

House Concurrent Resolution 31
Written Proponent Testimony
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Chairman Stoltzfus, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Infrastructure and Rural Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony on HCR 31. My name is Steve Tugend, I serve as legislative counsel to the Clermont County Transportation Improvement District and am an attorney at Kegler Brown Hill + Ritter. I offer this testimony as a proponent of HCR 31 sponsored by Representative Stephens.

The Clermont County Transportation Improvement District (CCTID), established in 2006, works with local jurisdictional partners and other county, state and federal agencies to secure funding that is used to improve the quality of life in Clermont County by stimulating economic development through transportation improvements. The projects CCTID works to fund help to ease congestion, expand access to business and shopping locations, and improve safety for all who travel through the area.

Ohio is blessed with great road transportation, including eight primary interstate highways running through it that provide easy access to the system for most Ohioans. However, more work can be done to improve mobility and connectivity for goods, services, and Ohio's workforce to all regions of the state.

We see the Federal Highway Administration's interest in extending I-74 eastward from Cincinnati as being consistent with the current plans of the Transportation Improvement District. In particular, if the decision is made to upgrade State Route 32 – which runs through Clermont County – into I-74, an already significant investment of infrastructure funds would be further leveraged to provide additional jobs and economic development to Ohio. Already, the CCTID has been successful in working with the Ohio Department of Transportation to secure funding to make improvements to what has come to be known as the “Appalachian Opportunity Corridor” that runs along SR 32 from I-275 all the way to the West Virginia border. The DeWine Administration has been supportive of this work.

It is the goal of our economic development professionals to improve the route currently taken by SR 32 to further decrease the travel time to the county from points east, thereby expanding the area's commutershed. Building out Interstate 74 would connect the county to other counties in the southcentral part of Ohio. This is essential because that region has some of the highest unemployment rates in the state, and this would bridge demand with supply. Route 32 also provides the state's greatest concentration of federally designated opportunity zones along its path.

The CCTID supports the passage of HCR 31 because it provides extra momentum behind an effort to improve this needed connectivity. Through its passage, Governor DeWine will have the backing of the General Assembly in support of his efforts to provide more economic opportunity to Appalachian Ohio through transportation improvements.

Chairman Stoltzfus and members of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony and thank Representative Stephens for introducing this legislation.