



Ohio House Finance Committee House Bill 23

Interested Party Testimony

Cleveland Mayor Justin M. Bibb and Cleveland City Council President Blaine A. Griffin

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.

We want to express our opposition to the portion of the legislation prohibiting a bicycle lane in the middle of a street or highway in a municipality with a population of more than 300,000 residents.

From a wider perspective, we believe this provision reflects the continued state encroachment upon the ability of cities, such as Cleveland, to implement measures designed to meet the unique needs of their own residents. Local governments, by their very nature, are in the best position to assess the needs of their communities.

At a more localized view, this language jeopardizes the \$25 million Superior Midway project, a bold vision embracing the 21st century use of multiple modes of travel throughout Cleveland. Specifically, the Midway project contemplates a protected, 2.4-mile center-of-the-roadway bikeway for all ages and abilities as a first phase to provide protected bike networks safely connecting neighborhoods across the city.

Cleveland is not the first city to contemplate a median bike lane, and indeed the center-aligned, well-used Big Creek Trail in our region has been in place for many years. Other examples include the Queens Boulevard Protected Bikeway, Sands Street Bikeway, and Allen/Pike Streets in New York City.

The Midway project – and the larger vision for protected bike lanes – will encourage redevelopment by providing transportation choices and helping build neighborhoods. It will help businesses attract talent, particularly Millennials and members of Generation Z who increasingly prefer to live within cities near where they can live, work, and travel affordably and avoid traffic congestion. Protected bike lanes also offer retail visibility for our small businesses, which could turn bike riders into regular customers. And increasing bike ridership promotes a healthier lifestyle, which not only improves the quality of life for residents but lowers health care costs.

The Superior Midway – reflecting almost 12 years of discussion, community engagement, and study – is funded mostly through federal grants and has widespread community support. The City of Cleveland,

Cuyahoga County, the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, the Greater Cleveland Partnership, the Downtown Cleveland Alliance, and Bike Cleveland are just a few of the public, private, and non-profit organizations supporting the project.

Cleveland City Council recently passed legislation authorizing the Cleveland Mayor's Office of Capital Projects to accept funding and enter into contracts to move the Superior Midway into the design phase. During this process, a robust community and stakeholder engagement component will inform the project's overall design.

To summarize, we believe the language in House Bill 23 prohibiting projects such as the Superior Midway is the wrong approach. First, from a wider view, it infringes upon the ability of municipalities to implement plans tailored to the residents who live in those communities. And, second, the provision would cripple a project strongly supported by the community that will re-imagine a road network offering transportation choice connecting neighborhoods, promoting economic growth, building climate-resilient communities, and encouraging healthier outcomes for residents.

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