

Date: February 28, 2023

Resolution No. 23-213

Title: Resolution to Support an Improved Highway Connection between Northwest Ohio and Central Ohio

Department/Agency: Commissioners

Contact: Commissioner Lisa A. Sobecki

Summary/Background: Northwest Ohio needs a more direct highway to connect the Northwest Ohio region to Columbus and the surrounding Central Ohio counties. The lack of a direct route has essentially cut Toledo and Northwest Ohio off from economic, political, and social opportunity that comes with easy access to the state capital. Elected officials and civic leaders in Toledo and Lucas County have recognized how the lack of an efficient highway to the economic and political center of the state has disadvantaged the region and have advocated for an improved highway to connect Toledo and Lucas County to Columbus and Central Ohio for more than three decades.

Toledo is the only metro city in Ohio without a free-flowing connection to the state capital. Motorists must navigate through traffic signals in order to reach Franklin County and Columbus city limits and the economic opportunities of Central Ohio. The area on State Route 23 within Waldo in Marion County and Interstate 270 in northern Franklin County is especially congested, with anywhere from 30,000 to 80,000 vehicles on that portion of the highway daily.

In 2022 the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) conducted a feasibility study called "Route 23 Connect" to examine creating a fully, free-flowing connection between Columbus and Northwest Ohio. The study focused on the portion of U.S. 23 between Waldo and I-270 in northern Franklin County, where 38 traffic clogging signals are located. However, ODOT ended the feasibility study that looked at six possible bypass route options, and has no plans for a long-term solution to improve travel on this important corridor.

Central Ohio is the fastest-growing area in the Midwest. The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission expects central Ohio will add over one million households and one million jobs over the next 20 years, and ODOT projects truck traffic will double by 2050. And, Toledo and Lucas County, as a logistics and freight hub, will grow in importance due to the expansion of the Interstate 73/74/75 Corridor and the completion of the widening of the Panama Canal, which will allow more ships to make their way to the Carolinas. Also, the new Gordie Howe International Bridge, which is scheduled to open in 2025, will provide additional lanes for processing freight vehicles to move goods more efficiently between the U.S. and Canada.

Furthermore, the opportunity for Northwest Ohio to participate in the success of the \$20 billion investment being made by Intel to construct leading-edge chip manufacturing plants in Licking County will be hampered because Toledo and the region is outside the two-hour radius that is preferred for suppliers.

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An improved highway connection to link Lucas County and Northwest Ohio to Franklin County and Central Ohio is critical to Ohio's continued economic development and commerce growth as well as addressing safety concerns on the existing State Route 23 corridor.

Budget Impact: N/A

Statutory Authority/ORC: None

Commissioner Skeldon Wozniak offered the following resolution:

WHEREAS, in consideration of the above, NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of County Commissioners, Lucas County, Ohio, that:

Section 1. The Board strongly urges Governor Mike DeWine, the Governor's Administration, and the Ohio Department of Transportation to review and reconsider the decision to end the Route 23 Connect Study and provide a long-term solution to address the critical need for an improved highway connection between Northwest Ohio and Central Ohio.

Section 2. This Board finds and determines that all formal actions of this Board concerning and relating to the adoption of this resolution were taken in an open meeting of this Board and that all deliberations of this Board that resulted in those formal actions were in meeting open to the public in compliance with the law.

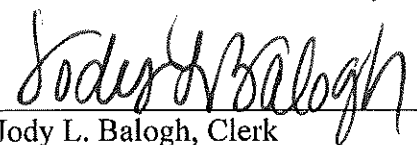
Section 3. This resolution shall be in full force and effect from and immediately upon its adoption.

Action Taken:

Commissioner Skeldon Wozniak voted yes

Commissioner Sobecki voted yes

Commissioner Gerken voted yes


Jody L. Balogh, Clerk