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Columbus Partnership
Interested Party Testimony for HB 54
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Chair Patton, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 54. My name is Jeff Polesovsky, and I am the Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for the Columbus Partnership.

The Columbus Partnership is a nonprofit, membership-based leadership organization of 82 chairpersons, chief executive officers, and senior executives from the Region's leading businesses and institutions. Our members include Fortune 500 CEOs, leaders of top universities, and the world's largest private, nonprofit research and development organization. The Partnership strategically considers how to uphold the shared vision to be the most prosperous region in the country as our leaders convene to address opportunities to advance economic development, smart mobility, public policy, education, leadership development, philanthropy, community branding, and downtown development.

Safe and efficient transportation infrastructure is essential to sustaining the Columbus Region's record-breaking growth and economic momentum. The Columbus Partnership strongly supports HB 54's investment in Ohio's transportation network, which is critical to maintaining our region's standing as one of the fastest-growing economies in the Midwest. Ohio continues to be a premier destination for businesses and residents alike. Over the past few years, Central Ohio has attracted transformational investments from some of the world's most innovative companies, including Intel, Honda, Anduril, and Amazon Web Services. These companies—alongside many homegrown successes—are helping to shape Columbus into a national hub for advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, and logistics.

As a result of this rapid growth, many roadways across the state are now operating above capacity. The funding provided in HB 54 will not only improve existing routes but also create additional roadways, enhancing safety, efficiency, and long-term economic competitiveness. Investing in increased capacity will ensure that Ohio's transportation system remains a competitive advantage—facilitating the movement of commuters, supporting supply chains, and reinforcing our region's status as a leader in economic development and innovation.

HB 54 also designates funding to improve Ohio airports, which contribute more than \$16.5 billion to the state's total economic output. It is important for Ohio to be accessible nationally and globally as the state attracts businesses and visitors. In the Columbus Region, John Glenn International Airport is a major hub for travelers, while Rickenbacker Airport plays a vital role in global supply chain connectivity.

Additionally, public transit is a key component of Ohio's transportation infrastructure. With the necessary funding, existing infrastructure can support multiple passenger rail systems. Four significant routes have already been approved by the Federal Rail Administration, including the "3C+D" corridor (Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, and Dayton) and the Midwest Connect (Chicago, Lima, Columbus, and Pittsburgh). The Columbus Partnership supports funding for the "Step 2" study to assess Ohio's future passenger rail needs. Expanding frequent passenger rail service would improve connectivity between Ohio's urban centers, enhance rural access to job opportunities, and make business travel more efficient. Public transit is critical to meeting workforce needs and driving economic development in both urban and rural areas.

Together, these investments in roads, airports, and public transit are not just about infrastructure—they are about securing Ohio's economic future. A well-connected state attracts businesses, creates jobs, and enhances quality of life for residents. By modernizing our transportation network, Ohio will continue to be a leader in innovation, a magnet for investment, and a place where businesses and families can thrive.

Chair Patton and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide testimony regarding HB 54's investment in Ohio's transportation infrastructure.