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Chairman Willis, Vice Chair Daniels, Ranking Member Grim, and members of the House Transportation Committee, thank you for allowing me to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 151, which allocates state revenue surplus to fund road and bridge projects.

HB 151 bolsters the continuation of the Connect4Ohio Program. The Legislature created this two-year initiative through ODOT in 2023 to help make commutes easier and transportation more seamless for all Ohio workers and travelers – especially those who venture through our state’s non-urban areas.

To vet projects, Connect4Ohio utilizes the Transportation Review Advisory Council’s project list to prioritize projects that complete existing corridors between at least two rural counties or eliminate slowdowns such as stop lights along non-interstate highways. Connect4Ohio is unique because it funds rural corridor projects – those in counties with no municipalities over 55,000 residents – at 100% of the project cost when appropriate. Connect4Ohio funds also provide the match when necessary for projects to receive final TRAC approval.

Since first implemented, Connect4Ohio is dramatically improving our transportation landscape. Projects in Athens, Brown, Hancock, Lawrence, Meigs, and Seneca counties have been undertaken, making significant space for new projects to join the TRAC list. The transformational transportation investments in these counties will impact these regions for generations. Moving these non-urban projects off the TRAC list in the future frees up more resources to target critical urban and interstate projects.

As it stands now, Connect4Ohio could expire with the implementation of the new budget. However, efforts to continue transportation improvements must continue, and we as a legislature must be creative in finding a funding solution for the future. Passage of HB 151 would help fund the following projects currently listed on the 2025-2028 TRAC Program List:

- A new proposed interchange at US 23 and State Route 762 in Pickaway County
- An additional lane to US 22 in Harrison County, stretching from Cadiz to Hopedale
- Widening SR 48 in Warren County
- Interchange and roadway improvements to US 30 in Van Wert County

- A new interchange along US 35 near Factory Road and Orchard Lane in Greene County

HB 151 is designed to fund projects well into the future. This legislation is an answer for funding future improvements on US 23 through Delaware County and south of Columbus as we look forward to I-73, US 30 in Northern Ohio, and OH 32 in Southern Ohio, among many other possibilities.

This legislation uses excess funds to fund construction projects only after contributions to the State of Ohio's Budget Stabilization Fund and the Sales Tax Holiday Fund. As many know, the State's Budget Stabilization Fund has been maxed out in recent years. HB 151 will allow the fund to continue its maximum balance.

House Bill 151 also allows the Sales Tax Holiday Fund to carry a reasonable maximum balance of \$250 million. The most recent sales tax holiday required \$162.8 million in reimbursements. This fund has a current balance of approximately \$587 million.

With these fund balances, HB 151 would free up approximately \$337 million in funding, more than enough to complete all five previously mentioned projects and then some. As the TRAC list and state budgets evolve in the future, Connect4Ohio will continue to serve a crucial funding role in expanding our transportation needs in Ohio.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 151. I welcome any questions the committee may have.