



Ohio Senate Transportation Committee

March 5, 2025

Proponent Testimony

Counties: *Delaware, Franklin, Hancock, Lawrence, Lucas*

Marion, Pike, Ross, Scioto, Wood, Wyandot

Chair Patton, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee, we appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in strong support of maintaining the funding and directive for the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to conduct a feasibility study for the proposed Interstate Route 73 corridor as part of House Bill 54, the state transportation budget.

This study is essential to evaluating the potential economic, transportation, and connectivity benefits that an I-73 corridor would bring to Ohio, and we urge this committee to ensure its inclusion remains intact. The proposed I-73 corridor would primarily follow the existing U.S. Route 23, extending from Toledo to Chesapeake, Ohio. This corridor encompasses and impacts the following Ohio counties:

- Delaware /Franklin/ Hancock/ Lawrence/ Lucas/ Marion/ Pickaway/ Pike/ Ross
Scioto/ Wood/ Wyandot

The benefits of this feasibility study are numerous and merit continued legislative support:

Addressing Critical Transportation Needs: The study will provide potential solutions to the ongoing congestion, safety concerns, and capacity issues along the U.S. Route 23 corridor, a critical north-south arterial roadway in Ohio. Previous ODOT studies have already highlighted the need for improvements in this region, and an interstate upgrade could provide long-term relief.

Enhancing Economic Development and Interstate Commerce: By establishing a direct interstate connection between Toledo, Columbus, and the Ohio River, the I-73 corridor would promote regional economic growth, expand access to markets, and improve freight mobility. This would benefit both rural and urban communities, increasing Ohio's competitiveness in attracting businesses and investments.

Filling a Major Interstate Access Gap: A significant portion of central and southern Ohio lacks direct access to an interstate highway. I-73 would bridge this gap, offering an interstate-grade route to residents and businesses while also connecting Ohio to existing completed sections of the corridor in the southern United States.

Strengthening Ohio's Infrastructure Resilience: With the increasing demands on our transportation network, investing in long-term solutions like I-73 will help ensure Ohio's infrastructure can support future growth. A feasibility study is the necessary first step in determining the best course of action.

Providing a Data-Driven Approach to Future Decision-Making: Without a comprehensive feasibility study, Ohio risks delaying critical infrastructure discussions that could shape the state's transportation future for decades. This study will equip policymakers with the necessary data to make informed, strategic investment decisions.

With modern traffic patterns, economic shifts, and technological advancements in transportation planning, it is prudent to reassess the viability of an I-73 corridor. This study will ensure that any decision regarding the project is made with up-to-date, evidence-based information.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge this committee to maintain the directive for ODOT to conduct the I-73 feasibility study and retain its funding in HB 54. Ohio must continue to evaluate transformative infrastructure investments that can enhance connectivity, foster economic growth, and improve the overall quality of life for its residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.