

Testimony of Nicholas J. Hanek  
Senate Transportation Committee  
February 27, 2025

Chair Patton, Vice-Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member Antonio, and the members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to express support for the passage of Sub. HB 54 and, specifically, the included language that will repeal Ohio Revised Code §5501.60 and mandate a comprehensive traffic study by NOACA and ODOT in the greater region to improve congestion. I am the President of Brunswick City Council and the Vice Mayor of the City of Brunswick, the largest city in Medina County, and I am here on behalf of the many proud residents who stand to lose their homes to an unwanted and unwarranted interchange.

Over the past two years, so many of these residents have testified to House and Senate committees regarding their personal stories and the detrimental impact that this law has had on their lives, families, and property values. I will let those testimonies speak for themselves and I will assure you that you will continue to hear their voices until this law is repealed.

Ohio Revised Code §5501.60 is an arbitrary formula without any known scientific or engineering basis that will impose a highway interchange where data has conclusively shown it is unwarranted. Prior to the highway interchange mandate imposed by this code section, the process of creating new highway interchanges was left to TRAC in conjunction with ODOT and Metropolitan Planning Organizations and not through

complete guesswork. Traffic engineering involves substantial complexity and, until now, the decisions regarding the placement of highway interchanges were left to professionals in the field.

In the last General Assembly, there was a proposed repeal of Ohio Revised Code §5501.60 in companion bills in the House and Senate. Many, many residents and officials testified in favor of the repeal bills. The only opposition testimony to the repeal, over the course of the last two years, came from the administration of the Mayor of Strongsville who cited a need for an additional traffic study of the greater region. Subsequently, ODOT and NOACA proposed to conduct a broad traffic study of the greater region to look for positive solutions to congestion in logical places. In good faith, the City of Brunswick immediately supported such a study and worked with the bill sponsor and ODOT to amend in the language requiring that such a study be mandated in conjunction with the repeal. After the study was added in the repeal bill, the City of Strongsville did not publicly oppose the repeal. Ultimately, the revised bill that included both the repeal and the study mandate passed the Senate 30-1 in the last General Assembly. The proposed language in Sub. HB 54 tracks the language from the prior repeal bills and the currently pending HB 9 and SB 31.

This law that should be repealed mandates that an interchange must be built in a specific area when arbitrary metrics are met and to which Boston Road on the border of the cities of Strongsville and Brunswick has been the sole focus. Previously, the focus had been on Howe Road in the City of Strongsville until the Mayor of the City of

Strongsville rejected a proposed slip ramp on Howe Road in 2016. Howe Road is located just north of Boston Road but situated entirely in Strongsville. This proposed slip ramp on Howe Road was an attempt to alleviate traffic concerns at the I-71 exit at Route 82 in Strongsville. The Mayor of Strongsville pulled back on the Howe Road Slip Ramp due to tremendous citizen pressure from the residents of Strongsville who were opposed to losing their homes and the increase in traffic that such a slip ramp would cause.

I am not an engineer, but traffic engineers have already come to conclusions about the viability of the Boston Road interchange. In 2023, the City of Strongsville completed a Preliminary Feasibility Study regarding a potential interchange on Boston Road. This study, conducted by a reputable engineering firm based out of Strongsville, definitively ruled out a Boston Road interchange as a viable solution to congestion issues in the region. ODOT, after receiving the data in the study, concluded that a Boston Road interchange “did not provide an obvious solution to reduce congestion” and, as a result, would not improve safety in the area. ODOT further recommended that a broader study of the region be conducted.

The lack of any improvement to congestion in the region was not the only troubling finding about this proposed interchange. Additionally, the Preliminary Feasibility Study also showed that an interchange on Boston Road would not improve the conditions at Route 82 and Howe Road; that traffic would actually slow on I-71 as a result of the potential interchange; that there would be no impact other than detrimental

to traffic in the City of Brunswick; and the study did not fully address the issues associated with a potential move of the jet fuel pipelines located on the south side of Boston Road other than through speculation.

Keeping this law in place also undermines the current study of the greater region – which is studying far beyond the scope of Boston Road. The current study proposes to cover far north of the troubled area of Route 82 and all the way to nearly seven miles north of Boston Road. This study will help to recommend potential actionable solutions to congestion issues. However, as it stands, the study is all but meaningless as there is a mandated result of an interchange in a specific location that is located far away from any of the congestion issues in the City of Strongsville.

The study by ODOT and NOACA should not be undermined by this law that is unsupported by any data. We can and should work together to solve traffic issues in the region using data and science. We can trust and work with professionals in the field to come to conclusions that benefit the area. Our residents deserve the understanding that our decisions making processes are guided by data and science and not mere guesses – whether those residents live on Howe Road or on Boston Road; in Cuyahoga County or Medina County; in Brunswick or in Strongsville.

To move forward and improve our region through sound engineering analysis, I am requesting that the language that repeals Ohio Revised Code §5501.60 and that mandates the traffic study of my region be kept in Sub. HB 54. Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions.