

Proponent Testimony for SB 155
November 12, 2023

Written Testimony of Rosemary Helderman

Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the transportation committee.

I would like to thank the committee for allowing me the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Rosemary Helderman, and I am a resident of Strongsville, Ohio. My home is situated on Boston Road and is the first home to the west of Interstate 71 on the Strongsville side of Boston Road. My family and I moved into this home in May of 1999 (24.5 years) and fell in love with the home, property, and neighborhood. Our lot is just under an acre of property surrounded by woods and the last home on a private easement giving us the feel of being in the county while living in the city. Boston Road is a two-lane country road with rolling hills lined with homes and streets leading into developments. Boston Road is currently a "no truck" road. We purchased this home as our "forever home". We raised five children and many children outside of our home have called this their "home away from home" as I was a licensed SUTQ 5-star rated family child care program for many of my 24.5 years that I have lived in this home.

As you've heard, my home is the first home to the west of Interstate 71 on the Strongsville side of Boston Road. With the push from the City of Strongsville to build the interchange and a Strongsville State Representative placing an unethical provision into House bill 23 (section 5501.60) forcing a highway interchange between two communities with specific provisions, I knew the home my husband and I tirelessly worked so hard to make, would be destroyed. This comes at a time when we only have a few more work years left before we plan on retiring. To uproot our lives at this time and start over would be a hardship and force us into many more years of work. Interest rates are high, there is a shortage of homes on the market to purchase, and eminent domain would not give us enough money to at least make a lateral move. This comes at a time when most of the improvements have been made to our home so that we can enjoy the fruits of our labor in our senior years.

Upon hearing this devastating news, I immediately went to a Brunswick City Emergency Meeting in reference to the building of the interchange. During the Brunswick City Emergency meeting many of my same concerns were addressed as resident after resident came forward to express their concerns. Some of these concerns are: the phenomenal costs to hardworking taxpayers that won't resolve the safety concerns the City of Strongsville and the Strongsville State Representative proposed it would, the

dangers of moving a high-pressure jet fuel pipeline (possibility of another East Palestine situation), plummeting house values to much of the area (these are already being felt) which leads to reduced taxes for the cities, the numerous loss of homes (much more than 15 that the initial plan proposed), and crime and human trafficking that would be potential concern with an interchange in a completely residential neighborhood. As a Strongsville resident, it was upsetting to hear that the City of Brunswick would be forced into this plan against their wishes and without conversations between the two communities. Since that first emergency meeting, the conversations in the City of Brunswick have continued from the city officials, Brunswick residents, and residents from the City of Strongsville who will all suffer devastating impacts if this interchange is built.

Following the emergency meeting in the City of Brunswick, I raced to a Strongsville City Council meeting to express my concerns about this interchange. The City of Strongsville expressed that they were pushing for the Boston Road interchange for the "good of their city and the citizens with regards to safety issues" and continued by stating that sometimes a few must be inconvenienced for the "greater good". Since I no longer care for children in my home, my commute to work goes through the traffic concerns that the City of Strongsville has identified. I expressed my disbelief that an interchange at Boston Road would even come close to alleviating their problem. The Strongsville Council asked me to wait until their feasibility study was complete so that I could understand how the data supports the building of such a costly project to alleviate traffic and safety concerns in a specific area of Strongsville (the Interchange on 82 and the Howe Road intersection). Not to my surprise, the study did not say that a Boston Road interchange would alleviate their traffic problem, nor would it help the safety issues they are experiencing. Their own study identified that the building of a Boston Road interchange would have **minimal** benefits to safety in their problem area. Not only would it minimally resolve their safety problem, but it could potentially create traffic problems on Boston Road and possible slower travel times on Interstate 71 due to the building of the Boston Road interchange.

I continue to go to as many council meetings as my schedule will allow me to stay informed. I wonder why the study only focused on Boston Road and not other areas in Strongsville. I wonder why Strongsville is still pursuing this interchange at Boston Road when their own study said that it would not help their traffic and safety concerns, along with numerous other studies done before this most current study. I wonder why some of the elected officials in the City of Strongsville are already posting the Boston Road interchange as one of their accomplishments. I wonder if the Boston Road interchange might be a proponent to the expansion of the Foltz Industrial Parkway in Strongsville and not really about safety at all.

I am writing this testimony in support of SB 155. I feel the need to testify because a legislator inserted legislation into House Bill 23 (section 5501.60) which has overreached his authority and role. There is an appropriate way to plan and build highway interchanges and the appropriate process was not followed. With this type of legislation, what will the future hold for Ohio's cities and their residents? Protocols were established for a reason! The feasibility study that the City of Strongsville paid for with help from the State of Ohio shows exactly why legislation should not override the appropriate protocol. The feasibility study proves that an interchange at Boston Road will not have an impact on the traffic safety problem that the City of Strongsville proclaims and shows that it wouldn't be built to help the "greater good". ODOT states in their response to the feasibility study that "it may be more feasible and cost effective to improve existing intersections than build a new interchange." According to House Bill 23 (section 5501.60) the State of Ohio **MUST** build a costly interchange at Boston Road. It would not be prudent or in good representation of the citizens in Ohio to leave these provisions in House Bill 23. I ask that you approve SB 155 and remove that language from House Bill 23 (section 5501.60).

I ask that you take my testimony into consideration and support SB 155 to repeal the Ohio Revised code 5501.60. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit my written testimony.