

Proponent Testimony for SUB HB 54 Gary Sanderson

Chair Patton, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Ohio Senate Transportation Committee. My name is Gary Sanderson. Our family have been residents of Brunswick Ohio for over 47 years. Thank you for allowing me to submit my proponent testimony. I strongly support repealing Section 5501.60 and adding Section 755.10, requiring that ODOT and/or NOACA conduct a study of the I -71 corridor and submit a report by the end of 2026.

Section 5501.60 - Specific Interchange Requirements was inserted in the 2023 Transportation Budget at the last minute. It mandates that interchanges be constructed, based on criteria that ignores long established methods. This criteria was chosen such that it only applies to just one part of I-71 between Route 82 in Strongsville and Route 303 in Brunswick, and presently, nowhere else in the state. It negates any thoughtful planning process, cost analysis, local community involvement, or consideration to lost homes and destroyed lives. I liken it more closely to a watered down soup recipe than a interchange plan.

Also, 5501.60 disregards Federal, State (ODOT & TRAC) and MPO (NOACA) legal requirements for placement of interchanges.

In mid 2023, two bills were introduced in the Ohio legislature to repeal 5501.60. In 2024, both bills passed unanimously through committees with the amendments you now read in SUB HB 54. The Senate voted 30-1 in favor. All that remained was a House vote. Disappointedly, it never was allowed a vote in the three remaining House sessions before the end of 2024. Like watching your dog get run over, three times.

During the time these bills were being considered, one of the few opponent testimonies to either of two bills was by the Mayor of Strongsville. His written testimony, contains the following.

“The City of Strongsville shares the same desire as any community in the region when it comes to decisions regarding new or improved infrastructure. We agree decisions should be data driven and believe the provision this bill seeks to repeal is allowing for the responsible entities to undertake the appropriate studies to gather the needed data and make decisions accordingly.” (My bold text notation)

So if the Mayor agrees that decisions should be data driven, the Mayor gets what he wants in the revisions of 5501.60 in SUB HB 54.

Section 5501.60, as currently written, does not call for any studies, or any planning. It does not, “allow for the responsible entities to undertake the appropriate studies”. It calls for no such studies or planning. It just mandates a interchange, period.

Last fall, seemingly in good faith, NOACA ordered a \$910k study for congestion of the I-71 corridor in the area and the appropriate alternatives. Would it be prudent for NOACA to proceed with this costly study, with the mandates currently contained in 5501.60?

Also in 6/2024, a \$300k feasibility study, commissioned solely by Strongsville, was released by Euthenics, Inc. It only reviewed one location, where Boston Rd. crosses I-71, the intended target of Section 5501.60. This study and in statements made by a Euthenics Representative during a Strongsville City Council meeting, state that only a minimal traffic congestion improvement will occur at Strongsville’s Rt 82 Interchange from construction of a new Boston Rd. Interchange. The meeting became very quiet. This just further proves and supports that Section 5501.60, is inappropriate.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony.