

Testimony SB 155 - Gary Sanderson 440-724-9784

Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke , and Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Ohio Senate Transportation Committee. My name is Gary Sanderson. Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony.

The text is the same as my spoken version at the 11/15/23 Committee Meeting except for the following three new paragraphs **(in Bold)** that adds new information based on activities after the 11/15/23 meeting.

In December, 2024, the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) met and approved Resolution 2023-045 - Interstate Highway Interchanges, in direct opposition to the House Bill 23 addition of ORC 5501.60 which improperly mandates the addition of a new interchange in the NOACA region. This approved resolution was forwarded to Governor DeWine and members of the Ohio General Assembly.

In January 2024, Governor DeWine speaking with the Plain Dealer, said that the federal government requires any new interchange project to have local support of Brunswick residents and officials before it can move forward. The Governor also noted that other potential locations should be evaluated for a new interchange.

Strongsville is now looking at SouthPark Mall redevelopment to add, a hotel, microbreweries, a fitness center, a grocery store, medical facilities and outdoor playing fields, all at the Rt. 82/I-71 Interchange. The rationale for a new Interchange at Boston Rd. is supposedly safety at the Rt. 82/I-71 Interchange. Remember, Strongsville's own \$300k traffic study says there will be only a minimal reduction in traffic at the Rt. 82 Interchange if a Boston Rd./I-71 Interchange is added. This redevelopment makes one wonder what's really wanted, safety or something else.

I've lived in Brunswick Ohio for the last 46 years. I strongly support Senate Bill 155 that calls for the repeal of language in House Bill 23 that mandates construction of a I-71 interchange between SR 82 in Strongsville and SR 303 in Brunswick. The language doesn't really say

exactly where, does it? Three crossroads exist. Most want to target Boston Rd. So let's talk about it.

I've lived in the Boston Rd/I-71 area, since 1977, and watched grass fields, in both Strongsville and Brunswick, turned into homes and nearby churches. Many homes built directly in the quadrants needed for a Boston Rd/I-71 interchange. At the same time, new developments and houses on hilly Boston Rd have used up almost all the property, west to Pearl Rd. and East to W. 130th St., about a 2.6 mile stretch. It is heavily residential.

Over those 46 years, many Boston Rd./I-71 interchange traffic studies by NOACA (the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency) with the involvement of ODOT, Strongsville and Brunswick, indicated that there was little to gain for the high cost of moving forward with a new Interchange.

So let's flash forward to March of this year, when the Ohio Representative for Strongsville, who apparently is frustrated with all these properly made decisions over the years, decides to legislate a solution. Thus the Interchange provisions added to HB 23. The same exact legislation was attempted in 2017, but thankfully, it was vetoed out by the Governor. The latest HB 23 addition is intended to target only one specific interstate highway area in Ohio, using criteria such as; distance between interchanges, county lines and population demographics. So simple! Too simple. No traffic studies needed, no cost analysis, no local government or community input or approval necessary, after all, what do they know. What matters if it's highly residential. Bulldoze many many homes without thoughtful studied justification, perfectly fine! Is this the way projects of this nature should be decided in Ohio? I think not.

It makes no sense to bypass long established state agencies like ODOT and TRAC (the Transportation Review Advisory Council). Ask yourself, don't they exist exactly for this purpose? It is wrong to short cut the established process. Doing so will only result in poor decisions and what you are hearing today from Strongsville and Brunswick residents affected by this now.

Safety was the key reason mentioned for this legislation. Namely, safety improvement by relieving congestion at the 8 lane wide Strongsville SR82 Interchange. Well, safety will not be appreciably improved with the

addition of a Boston Rd. Interchange. Why? In June, yet another traffic study, directed solely by Strongsville, and performed by Euthenics, Inc, was released. In my opinion, it is shortsighted. It only considers Boston Rd. Interchange alternatives. ODOT has commented on the study and takes issue with it only studying Boston Rd. alternatives. Drake Rd is a crossroad that exists solely within Strongsville, that could have been included. But, no matter. Both this new study and statements made recently by a Euthenics Representative during a Strongsville City Council Meeting, tell us that only a minimal traffic congestion improvement will occur at the Strongsville SR82 Interchange, from construction of a Boston Rd. Interchange. You could have heard a pin drop.

Minimal congestion improvement equates to minimal safety improvement, the basis of the Interchange legislation. So vague criteria.....distance between interchanges, county lines, and population demographics, are inadequate and should not be used to dictate where highway interchanges are required anywhere in Ohio. Are tax dollars being spent wisely? Please do not allow this legislation to exist. If this legislation is not repealed, what might happen to safety along Boston Rd.? Certainly, Boston Rd. traffic will increase exponentially, along with greatly diminished safety and increased criminal access to residential neighborhoods.

The Rt 82 traffic congestion in Strongsville is at their invitation. Their extensive and continuing business and industrial growth, breeds massive traffic. Plain and simple. It is Strongsville's chosen outcome. That's okay, but if you create a problem, isn't it your responsibility to fix it? Don't blame others and force your dilemma upon them.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I would be happy to answer any questions.