

Senate Transportation Committee

Proponent Testimony on sub HB54
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Chair Patton, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for this opportunity to comment on provisions in sub HB54, the state's transportation budget.

The Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce represents more than 2,000 businesses across northwest Ohio. We strongly support the provision in sub HB54 to provide for a free-flow highway connection between US23 and I-71.

The establishment of a free-flow connection between northwest and central Ohio would enhance economic development opportunities between the regions. The existing US23 alignment in Delaware County has a number of safety concerns and creates unpredictable travel times for the movement of commerce between the regions. These impediments make it difficult enhance economic opportunities.

A free-flow connection will put the connection between the northwest and central Ohio regions on par with other regions in the state. This connection is also expected to relieve some of the pressure that exists on other corridors such as SR315, SR36/37, and US68 created by the congestion and unpredictability of US23. Prior studies have shown that by addressing the safety and congestion concerns in Delaware County, that the local businesses will also benefit because it will be easier for local residents in the area to visit the establishments.

The opening of the Gordie Howe International Bridge later this year is expected to increase the flow of commercial traffic between Ohio and Canada. The more efficient border crossing will likely create additional opportunities for growth and trade. By addressing the Toledo to Columbus corridor now, will alleviate even more problems later.

Dozens of business and economic development leaders from across northwest and central Ohio agree that a free-flow connection will greatly benefit both regions. Our partners in this effort tell us that it is equally important to central Ohio businesses to reach opportunities in northwest Ohio as it is for northwest Ohio businesses to reach central Ohio.

The Chamber appreciates the Senate's effort to support a critical infrastructure project that will support economic growth across Ohio. We respectfully ask that you maintain this language in the transportation budget.