



# **OASIS COMMUTER RAIL COMMUNITY MEETING RESULTS REPORT**

for the April 2011 Community Meetings

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## **HAM/CLE-Oasis Rail Corridor PID No. 86463**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In April 2011, the Oasis Commuter Rail Project Team held a series of three community meetings designed to:

1. Reintroduce the commuter rail concept to the public as one of four long-term solutions being considered to address mobility and connectivity challenges within the Eastern Corridor.
2. Define the purpose of the current Tier 2 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis process and identify what is to be accomplished as part of the study
3. Manage community expectations for the current phase of the Oasis Commuter Rail study and the next steps
4. Provide the community with an opportunity to share their questions, comments and suggestions about the proposed commuter rail line

The community meetings were held at three locations within the Oasis study area: LeBlond Recreation Center near downtown Cincinnati; the R.G. Cribbet Recreation Center in Fairfax; and at Milford High School in Milford. The content and format of each meeting was repeated at each location.

Held in the evening, the meetings were organized in an open house format. Attendees visited a series of eight information stations focused on various facets of the Oasis Commuter Rail Tier 2 study. Project team members were available at each station to answer questions and receive publically spoken comments. One station was an interactive station at which attendees were able to review maps of the project corridor and mark on them suggested alignments and station locations.

An Open Comment/Question and Answer session was also held as part of each meeting. Andy Fluegemann of the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Steve Bergman of HDR Engineering served as moderators and answered questions. Steve Carroll of HDR Engineering provided responses specifically related to rail technology and Jay Hamilton from ODOT assisted with questions and answers at the meeting in Milford. Discussions held as part of these sessions were documented by a court reporter (transcripts of the sessions are provided in Appendix D, Community Meeting Transcripts).

## MEETING ATTENDANCE

A total of 294 citizens signed in at the public meetings. Actual attendance numbers were slightly higher as some attendees chose not to sign in. The meeting at Milford High School had the highest attendance (123) and the meeting in Fairfax had the lowest (69).

## MEETINGS RESULTS AND LEARNINGS

Overall, the meetings and the Open Comment/Question and Answer sessions appeared to be well received. Participants appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the proposed project, ask questions and share their comments. Of the 294 people who attended the meetings, nearly 200 completed the Oasis Commuter Rail Project Survey and Comment form (68% return rate). The summary information presented below is based on participants' feedback at the meetings and the information shared in the surveys.

1. Nearly 50% of those who attended the meetings were from communities outside of the proposed rail corridor. Other communities that had high levels of participation at the meetings included Anderson Township (20.7%), Milford (15.7%) and Miami Township (10.7%).
2. Most meeting participants had an accurate baseline understanding of at least one of the purposes of the proposed Oasis Commuter Rail line.
3. The level of support for the proposed commuter rail line varied by meeting location. Participants at the LeBlond meeting tended to be least supportive of the concept (67.1% of survey respondents said they supported the commuter rail concept; 26.8% said they did not). Participants at the meeting in Fairfax were the most supportive (91.4% were in support of the concept; 2.9% were not). Approximately 80% of survey respondents from the Milford meeting were in support of the concept and 17.1% were not in support of it.
4. Approximately 77% of survey respondents stated that the project was either "Very Important" or "Somewhat Important" to them. Reasons given for why the project was important included that it offers: new transportation options and economic development opportunities; possible reductions in traffic congestion; and reduction in air pollution/auto emissions. A number of respondents also stated that the project was important due to the impact it may or may not have on proposed bike trails that would run along existing rail tracks, and on taxes paid by property owners.
5. Concerns against the rail line centered around anticipated costs (for construction and operation and maintenance), possible financial impacts on property owners (increased taxes, decreased property values), negative environmental impacts (particularly if the trains are powered by diesel technology), level of need, and impact on proposed bike trails.
6. Approximately 60% of survey respondents said they would not use the rail line to commute to and from work. Primary reasons offered for not using the Oasis line were due to the fact respondents did not work in areas served by the line, respondents work from home, or

respondents are unemployed or retired. However, more than half of the survey respondents (59%) said they would use the rail line for weekend transportation to entertainment venues and recreation sites, and for visiting friends and family.

7. Many meeting participants and survey respondents voiced concerns about the use of diesel technology for the commuter line, and many opposed establishment of the line if diesel technology were to be used. Reasons for concerns about diesel technology included environmental impacts (noise, exhaust, pollution), the associated speed of the trains (if diesel technology is used, would the trains truly serve all communities within the corridor, or would it bypass too many?) and impacts on the values of nearby properties. Also, diesel trains would require a wider track corridor and cannot operate next to bike paths.
8. As it moves through the Tier 2 analysis process, the community would like the project team to pay particular attention to:
  - Funding – How much will this project cost and who is going to pay for it?
  - Cost-effectiveness of the project – will it be a wise return on the investment?
  - Ridership – Will enough people use the commuter line once it is built?
  - Environmental impact – How will the project affect the environment and community in terms of pollution, noise, etc.?
  - Rail technology options – Which technologies best meet the needs of the communities, not just the needs of the rail line?
  - Impact on property owners – Will the rail line decrease property values and increase taxes?
  - Opportunities for multiple uses of the project corridor - Can the proposed rail line operate alongside walking and bike paths?

## **PUBLICITY SUMMARY**

To announce the public meeting dates and locations, the Oasis Communications Team utilized several outreach tactics, including media outreach, email notification, and automated phone calls to residents within the project corridor.

Several weeks prior to the meetings, the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, *Business Courier*, *Clermont Sun*, and Community Press papers received a press release announcing the public meetings, and local TV and radio stations received the release several days before the meetings. The Oasis Communications Team confirmed at least five project-related articles published in the print editions of *Cincinnati Enquirer* and Community Press papers (namely the *Eastern Hills Journal* and *Forest Hills Journal*); stories and information about the project and upcoming meetings were also published in the online versions of the papers, as well as on a number of local community websites, TV news websites, community-focused blogs, and bicycling sites. The Project Team also tracked 21 stories on local TV stations, airing between

April 4 and April 7.

Information about the community meetings was also distributed via email to approximately 500 stakeholders, and automated phone calls were made to 48,500 households within the project area.

As part of the Oasis Commuter Rail Project Survey, respondents were asked how they learned about the community meeting. The print edition of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* was the most frequently selected information source (29.3%), followed by word of mouth (22.3%), community newspapers (19.1%) and email notifications (15.4%).

Going forward, the majority of respondents (50.3%) said they would like to receive project information and updates via email. Other top preferences for future communications include the print edition of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* (40.5%), the project website (40.0%), community meetings (39.0%), local TV news (38.5), and community newspapers (37.5%).

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The following report provides a summary of the Oasis Commuter Rail Community Meetings: their content and format, publicity efforts and recommendations for future meetings. This report also summarizes the information gained from the public at the meetings, both as part of the discussions held and surveys submitted. Representations of the information boards, meeting handouts, publicity materials, media outreach results, and survey data can be found in the appendices.

# 1.0 MEETING FORMAT

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The first round of the Oasis Commuter Rail community meetings was held on April 5, 6 and 7, 2011. The meetings took place at three different locations along the project corridor:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
Tuesday, April 5	LeBlond Recreation Center	2335 Riverside Drive, Cincinnati, OH
Wednesday, April 6	R.G. Cribbet Recreation Center	5903 Hawthorne, Fairfax, OH
Thursday, April 7	Milford High School, Cafeteria	1 Eagles Way, Milford, OH

All meetings were held between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. and were organized in an open house format. During the first two hours of each meeting, attendees visited a series of information stations, each highlighting a different element of the project (see 2.0, Information Stations). Project team members were positioned at each station to provide further detail about the station topics, answer questions and to receive publically spoken comments.

An Open Comment/Question and Answer session began at 7 p.m. Andy Fluegeman (ODOT) and Steve Bergman (HDR Engineering) moderated the sessions, and Steve Carroll (HDR) and Jay Hamilton (ODOT) provided assistance as needed. More detail about these sessions is provided in section 4.0, Question and Answer/Open Comment Sessions.

## ATTENDANCE RATES

A total of 294 people signed in at the meetings.<sup>1</sup> A breakdown of how many people signed in at each meeting location is provided below:

<u>MEETING LOCATION</u>	<u>NO. OF SIGN INS</u>
LeBlond Recreation Center	102
R. G. Cribbet Center	69
Milford High School	123
	<hr/>
	294 Total

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<sup>1</sup> A number of visitors to the meetings opted not to sign in, however, the project team was not able to determine how many. Therefore, those individuals are not included in the overall attendance count.



## MEETING LOCATIONS

The community meeting locations were selected based on proximity to the project corridor; proximity to key points within the corridor (beginning, middle, end); size; accessibility (in terms of both location and ADA accessibility); cost; and availability of equipment needed for the meetings (tables, chairs, microphone system, etc.). Also factoring into the selection process was whether or not the facility had been used for previous Eastern Corridor community meetings (the LeBlond and R.G. Cribbet Recreation Center in Fairfax had both been used for previous meetings).

## 2.0 INFORMATION STATIONS

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There were eight information stations plus a welcome table set up at each community meeting. Each station highlighted a different element of the project. Stations generally consisted of information boards placed on easels positioned either on top of or behind a table covered with a white tablecloth. Additional information related to the stations and/or handouts were placed on top of the tables for participants to review. Project team representatives were available at each station to discuss the information being presented, answer questions and listen to comments.

Some of the information boards presented at the community meetings were created specifically for the meetings. The content/images on the remaining boards were taken from previous studies and were used to show what is already known about the project and project corridor; these boards are identified in the following discussion with an asterisk (\*). Representations of the information boards are provided in Appendix A, Information Boards. Copies of materials distributed at the community meetings are provided in Appendix B, Meeting Handouts.

A further discussion of the information presented at each station follows.

### WELCOME TABLE

Upon entering the meeting space, participants were greeted by project team representatives who asked them to sign in, provided them with an information packet and Oasis Commuter Rail Project Survey and Comment form, and verbally outlined the format of the meeting and when the Open Comment/Question and Answer session was scheduled to begin. The greeters also stressed the importance of completing and returning the survey/comments forms before participants left for the evening.

#### *Station Staff:*

- Sarah Schneider, Saybrook
- Michael Bruton, Saybrook
- Melissa Gray, HDR

#### *Handouts:*

- Welcome cover letter – welcomed attendees, outlined meeting purpose and format
- Frequently Asked Questions – provided answers to questions most likely to be asked
- Oasis Commuter Rail Project Survey/Comment form – designed to capture participants' knowledge of, interest in and support for the commuter rail project; provided space for participants to share comments

## STATION 1: INTRODUCTION TO OASIS

Station 1 provided a general overview of the Oasis Commuter Rail project. The station highlighted the mobility and connectivity challenges within the Eastern Corridor and the overall goals for the Oasis Commuter Rail project. The station also identified the project corridor using both maps and a video.

### *Station Staff:*

- Steve Bergman, HDR

### *Visuals:*

- Project Goal board
- Project Purpose board
- Maps depicting the Oasis Commuter Rail project corridor, from the Tier 1 Study\*
- Video of a fly-over across the length of the project corridor

## STATION 2: EASTERN CORRIDOR PROGRAM

Station 2 provided an overview of the Eastern Corridor Program. The station highlighted why the program is needed, what studies have been completed to date, and an overview of the studies currently under way.

### *Station Staff:*

- Deb Osborne, Entran
- Andy Fluegemann, ODOT

### *Visuals:*

- Eastern Corridor Current Studies Map\*
- Eastern Corridor Summary Board

## STATION 3: RAIL TECHNOLOGY OVERVIEW

At Station 3, attendees learned more about the characteristics of commuter rail – operational facts, typical kinds of equipment used, average speeds of commuter trails, station spacing, etc. Also presented was a comparison of the various rail technologies currently under evaluation as part of the Tier 2 Oasis Commuter Rail study.

### *Station Staff:*

- Steve Carroll, HDR

### *Visuals:*

- Rail Technology comparison chart
- Commuter Rail Characteristics board

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\* Information presented on boards followed by an asterisk was taken from previous studies.

## **STATION 4: COMMUNITY SETTINGS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

Station 4 provided an overview of current land use within and around the project corridor, general demographics within the corridor and information about noise and vibrations along the existing rail tracks within the corridor. All information presented at this station was obtained from previous studies.

### *Station Staff:*

- Valerie Robbins, Parsons Brinckerhoff

### *Visuals:*

- Current Land Use map\*
- Noise and Vibration Screening (along the existing rail line within the project corridor)\*
- Zero-Car Household distribution map\*

## **STATION 5: ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Station 5 summarized known natural and cultural resource features within the project corridor.

### *Station Staff:*

- Craig Cox, TranSystems

### *Visuals:*

- Cultural Resources map\*
- Future Land Use map\*
- Ecological Resources map\*

## **STATION 6: TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD)**

Station 6 was an interactive station at which attendees learned about Transit Oriented Development (TOD) – the creation of compact, walkable communities centered on high quality train systems – and had the opportunity to provide direct input on the alignment of the proposed rail line and location of stations. Maps of the project corridor were available for attendees to review and make notes on for the project team’s consideration. Participants also noted on the maps where they live.

### *Station Staff:*

- Debra Hempel, HDR
- David Taylor, HDR
- Eric Pohlmann, HDR

### *Visuals:*

- 10-minute video about Transportation Oriented Design (TOD)
- Aerial photograph of western half of the project corridor
- Aerial photograph of eastern half of the project corridor

## STATION 7: PROJECT EXPECTATIONS

The purpose of Station 7 was to set expectations for the Tier 2 Oasis Commuter Rail study in terms of the tasks to be completed and completion schedule. Also discussed at this station were potential funding sources for future efforts related to the Oasis Commuter Rail line (additional studies, construction, etc.).

*Station Staff:*

- Matt Selhorst, HDR

*Visuals:*

- Funding Sources
- Project Study Timeline

## STATION 8: COMMENT TABLE

Station 8 was a table at which attendees could sit down and complete the Oasis Commuter Rail Project Survey/Comment Form. Completed forms were collected at the station and by the Welcome Table greeters.

*Station Staff:*

- Michael Bruton, Saybrook
- Cindy Wallace, TranSystems

*Visuals:*

- None

## 3.0 PRESENTATION

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The original plan for the Oasis community meetings included a presentation that would provide an overview of the project, its purpose and need, projected benefits, alternatives under consideration, the evaluation process and next steps. However, during the week of the community meetings, it was determined that the presentation would duplicate the information being presented at the information stations and it would be a more valuable use of time to instead extend the length of the Open Comment/Question and Answer sessions. As such, the project team did not deliver a formal project presentation at the community meetings, but offered a brief introduction to the Eastern Corridor Project and to the Oasis project status and intent.



# 4.0 OPEN COMMENT/QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS

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The Open Comment/Question and Answer sessions began at 7:00 p.m. Andy Fluegemann<sup>2</sup> and Steve Bergman served as moderators and opened the sessions by welcoming participants and briefly explaining the purpose of the Oasis Commuter Rail Tier 2 study. Participants were then invited to ask questions and share their comments.

## COMMENT/QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION LENGTHS

Each Open Comment/Question and Answer session lasted as long as needed to address all questions and comments. Session lengths varied at each location:

<u>MEETING LOCATION</u>	<u>DURATION OF COMMENT/Q&amp;A SESSION</u>
LeBlond Recreation Center	60 minutes
R. G. Cribbet Center	30 minutes
Milford High School	60 minutes

## SESSION FORMAT

The Open Comment/Question and Answer sessions were held in the same room as the information stations (the information stations were set up on one side of the rooms while the presentation area was set up on the other). Seating was provided for 50 to 100 people, depending on the facility and space available.

Session participants were asked to raise their hands and to keep their questions and comments to no more than two minutes in length. They were also asked to introduce themselves and identify where they resided. Participants stayed in their seats and a project team member handed them a cordless microphone to use when speaking. The moderators used a second microphone to answer questions and respond to comments.

Following the Open Comment/Question and Answer sessions, some participants returned to the information stations to further discuss any questions, comments and concerns they had with project team representatives. In general, however, the community meetings concluded with the close of the sessions.

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<sup>2</sup> Although he participated in the Open House portion of the community meeting at Milford High School, Andy Fluegemann was not able to stay for the Open Comment/Question and Answer session and was replaced by Jay Hamilton from ODOT.



## DISCUSSION OVERVIEW

A court reporter recorded the questions, comments and responses shared during the Open Comment/Question and Answer sessions. Transcripts of each session are provided in Appendix D, Community Meeting Transcripts. In summary, however, the overall discussions held during the Open Comment/Question and Answer session at each location were fairly similar. Topics of most interest tended to be:

1. Rail Technology – Many questions and comments pertained to the type of technology that would be used on the Oasis line. Concerns were expressed about the use of diesel (DMU) technology, and noise, odors, exhaust and the desire to use the rail corridor for recreational purposes (especially biking) were cited as the primary reasons for the concerns.
2. Bike Paths – Many participants expressed an interest in using the existing rail corridors as bike paths.<sup>3</sup> Those in support of the bike path concept tended to oppose the use of diesel technology and instead urged that electric or “street car” technology be considered instead. While often vocal in their concerns about the commuter rail concept, most bike path proponents did not necessarily oppose the commuter rail concept; they opposed development of a rail line that precluded the use of the rail corridors for bike paths.
3. Operational Logistics – A number of questions were asked regarding how many stations there would be, where they would be located, frequency of stops, cost to ride, etc. In addition, some participants wanted to know more detail about the projected ridership and costs. They felt that both ridership and project costs should be key factors in deciding whether or not to go forward with studies and plans related to the project.
4. Funding – Multiple participants asked about how the project would be funded and whether or not their taxes would increase in order to pay for construction and operation of the commuter rail line. Several people also asked if the public would have the chance to vote on whether or not to move the project forward.
5. Environmental and Property Value Impact – Concerns were expressed related environmental issues (noise, odors and pollution, particularly when generated by diesel technology) and impacts on property values. Residents, property owners and developers were especially concerned with the impacts an active commuter rail line would have on properties located near the western terminus of the line.

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<sup>3</sup> Bike paths were a key topic at each of the community meetings. This is due in part to a strong effort by local biking groups and organizations to get their members to attend the community meetings and express their interests in converting the existing rail tracks to bike paths, and their concerns about using those same tracks for new rail transit. It is not known if the level of support for the bike path concept is reflective of the overall community, or just of these representative groups.

6. Length of Study Process – A number of questions arose related to the length of the study process for both the Oasis Commuter Rail project and the Eastern Corridor project as a whole. Some participants expressed frustration that studies have been underway for many years, but it appears that no progress has yet been made.
7. Support for Project – While some meeting participants expressed either concerns or lack of support for the proposed commuter rail line, many people also expressed interest in and excitement about the rail line. Reasons for their support included convenience, improved mobility and accessibility, and new economic development opportunities within the Eastern Corridor region.

Support for the project varied by meeting location. Participants at the LeBlond meeting expressed the most concern about the proposed Oasis rail line (according to the surveys collected at the meeting, 67.1% said they supported the concept; 26.8% did not support it). Participants at both the Fairfax and Milford meetings expressed higher levels of support for the commuter rail concept in their surveys (91.4% and 80.0%, respectively).

# 5.0 PUBLICITY

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The Community Meetings were publicized through the following channels:

## MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

The Oasis Communications Team prepared and distributed a press release to local community papers, the *Enquirer*, the *Business Courier*, local TV news stations and key talk radio stations. The release introduced the project and outlined the purpose of the community meetings and the meeting dates, times and locations. The release was distributed according to the following schedule:

Community Press newspapers	Week of March 22
<i>Cincinnati Enquirer</i>	Week of March 22
<i>Business Courier</i>	Week of March 22
TV News	Week of March 28
Radio	Week of March 28

Communications team representatives from Saybrook Marketing Communications served as the primary media contact. Andy Fluegemann, ODOT, was the primary project spokesperson.

## Media Results Summary

### Print

The Oasis Communications Team confirmed placement of articles in the following print publications:

- Cincinnati Enquirer* – front page\*
- Eastern Hills Journal* – two articles, front page\*
- Forest Hills Journal* – two articles, front page\*

### Online

Discussion and/or coverage of the Oasis Commuter Rail project also took place online. Articles, meeting announcements and/or discussions were confirmed on the following sites:

- Abandoned Subways of Cincinnati, facebook page
- Building Cincinnati Blog, [www.Building-Cincinnati.com](http://www.Building-Cincinnati.com)\*
- Cincinnati USA website, [www.CincinnatiUSA.com](http://www.CincinnatiUSA.com)
- News Record, [www.NewsRecorder.org](http://www.NewsRecorder.org) (Univ. of Cincinnati student newspaper)\*
- The Other Side of the Tracks* website, [www.ReconnectingAmerica.org](http://www.ReconnectingAmerica.org)

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\* Copies of articles noted with an asterisk (\*) are included in Appendix C, Media Results.

Ohio River Trail website, [www.OhioRiverTrail.org](http://www.OhioRiverTrail.org)  
Ohio Bikeways website, [www.ohiobikeways.net](http://www.ohiobikeways.net)  
Reser Bicycles website, [www.reserbicycle.com](http://www.reserbicycle.com)\*  
Sierra Club facebook page, [www.facebook.com/SierraClubMiamiGroupOhio](http://www.facebook.com/SierraClubMiamiGroupOhio)  
Urban Cincinnati Blog, [www.UrbanCincy.com](http://www.UrbanCincy.com)\*  
Urban Ohio Blog, [www.UrbanOhio.com](http://www.UrbanOhio.com)  
WCPO, [www.WCPO.com](http://www.WCPO.com)\*

Postings of the Oasis community meetings were confirmed on the following community websites:

Anderson Township, [www.AndersonTownship.org](http://www.AndersonTownship.org)  
Milford, [www.MilfordOhio.org](http://www.MilfordOhio.org)  
Newtown, [www.NewtownOhio.gov](http://www.NewtownOhio.gov)

### **Broadcast**

Information about the community meetings was also distributed to the following television channels: Channel 5 WLWT, Channel 8 WCPO, Channel 12 WKRC, and Channel 19 WXIX. Most of the TV news stations also provided links to the Oasis Commuter Rail website on their website.

Total Story Count:	21
Total Nielsen Audience	688,828
Total 30-Second Ad Equivalency	\$5,465
Total Run Time:	22:29
Total Calculated Ad Equivalency	\$8,355
Total Calculated Publicity Value	\$26,109

*Results generated by Media Library, Inc.*

A detailed summary of the news clips aired on each television station is provided in Appendix C, Media Coverage.

## COMMUNITY COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Oasis Communications Team sent information via email about the project and upcoming meetings to community and neighborhood council representatives for the communities located along the project corridor (listed below). The team also requested that the representatives forward the information along to their constituents through their established communications channels.

Amelia Village  
Anderson Township  
Batavia Township  
California Community Council  
Cincinnati Business Committee  
City of Milford  
Clermont County Chamber of Commerce  
Columbia Township  
Columbia Tusculum Community Council  
Downtown Residents Council  
East End Community Council  
Hyde Park Neighborhood Council  
Linwood Community Council

Madisonville Community Council  
Miami Township  
Mt. Lookout Community Council  
Mt. Washington Community Council  
Oakley Community Council  
Pendleton Community Council  
South Milford Neighborhood Association  
Union Township  
Village of Fairfax  
Village of Indian Hill  
Village of Mariemont  
Village of Newtown  
Village of Terrace Par

## STAKEHOLDERS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Oasis Communications Team sent out an announcement about the community meetings, as well as a link to the project website, to approximately 450 project stakeholders using Constant Contact (an email delivery program) on March 25, 2011. A second email providing a reminder about the community meetings was sent out the following week.

## AUTOMATED TELEPHONE CALL NOTIFICATION

On the Monday preceding the community meetings (April 4, 2011), residents in communities located along the project corridor received a recorded phone message introducing the project and inviting them to the upcoming community meetings. The Oasis Project Team worked with Front Porch Strategies to identify recipient households, record the message and coordinate delivery.

## Results Summary

The Oasis Project Team targeted residents in the following communities to receive the automated phone call:

**City of Cincinnati Communities**

California  
Central Business District  
Columbia Tusculum  
East End  
East Walnut Hills  
Evanston  
Hyde Park  
Linwood  
Madisonville  
Mt. Adams  
Mt. Lookout  
Mt. Washington  
Oakley

**Eastern Corridor Communities**

Anderson Township  
Batavia Township  
City of Milford  
Columbia Township  
Miami Township  
Union Township  
Village of Amelia  
Village of Fairfax  
Village of Indian Hill  
Village of Mariemont  
Village of Newtown  
Village of Terrace Park

Approximately 48,500 households were included on the contact list. Three contact attempts were made for each phone number. When a person or voicemail answered, the message was played. If there was no answer or a line was busy, a return call was placed 15 minutes later, up to three times. Of the total calls placed, approximately 44,400 connections were made (approximately 92%). A breakdown of results from the automated phone call is provided below:

	<u>Total No.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Live Answers	16,265	34%
Answering Machines	28,104	58%
Busy	236	0%
No Answers	2,523	5%
Operator Intercept	981	2%
No Ring	5	0%

**Telephone Message Script**

Following is the script used for the automated phone calls:

*Hi, this is Andy Fluegemann with the Ohio Department of Transportation calling to invite you to attend a community meeting about an important transportation project being considered for our community.*

*The Oasis Commuter Rail is one of four long-term solutions being considered to address increasing traffic and congestion in the eastern Greater Cincinnati region.*

*This week, we will hold a series of community meetings to discuss this proposed solution, and to listen to your feedback about the project. We'll also answer questions you might have.*

*The meetings will be held on:*

*Tuesday, April 5th at the LeBlond Recreation Center at 2335 Riverside Drive.*

*Wednesday, April 6th at the R. G. Cribbet Recreation Center at 5903 Hawthorne Avenue in Fairfax. And, Thursday, April 7th at the Milford High School Cafeteria at 1 Eagles Way.*

*Again, that's Tuesday at the LeBlond Recreation Center, Wednesday at the R. G. Cribbet Recreation Center in Fairfax, and Thursday at Milford High School.*

*Each meeting will be open from five to eight p.m. and will include a public question and answer session at seven p.m. There is no formal program; please come when our schedule allows.*

*More information can be found on line at W W W dot eastern corridor dot org.  
Paid for by the Ohio Department of Transportation.*

## 6.0 PROJECT SURVEY/COMMENT FORM RESULTS SUMMARY

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Upon entry to the community meetings, participants were given an Oasis Commuter Rail Project Survey/Comment form to evaluate their knowledge and interested in the proposed project and to share their opinions.

The survey consisted of eleven core questions assessing the respondent’s knowledge, understanding, and perception of the Oasis Commuter Rail project. Some questions asked respondents to rate how important they felt issues were while others asked respondents to select “yes” or “no” regarding their agreement on certain topics. Most questions included an opportunity for respondents to provide comments to support their answers. Four demographics questions followed the eleven Oasis questions to help provide the project team with a better understanding of the respondents’ background, city of residence, and source of referral. This information was included to enhance the survey analysis. Lastly, respondents were given the space to share any additional comments they would like to include.

<u>Meeting Location</u>	<u>No. of Attendees</u>	<u>No. of Completed Surveys</u>	<u>Those in support of the rail</u>	<u>Those not sure if they support the rail</u>	<u>Those not in support of the rail</u>
LeBlond Recreation Center	102	82	67.1% (55 respondents)	6.1% (5 respondents)	26.8% (22 respondents)
R. G. Cribbet Center	69	35	91.4% (32 respondents)	5.7% (2 respondents)	2.9% (1 respondents)
Milford High School	123	70	80.0% (56 respondents)	2.9% (2 respondents)	17.1% (12 respondents)
Surveys Mailed After Meeting	N/A	12	75.0% (9 respondents)	8.33% (1 respondent)	16.67% (2 respondents)

### SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Following is a summary of the answers received to the questions on the Oasis Commuter Rail Project Survey/Comment form. The summaries include general categorizations of the responses provided; all individual responses are provided in Appendix E, Community Meeting Survey Results.



**Question 1: Before the public announcement of the Community Open House meetings in April, had you heard of the proposed Oasis Commuter Rail line?**

A majority of meeting participants appeared to have a baseline knowledge of the Oasis project. Approximately 60% of survey respondents said they had heard about the proposed Oasis Commuter Rail project prior to the announcement and publicity of the community meetings. Some of the facts participants shared with project team representatives at the community meetings were taken from materials and media coverage produced during previous studies, but not all of the facts cited were accurate or up-to-date.

**Question 2: Overall, how important is the proposed Oasis Commuter Rail line to you (choose one)?**  
*[Answers to choose from were: Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not Sure, Not Very Important, Not Very Important At All.]*

Nearly 77% of survey respondents reported that the rail project is “very important” or “somewhat important” to them. The most frequently cited reasons for these ratings include:

- Economic development opportunities
- Possible reduction in automotive traffic/congestion on highways
- Interest in new transit options
- Interest in potential bike trails along rail lines
- Reduction in pollution and automobile emissions

Approximately 15% of respondents said that the project was either “not very important” or “not important at all” (six percent and eight percent, respectively). General reasons for these ratings include:

- Property values will decrease
- Respondents don’t commute and will not use the system
- Respondents live too close to the proposed alignment
- Respondents felt that the rail line is designed to benefit Clermont County, not the community as a whole
- Respondents felt the project would not be completed in their lifetimes

**Question 3: Please briefly describe what you understand the purpose of the Oasis Commuter Rail line to be.**

Approximately 90.5% of survey participants responded to this question. In general, most respondents had an accurate understanding of at least one or more of the purposes of the proposed project, with the most frequently cited purposes being reduced traffic and the opportunity for efficient travel between downtown and the Clermont County. Other purposes mentioned include:

- Reduced traffic congestion; reduced number of cars on the road
- Reduced commuting time between Eastern Corridor communities and downtown
- Providing an alternate mode of transportation within Eastern Corridor
- Improved efficiency of the transportation system
- Improved safety

- Reduced pollution
- Bring communities together
- Encouragement of economic growth

**Question 4: Please rate the importance of the following Oasis Commuter Rail benefits to you:**

- New/Increased public transportation options
- Improved roadway safety
- Decreased surface road congestion
- Decreased highway congestion
- Reduction in greenhouse emissions
- Community revitalization opportunities
- Neighborhood development opportunities
- Other

*[Rating valuations to choose from were: Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not Sure, Not Very Important, Not Very Important At All.]*

The majority of respondents assigned each benefit a “Very Important” rating over the other ratings. The items are ranked below in terms of the percentage of respondents who assigned them a “Very Important” rating:

New/increased public transportation options	57.9%
Community revitalization opportunities	51.0%
Neighborhood development	50.5%
Decreased surface road congestion	48.7%
Reduction in greenhouse emissions	47.0%
Decreased highway congestion	45.5%
Improved roadway safety	41.1%

Respondents also had the opportunity to list “Other” benefits they felt were important. Nineteen respondents added “Other” suggestions to this question, and many comments received could be grouped into the following general categorizations:

- Impact on taxes
- Inclusion of bike trails
- Decreased travel expense for commuters
- Development opportunities
- Healthier air

**Question 5: What do you think are the top three things that the project team needs to keep in mind as it moves forward with planning for the Oasis Commuter Rail line?**

One hundred and seventy-nine (179) people used this section to share thoughts on what they would like the project team to consider when moving forward with the planning process. The most common responses included concerns about and/or interest in:

- Funding
- Cost-effectiveness
- Projected ridership
- Potential noise and vibration levels
- The incorporation of bike paths
- Logistical issues (such as operation time, station location, etc.)
- Pollution
- The rail line's potential to effectively serve the community
- Concerns over rail technology, particularly diesel
- Potential for economic development
- Impact on area property values

*\*\* Note: The above items are not listed in any particular order.*

**Question 6: In general, would you be in support of a commuter rail line being developed within the Eastern Corridor?**

The majority of respondents (79.5%) would be in support of a commuter rail being developed in the Eastern Corridor. It is important to note, that while the majority is in support of the rail, the majority (60.4%) also reported they would not take the rail to commute to work (see Question 8 for details).

Common reasons given for supporting commuter rail development include:

- Rail is an alternative to driving
- Rail is an effective mode of transportation
- Rail will decrease highway traffic and congestion

Common reasons given for not supporting commuter rail development include:

- Concerns about the costs involved and potential tax increases
- There is no need for a commuter rail in this area
- Rail is not economically feasible

**Question 7: Do you currently commute between downtown Cincinnati and the Eastern Corridor or among Eastern Corridor communities?**

The majority (52.6%) of respondents do not commute between downtown Cincinnati and the Eastern Corridor or among the Eastern Corridor communities.

**Question 8: If built, how likely would you be to use the proposed Oasis Commuter Rail line to travel to and from work? [Answers to choose from were: Very Likely, Somewhat Likely, Not Sure, Probably Not Likely, Definitely Not Likely.]**

Approximately 60% of respondents reported they would not use the Oasis rail to commute to work. Those respondents who said they would not take the rail cited reasons such as:

- I am retired
- I am unemployed
- I do not work downtown or along the rail line
- I work from home
- I am a stay at home parent

Those respondents who would probably take the rail (29.4%) to commute to work noted reasons such as:

- I am interested in costs savings
- I am interested in time savings
- There are environmental benefits that come along with mass transit

**Question 9: If built, how likely would you be to use the proposed Oasis Commuter Rail line to travel for weekend transportation? [Answers to choose from were: Very Likely, Somewhat Likely, Not Sure, Probably Not Likely, Definitely Not Likely.]**

While a majority of respondents reported that they would probably not take the Oasis rail to commute to work (60.4%), 58.7% of respondents reported that they would use the rail on weekends. Reasons for commuting on the weekends include:

- Attending entertainment engagements such as attending sporting events, visiting museums, or going to restaurants
- Gaining access to recreation sites along the Eastern Corridor
- Visiting family and friends

Those who would not be interested in using the commuter rail for weekend travel stated reasons such as:

- Prefer to be on own time schedule, not the train schedule
- Personal weekend travel destinations are not on the rail route
- Overcrowding concerns on trains when going to and from major downtown events such as Oktoberfest, RiverFest, etc.

**Question 10: How would you like to receive future updates about the Oasis Commuter Rail study (please check your top three preferences)?**

The majority (50.3%) of respondents would like to receive updates regarding the project via email. The other two top preferences for receiving project communications were inclusion in the print edition of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* (40.5%) and the project website (40.0%). See the list below for the full ranking of communications options, in order of preferences.

1. Project email updates	50.3%
2. Cincinnati Enquirer (print)	40.5%
3. Project website	40.0%
4. Community meetings	39.0%
5. Local TV news	38.5%
6. My community newspaper	37.4%
7. Local radio news	19.0%
8. Cincinnati Enquirer (online)	14.4%
9. Cincinnati.com	9.7%
10. Informational meetings conducted over the phone	3.6%
11. Local blogs	2.1%
12. Other*	1.5%

\* “Other” sources listed include Facebook, National Public Radio (NPR), and signage near intersections.

**Question 11: Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. To conclude, we would appreciate your responses to the questions below to help the project team gather a better understanding of the survey results. *[Respondents were asked to indicate their gender and age range].***

The majority (34.0%) of respondents were between the ages of 55 and 64 years old. More men (116 respondents) than women (66 respondents) submitted completed surveys.

**Question 12: Please identify your current community of residence.**

A majority of meeting attendees (47.1%) reported living in areas outside the project corridor. Of those living within the project corridor, a large portion (53.7%) came from four communities near the eastern terminus of the Eastern Corridor: Anderson Township (20.7%); Milford (14.0%); Miami Township (10.7%); and Union Township (6.6%).

Communities of residence included:

1. Other*	47.1%
2. Anderson Township	20.7%
3. Milford	15.7%
4. Miami Township	10.7%
5. Union Township	6.6%
6. Mt. Washington	6.6%
7. East End	5.8%
8. Columbia Tusculum	5.8%
9. Hyde Park	5.0%
10. Village of Fairfax	5.0%
11. Mt. Lookout	4.1%

12. Linwood	2.5%
13. Madisonville	2.5%
14. Oakley	2.5%
15. Village of Mariemont	2.5%
16. Village of Newtown	2.5%
17. Batavia Township	1.7%
18. Amelia Township	0.0%
19. Columbia Township	0.0%
20. Pendleton	0.0%
21. Village of Terrace Park	0.0%

\* “Other” areas of residence listed include:

Adams Crossing	East Walnut Hills	Mt. Carmel
Adams Landing	Goshen	Northern Kentucky
Blue Ash	Jackson Twp	Norwood
Brown County	Indian Hill	Over the Rhine
Cheviot	Loveland	Springfield Twp
Clifton	Madison Place	Stonelick Twp
College Hill	Maineville	Symmes
Downtown	Montgomery	Westwood
Eastgate	Mt. Adams	Withamsville

**Question 13: Did you attend one of the recent Oasis Commuter Rail Community Open Houses?**

One hundred percent of respondents attended one of the recent community meetings. A small number of surveys were submitted online (21) and responses to those surveys will be presented as an addendum to the full survey results report.

**Question 14: If so, which community meeting did you attend?**

Nearly 46 percent of the survey respondents attended the community meeting at the LeBlond Recreation Center. The breakout for each meeting is below:

1. LeBlond Recreation Center	45.9%
2. Milford High School	35.0%
3. R.G. Cribbet/Fairfax Recreation Center	19.1%

**Question 15: How did you hear about the Oasis Community Meetings?**

A majority of respondents (29.3%) learned about the community meetings from the print edition of the *Enquirer*. Word of mouth (22.3%), community newspapers (19.1%), email notification (15.4%), the

automated telephone call (13.8%), and local TV news (13.8%) followed as other popular information sources. The rankings of information sources are provided below:

1. Cincinnati Enquirer (print)	29.3%
2. Word of Mouth	22.3%
3. Community Newspaper	19.1%
4. Project Email Notification	15.4%
5. Recorded Telephone Announcement	13.8%
6. Local TV News	13.8%
7. Other	12.2%
8. Cincinnati Enquirer (online)	5.3%
9. Project Website	3.2%
10. Cincinnati.com	2.1%
11. Local blogs	2.1%
12. Local radio news	1.1%

\* “Other” sources included:

- Columbia Tusculum Enewsletter
- Ohio River Way email
- Ohio Kentucky Indiana Regional Council of Government (OKI)
- City Council Meeting
- Chamber of Commerce
- Our City Liaison
- UrbanOhio.com
- Flyer
- Sierra Club
- East End Area Council
- Bike Political Action Committee (PAC)

**Question 16: Your feedback is valuable to the project team. Please use the space below to share any additional comments you may have.**

Ninety (90) respondents shared additional comments. Areas of interest most commonly mentioned in this section were:

- Concern over government spending
- Integration of bike trails along the rail line
- Inclusion of the Wasson rail line in the proposed study
- Rail line funding and operational costs
- Excitement about the possibility of a commuter rail being built
- The timeline for the rail project
- Concerns over diesel technology
- Potential noise and vibration effects

- Preference for station locations
- Impacts on the Little Miami River
- Project being long overdue
- Connecting the rail line to the proposed Streetcar project

**Question 17: Information about the Oasis Commuter Study will often be distributed via email. If you would like these updates, please provide your email address in the space below.**

One hundred and fifteen (115) respondents requested that their email address be added to the project update distribution list.





# 7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

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After considering the information obtained from the three public meetings, the Oasis project team has a better understanding of the community's knowledge, interest in and understanding of the proposed commuter rail project. This information will be beneficial when moving forward with the project.

## MISPERCEPTIONS NEEDING CLARIFICATION

Many responses offered on the Oasis Commuter Rail Project Survey and Comment form, as well as made by participants during the Open Comment/Question and Answer sessions and one-on-one conversations with project team representatives, revealed several previously-formed misperceptions about the project:

1. **Use of Diesel Technology:** Repeated comments from participants demonstrated that many meeting attendees were under the impression that diesel (DMU) technology was the only rail technology under consideration for the Oasis Commuter Rail line. Because of this, they expressed concerns regarding the noise, pollution, and operational inefficiencies generated by diesel technology, and in some cases, openly opposed the proposed commuter rail line. Going forward, it will be important to emphasize that the project team is studying multiple rail technologies, and thus far, a preferred technology has not been identified.
2. **Bike Trails:** Some community meeting participants assumed that the development of the proposed commuter rail precludes the establishment of bike paths along the existing rail lines, particularly if diesel technology is used. In some cases, this assumption prompted participants to oppose the proposed rail project. As the project moves forward, the project team needs to emphasize that some rail technologies may operate in conjunction with bike trails and other similar recreational uses rather than in opposition to it, and those technologies are currently under evaluation.
3. **Decision Making –** A number of meeting participants believed that a decision to build the Oasis Commuter Rail line has already been made. It will be important to continue emphasizing that the purpose of the current Tier 2 study is to further explore the feasibility of the rail line and that no decisions have been made yet.

## FUTURE STUDY SUGGESTIONS

Comments offered at the community meetings and in the surveys included suggestions for further study. Such suggestions included a ridership study and cost studies pertaining to ticket prices (it was also suggested that this study include a comparison of ticket prices for similar commuter lines across the country). The Oasis Project Team is already planning to complete these studies as part of its project scope. In turn, the Communications Team should make efforts to share the results of these studies with

the public as they are completed. The results could be included in project email updates, as articles in Enewsletters and/or shared at future community meetings.

## INFORMATION MATERIAL IMPROVEMENTS

Meeting attendees shared their thoughts on how to improve the meeting content for future Oasis Commuter Rail community meetings. Suggestions included:

1. Show a short video of successful rail projects in other cities to provide a clearer idea of what a commuter train would look like and how it would/could operate.
2. Hold the meetings at more locations, including a downtown venue such as Fountain Square or the Cincinnati public library.
3. Decrease the number of handouts provided at future community meetings.

## MEETING SPACE EVALUATION

The meeting space at each facility met the Project Team’s needs. Also, the staff at each facility was helpful and accommodating. While no logistical problems were experienced at the Fairfax and Milford locations, the blowers for the central heating and cooling system at the LeBlond facility were loud and made it difficult to hear during the Open Comment/Question and Answer session. Also, parking was limited at LeBlond as the lot was small and many of the spaces available were being used by people working out at the facility or playing in the nearby ball fields. Going forward, the Oasis Communications Team recommends using the R.G. Cribbet Recreation Center in Fairfax and Milford High School for future meetings, but because of the challenges encountered at LeBlond, recommends finding a different venue for meetings held near downtown Cincinnati.

### LOCATION

### USE FOR FUTURE MEETINGS?

LeBlond Recreation Center	No
Nagel Elementary School, Gym	Yes
Milford High School, Gym	Yes

## FUTURE COMMUNICATIONS

Based on information obtained from the Oasis Commuter Rail Project Survey/Comment form, the channels of communications preferred by meeting participants include email and the project website, the print edition of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, local TV news programs and community meetings. As such, the Oasis Communications Team will be sure to use these channels as our primary means to distribute information throughout the remainder of the Oasis Commuter Rail Tier 2 study.

