of a “price for progress” (to quote the President of Strongsville City Council) and that having a home destroyed by the government is perfectly acceptable for “the greater good” (to quote the Strongsville Representative who initiated ORC 5501.60). These statements continue to occur despite the data showing that the very project this law was designed to implement- an interchange at Boston Road- has no benefit to the residents of either city. ORC 5501.60 is the absolute worst kind of big government- imposing on citizens without any basis.

As the President of City Council, I have to plan for the impacts this will have on my community. We are handcuffed until this law goes away- while the language of ORC 5501.60 states that ODOT will pay for the interchange itself- the law is silent as to what the other certain requirements will cost the City of Brunswick. We are faced with the reality of having to pay to expand Boston Road to as many as six lanes and the cost of the relocation of the jet fuel pipeline located on the south side of the road. The cost of the

safety forces and coordination required as we determine the potential blast radius and millions of dollars in costs suddenly imposed into our budget is beyond substantial- it will bankrupt the City of Brunswick.

On behalf of the City of Brunswick, I am requesting that you support Senate Bill 155 and the repeal of ORC 5501.60. The process of the development of highways is typically left to data-driven decision making with the consultation of transportation professionals. This law attempts to destroy all of that- without any regard to the negative consequences that have already occurred and will continue to occur- by ensuring that a law can force a result. Through your actions now- you can undo the nightmare of a law that has been hanging over my community- and the residents will be able to be safe from the government destroying their homes.