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Chairman Kunze, Vice Chair Reineke and Ranking Member Antonio.

Thank you for the opportunity to address any amendment that might be in the works to allow for the selling of the Cincinnati Southern Railway.

As a citizen of the City of Cincinnati, I am troubled that such a momentous decision to move the sale of this railway to a vote would come in the form of an amendment to the Transportation Budget.

The Ferguson Act, formally titled "An Act Relating to Cities of the First Class Having a Population Exceeding 150,000 Inhabitants," was made law May 4, 1869. The bill was conceived by Edward A. Ferguson as a means of circumventing a provision in the Ohio Constitution of 1851 that prohibited counties, cities and towns from becoming owners in any joint stock company. It was built on the idea that while the city could not loan money to a private company to build its railroad, there was nothing in the Constitution that prevented the city from building its own road.

In 1880 the first freight and passenger trains began operating on the completed line between Cincinnati and Chattanooga. Since that time the citizens of Cincinnati have benefited immensely from not only the business this unique enterprise has brought to the city but also hundreds of millions of dollars in lease payments to complete hundreds of projects throughout the city.

Unfortunately, the current Board of Trustees has engaged in a plan to sell the entire Cincinnati Southern Railway without public input through closed door "executive session" meetings. They have used taxpayer dollars to hire four separate lobbying, legal and public relations firms to pave the way for this amendment to be snuck into a "must pass" bill and thus circumvent real public discourse.

The citizens of Cincinnati have twice this century stood up to well-funded campaigns to sell off public assets. Efforts by elected officials to sell off the City Water Works and separately the city's parking facilities to the highest bidder both met with defeat at the ballot box. A well-informed electorate is once again likely to reject this proposal but only if given the facts through lengthy public debate. The supporters of this proposal know this and that is why they are trying to sneak this into the Transportation Budget bill.

I urge you today to reject including any amendment to sell the Cincinnati Southern Railway from inclusion into the Transportation Budget and encourage its supporters to introduce a stand-alone bill that can receive the proper vetting that the repeal of a law that has served Cincinnati for over 150 years and valued at 1.6 Billion dollars should receive.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions.