

Ohio House of Representatives  
Economic and Workforce Development Committee  
October 17, 2023  
Written Testimony of Nicholas J. Hanek

Chair Swearingen, Vice Chair Santucci, Ranking Member Upchurch, and members of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the consideration of this written testimony. My name is Nicholas Hanek, and I am the Council President and Vice-Mayor of the City of Brunswick, the largest city in Medina County. I am writing in strong support of the passage of House Bill 276, as introduced by Representative Ray and Representative Miller. We are thankful for the tireless advocacy of Representative Ray and Representative Miller on behalf of our citizens.

Earlier this year, in House Bill 23, a provision was inserted into the Ohio Revised Code (ORC 5501.60) that requires that a new highway interchange be forced into communities every 4.5 miles when specific characteristics are met. While ORC 5501.60 has far-reaching and long-term implications- including the future population growth east of Columbus with the development of the Intel plant- this provision was targeted solely to impose an unwanted highway interchange into the City of Brunswick in the middle of a residential neighborhood located at Boston Road. This residential road stands at the border of Cuyahoga and Medina Counties between the City of Brunswick and the City of Strongsville.

Over the past several months, we have felt the immediate and detrimental impacts in the City of Brunswick solely due to this new revised code provision. Following the implementation of ORC 5501.60, a study was released by the City of Strongsville that showed the detailed intentions to convert our residential neighborhoods into an unlivable traffic corridor. Dozens upon dozens of homes will forcibly be seized by eminent domain if this project occurs. Property values in the area have already dramatically plummeted due to the ongoing threat that those homes may be taken away by the government. An entire cul-de-sac of homes valued at approximately half a million dollars would be

wiped out in one version of the proposed plans, with the rest of the development's value dropped to almost nothing as a large interchange would be located next door. This law has created a 4.5-mile zone between two communities in which big government has told the residents that they, essentially, have no value.

It is shocking and without precedent that one community can threaten to destroy another based upon a law designed to subvert all established processes. It is even more astonishing that an interchange at Boston Road- the sole reason this ORC provision was put into HB 23- absolutely does not improve the traffic or safety of any residents in any meaningful way. The study executed by the City of Strongsville, conducted by a Strongsville-based contractor and hired by the City of Strongsville, shows with certainty that an interchange imposed at Boston Road would not have any positive impacts on safety or help improve traffic flow. In a letter to the City of Brunswick and other municipalities, Director Jack Marchbanks of the Ohio Department of Transportation recently wrote that Strongsville's study "did not provide an obvious solution to reduce congestion or reduce crash frequency."

Now- due to ORC 5501.60- the State of Ohio is under an absolute mandate to impose an interchange when it is not warranted for any reason related to safety. We are under an imminent threat that another municipality will take the very language of ORC 5501.60 to force the State of Ohio to impose this result. For months, our residents have been told that the loss of their homes is just a necessary part of a "price for progress" (to quote the President of Strongsville City Council) and that having a home destroyed by the government is perfectly acceptable for "the greater good" (to quote the Strongsville Representative who initiated ORC 5501.60). These statements continue to occur despite the data showing that the very project this law was designed to implement- an interchange at Boston Road- has no benefit to the residents of either city. ORC 5501.60 is the absolute worst kind of big government as it imposes on citizens without any basis.

As the President of Brunswick City Council, I have to plan for the impacts this will have on my community. We are handcuffed until this law goes away. While the language of ORC 5501.60 states that ODOT will pay for the interchange itself, the law is silent as to what the other specific requirements will cost the City of Brunswick. We are faced with the harsh possibility of having to pay to expand Boston Road to as many as six lanes and the cost of relocating the jet fuel pipeline located on the south side of the road. The cost of the safety forces and coordination required as we determine the potential blast radius of a jet fuel line and the additional millions of dollars in expenses suddenly imposed into our budget is beyond substantial. It will bankrupt the City of Brunswick.

On behalf of the City of Brunswick, I request that you support HB 276, which would repeal the interchange requirement in ORC 5501.60. The process of developing highways is typically left to data-driven decision-making with the consultation of transportation professionals. This law attempts to destroy these processes without any regard for the negative consequences that have already occurred and will continue to occur by ensuring that a law can force a result. Your actions now can undo this nightmare of a law that has grave effects on my community and you will ensure that our residents will be safe from the destruction of their homes.