

# Ohio House Finance Committee

## House Bill 23

### Interested Party Testimony

*Cuyahoga County Executive Chris Ronayne*

Chair Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee – thank you for the opportunity to submit written interested party testimony on House Bill 23, the state’s transportation budget.

As the new County Executive for Cuyahoga County, I was elected by the residents of my county to implement policies that meet their unique needs and keep our residents safe.

It is for this reason that I am opposed to a newly added provision that prohibits a bicycle lane in the middle of a street or highway in a municipality with a population of more than 300,000 residents.

Provisions, such as this one, are part of a pattern of state encroachment upon the ability of local governments, who best know the needs of their communities, to implement measures designed to meet the unique needs of their residents.

To demonstrate the practical negative impact of this provision, this language threatens the \$25 million Superior Midway project, a forward-thinking vision utilizing multiple modes of travel throughout the City of Cleveland in my county. The Midway project envisions a protected, 2.4-mile center-of-the-roadway bikeway as a first step in providing protected bike networks safely connecting neighborhoods across the city and bringing communities closer together.

Cuyahoga County foresees some very positive developments that will result from The Midway project and the larger vision for protected bike lanes. For example, the project will encourage redevelopment and help build neighborhoods. Furthermore, it will help businesses attract talent, particularly those preferring to live within cities near where they can live and work. Additionally, protected bike lanes also offer retail visibility for small businesses, which will help generate regular customers. Finally, protected bike lanes will increase ridership, which in itself promotes health, wellness, and lower health care costs.

The Superior Midway project, which could be in jeopardy if this provision becomes law, has broad public, private, and non-profit community support and reflects more than a decade of study as well as community discussion and engagement. The project is funded mostly through federal grants and has support from the City of Cleveland, the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, Bike Cleveland, the Greater Cleveland Partnership, and the Downtown Cleveland Alliance.

The problematic language in House Bill 23 related to bicycle lanes infringes upon the ability of local governments to implement plans designed to meet the needs of their residents. Furthermore, the provision would jeopardize the Superior Midway — a project with strong community support. It truly is an effort to build transportation choice – which will promote economic growth, connected neighborhoods, climate resiliency, and healthier lifestyles.

I respectfully request the Ohio House Finance Committee remove the language.