

Ohio Senate

Transportation Committee

February 27, 2025

Written Testimony of Medina County Commissioner Aaron Harrison, Medina County Commissioner Stephen D. Hambley, Medina County Commissioner Colleen Swedyk and Medina County Engineer Andrew Conrad

Chair Patton, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for accepting this written testimony in favor of Sub. H.B. No. 54.

This testimony is presented to offer the continued support of the above noted Medina County elected officials for the repeal of Ohio Revised Code Section 5501.60 as it pertains to the requirements to build certain highway interchanges. The language of this proposed repeal is virtually identical to repeal language that was passed by the Ohio Senate in the 135th General Assembly. There are several reasons why the Senate should take action to support this repeal. Many of these points have already been presented to you today, but we are confident that in spite of the potential repetition, you will not lose sight of the strongest reasons for advancing the repeal effort which include:

- 1) **Restoring order.** The initial action was taken outside of the established protocol for determining where interchanges are necessary and appropriate. The original bill was something of an end run around long-standing and collaborative protocols that were designed to minimize (if not entirely eliminate) one well-connected community's ability to run roughshod over an adjacent and less powerful community in the transportation planning process. Repealing the interchange mandate of Ohio Revised Code Section 5501.60 sends a very clear message that the Legislature intends these protocols be followed.
- 2) **Saving a community.** Brunswick is a well-managed city that benefits from very strong leadership. While it may have the tools to overcome the financial burdens and other challenges that would be imposed on it by the construction of this interchange, other communities are not as fortunate. Make no mistake that in the absence of this repeal, legislative mandates for transportation projects will once again become the norm. If that transpires, it is only a matter of time until similar actions occur to the detriment of a

community that is not capable of surviving it. Therefore, by standing up for this repeal, the community saved could very well be one located in your home district.

- 3) Finally, and most importantly, is **relieving the citizens of Brunswick, Strongsville and the adjacent unincorporated areas of this unwanted burden**. Even though Brunswick as a whole may be able to overcome the imposition of an unwanted interchange, the same *cannot* be said for the homeowners in the affected section of Boston Road. Those residents face an uncertain future. This interchange won't just destroy their homes, but also the relationship they enjoy with their neighbors and the community in which many of them have called home for decades. This is the single most important argument. And, notably, it can *only* be accomplished through advancing the repeal effort.

One additional thought about these citizens-- who will be most impacted by your decision to advance the repeal. These are citizens of multiple communities who have unified to fight what they see as an unjust proposal. Their unprecedented response has inspired action by local and even regional government entities. They secured swift and unanimous action from NOACA to oppose the interchange and, more recently, unanimous action to commit funds to assist ODOT to further study the traffic situation in Strongsville in an effort to identify more impactful (and less controversial) solutions.

Your support will send a very clear message to these citizens that they have been heard by their leaders in Columbus just as clearly as they were heard by their local leaders in the City of Brunswick and Medina County and the leaders of our surrounding communities who have lent their support through their participation in NOACA's actions as well. In light of this, we would humbly request that you support Sub. H.B. No. 54. Thank you for your consideration of this written testimony and your continued service to your constituents and our Great State of Ohio.