

Ohio Senate Transportation Committee Testimony
Todd Audet, P.E., Economic Development Director
City of Rossford, Ohio
June 16, 2021, 9:00 a.m.

Chair Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Committee, my name is Todd Audet, and I serve as the Economic Development Director for the City of Rossford, Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 162, sponsored by Vice Chair Reineke.

With Mayor Neil MacKinnon III at the helm, the City of Rossford is becoming well known as the “Crossroads of America,” due to its proximity to the intersection of the Ohio Turnpike & I-75 and due to the annexation of approximately 1,200 acres bounded by I-75, SR 20 and Lime City Road, for commercial development, in 1991.

Because of its location, Rossford is inextricably linked to the success of the Ohio Turnpike. In fact, I can attest to the Turnpike’s standing as a vital freight corridor and the role the Turnpike plays in local economic development. In 2018, for example, Amazon decided to locate a four-story warehouse at our Crossroads development site and the area is now teeming with additional development.

The modernization of the Ohio Turnpike associated with Senate Bill 162 will increase efficiency and improve access to the Turnpike, especially for our commercial customers like Amazon.

As I have learned and as I fully support, the Commission is seeking legislative amendments to its authorizing statute, Chapter 5537 of the Ohio Revised Code. This legislation supports the construction and technology upgrades that the Commission is currently undertaking to modernize its toll collection system. This authority is necessary for the implementation of Open Road Tolling (ORT) and All-electronic Tolling (AET).

The Commission’s modernized toll collection system, when it debuts in early 2023, will level the playing field for the Ohio Turnpike and its customers. You see, toll authorities around the nation are also moving to ORT or AET. In fact, the Pennsylvania Turnpike is now an AET system.

As a result of competitive forces and customer demand, the City of Rossford would like to ensure that the Ohio Turnpike stays current with technology to serve and protect its customer

base in the most modern way possible. A modernized Ohio Turnpike is good for the State of Ohio, good for its citizens, and good for the City of Rossford and its burgeoning economic development.

Rossford leadership and its citizens have a vested interest in safeguarding the Commission's ability to collect tolls effectively and efficiently as its primary source of revenue. We rely heavily on the Ohio Turnpike to move its goods safely and efficiently to market and its people to places of employment, as well as their favorite travel destinations.

In summary, Ohio Turnpike leadership has done its due diligence with Senate Bill 162. This bill allows the Commission to work with the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles to require vehicle owners to pay their delinquent tolls before they can register their vehicle; and it protects customers' confidential information and establishes an appeals process that is fair and clear.

The City of Rossford appreciates your consideration of the Commission's efforts to better serve its customers and provide what will truly be a safe, modern, and efficient route along the northern corridor of Ohio. I respectfully urge your support of Senate Bill 162.

Madame Chair and members of the Committee, I may be reached at (419) 280-9488 if I may be of further assistance or answer any questions.