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## **DEVELOPMENT TEAM MEETING SUMMARY**

*R. G. Cribbet Center · November 16, 2011*

**Prepared by:**

**Saybrook Marketing Communications**

**3665 Erie Avenue, Suite 5**

**Cincinnati, Ohio 45208**

# Meeting Attendees

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## Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners

- Todd Portune, Hamilton County Commissioner/Hamilton County Transportation Improvement District
- Ted Hubbard, Hamilton County Transportation Improvement District
- Martha Kelly, City of Cincinnati
- Mark Policinski, Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments
- Steve Mary, Ohio Department of Transportation
- Joe Vogel, Ohio Department of Transportation
- Andy Fluegemann, Ohio Department of Transportation
- Keith Smith, Ohio Department of Transportation
- Jay Hamilton, Ohio Department of Transportation

## Project Team Consultants

- David Wormald, URS Corporation (Red Bank Corridor Project)
- Deb Osborne, Stantec (SR-32 Relocation Project and the SR-32 Improvements, Eastgate Area Projects)
- Andy Schneider, Transystems (SR-32 Improvements, Eastgate Area Projects)
- Steve Bergman, HDR Inc. (Oasis Rail Transit)

## Saybrook Marketing Communications

- Laura Whitman, Saybrook Marketing Communications
- Sarah Schneider, Saybrook Marketing Communications

## Eastern Corridor Development Team

- Marilyn Wall, The Sierra Club
- Jay Gohman, Village of Terrace Park
- Eric Partee, Little Miami Inc.
- Frank Henson, Queen City Bike
- Marcheta Gillam, Cincinnati Environmental Advisory Council
- Tom Caruso, Anderson Township
- Sheila Mixon, Urban League of Cincinnati
- George Kipp, Village of Indian Hill
- Charlene Metzger, Village of Fairfax
- Nick Ragland, Gorilla Glue Company
- Cory Wright, Union Township
- Don Mills, Ohio River Way

- Jay Andress, Wasson Way Group
- Bob Igoe, Madisonville Community Council
- Steven Schuckman, Cincinnati City Parks
- Tom Fiorini, Cincinnati Sports Club
- Bill Collins, Madisonville Community Council
- Kay Nolen, MedPace
- Ross Hamre, Hamilton County Park District
- Susan Doucleff, Mt. Washington Community Council
- Michael Lemon, Columbia Township
- Curt Cosby, Village of Newtown
- Craig Rozen, Oakley Community Council
- Chuck Short, Village of Newtown

## Formal Presentation

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The meeting began with an introduction of the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners, project team representatives and Eastern Corridor Development Team members. Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) District 8 Deputy Director Steve Mary followed the introductions with the purpose of the Eastern Corridor Development Team and asked members to share the information they receive at this meeting with their respective organizations/communities. ODOT's Tim Hill, Environmental Administrator (Office of Environmental Services), announced that minutes, handouts and the slide show presentation from the meeting will be posted on the Eastern Corridor website. [Post-meeting note: these materials have been placed on the website, [www.EasternCorridor.org](http://www.EasternCorridor.org), under the Public Participation, Recent Activity links.]

Mr. Mary then began the formal presentation which included an introduction of the Eastern Corridor Program, its component projects and the study process.

- Todd Portune, Hamilton County Commissioner and Chair of the Hamilton County Transportation Improvement District, and Ted Hubbard, Hamilton County Chief Deputy Engineer, presented an overview of the Eastern Corridor Program and the Program's development history
- Andy Fluegemann, ODOT District 8 Planning Engineer, summarized the findings and recommendations of the 2005 Tier 1 Final Environmental Impact Study (FEIS) and the Federal Highway Administration's 2006 Record of Decision, and discussed how these recommendations form the basis of the current Tier 2 study. Mr. Fluegemann also discussed the purpose and goals of the Tier 2 study, as well as provided an overview of the SR-32 Relocation and Oasis Rail Transit projects.
- Keith Smith, ODOT District 8 Environmental Engineer, provided an overview of the Red Bank Corridor project.

- Jay Hamilton, ODOT District 8 Traffic Planning Engineer, provided an overview of the SR-32 Improvements, Eastgate Area projects.
- Mr. Hill discussed ODOT's new Project Development Process which will be used to guide the development of several of the Eastern Corridor projects such as the SR-32 Relocation project. Mr. Hill mentioned that the new process should help streamline and speed up the study process.
- Joe Vogel, ODOT District 8 Planning and Engineering Administrator, presented information about the Program's current funding status and sources, and discussed public involvement efforts that will take place as part of the current study process.

The presentation concluded with an emphasis on the importance of public involvement and public engagement in the Program development process, and a discussion of the role and responsibilities of the Eastern Corridor Development Team members in the public involvement process. Also, the team shared that the Internet and local media outlets will be used actively to help keep the public aware of progress being made and upcoming involvement opportunities.

The presentation was followed by an open Question and Answer Session. The following section summarizes comments, inquiries and responses made during this session.

## Question and Answer Session

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### **Q1. Are you taking/distributing minutes?**

We will put the slides and notes on the Eastern Corridor website. (These materials have been placed on the website, [www.EasternCorridor.org](http://www.EasternCorridor.org), under the Public Participation, Recent Activity links.)

### **Q2. Will a draft EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) be done as part of Tier 2?**

An EIS will be prepared only for the SR-32 Relocation project. This process will include preparation of a draft EIS and a final EIS and extensive public involvement. However, because we are working with existing roads for the Red Bank Corridor and SR-32 Improvement, Eastgate Area projects, it is expected that we will receive Categorical Exclusions for those. This means we don't expect the Federal Highway Administration to require formal Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Study (EIS) reports to be prepared for these projects (although, environmental analyses are being completed to assess the likely impacts they will have on the natural and man-made environments and determine if further study is needed). We expect that an EA will be required as part of the Oasis Rail Transit project.

### **Q3. Since there are four projects, will there be four Records of Decision?**

No. Only the SR-32 Relocation project will go through the extensive Environmental Impact Statement process, which will include a Record of Decision.

**Q4. There is a Record of Decision expected for 2013. Does that mean that a Red Bank Record of Decision will be issued earlier?**

No. A Record of Decision is not required for the Red Bank Corridor project.

**Q5. Has a Categorical Exclusion been secured for the Red Bank project?**

No, it has not. This will be discussed more at upcoming Community Partner Committee meetings.

**Q6. A Madisonville representative stated that his group representing Red Bank Corridor communities has made a lot of progress in terms of recognition from Commissioner Portune and that an arrangement was made to work together on the Red Bank Corridor Project. Will ODOT be working with the Commissioner to make sure this happens?**

Yes, ODOT is working with Commissioner Portune.

**Q7. Since funding dollars have been secured for the SR-32 Improvements, Eastgate Area project construction, will Red Bank be next for construction?**

Not necessarily. Each project is on its own development schedule and construction depends on how the projects advance through the development process. We still need to finalize funding sources for this project.

Also, a note of clarification—we have secured construction funding for a portion of the SR-32 Improvements, Eastgate Area effort: Phase 1 of the I-275/SR-32 Interchange Improvement project. We are still working to obtain funding for remaining project elements.

**Q8. Madisonville community representatives met with Congresswoman Schmidt who expressed confidence in securing a sizable amount of money for the Eastern Corridor Program. Do the representatives here tonight agree with that assessment?**

Congresswoman Schmidt has been very supportive on the Program and is a strong advocate. The challenge however is that approval of the federal transportation bill is several years overdue and there are a lot of demands on the limited resources. There is much that is still up in the air but we are working hard on it every day.

Commissioner Portune said he's made several trips to Washington with Clermont County representatives to meet with local house and state delegations about the bill that includes the Eastern Corridor Program. There is a house version of this bill on the table, but it has not been adopted by the state yet and it has to go through the process. Federal funding depends on when this bill is adopted. Congresswoman Schmidt is working very hard to secure funding, but this is a political process and it will take time.

ODOT has recently gone through a regional process to prioritize what projects need funding and the Eastern Corridor Program received strong consideration.

**Q9. What local sources contributed to the 20% of local funding mentioned in the presentation?**

The Hamilton County and Clermont County Transportation Improvement Districts were the primary local funding sources. The 20% local funding for the SR-32 Improvements, Eastgate Area and Oasis Rail Transit projects are actually from the State through the Ohio Department of Transportation. Potential sources of local matching funds include local capital improvement programs, County municipal road funds, Ohio Public Works Commission and others, depending on jurisdiction.

**Q10. Can you put the breakdown of the 20% funding sources on the website?**

Yes. [Post-meeting note: this is in progress.]

**Q11. Is this money already secured?**

Yes.

**Q12. What is the total dollar amount for the Eastern Corridor Program?**

We do not have a total dollar amount for the Eastern Corridor Program just yet. Determining that total number is part of the Tier 2 study process. We will be evaluating the alternatives, narrowing them down and refining costs. We will be able to answer that question much better at the conclusion of the current study phase.

**Q13. I like commuter rail. Oasis is a good idea and using existing rail is great. Can we put in an electric line? Have you looked at rail in other cities? Is there funding for new rail between the boathouse and downtown?**

New Jersey's River Line is used for joint freight and passenger lines. This is comparable to what we are looking at for the Oasis line, although no decisions have been made yet.

Over the course of the next 60 – 90 days, the team will be selecting alignments for the rail segment between the Boathouse and the downtown Riverfront Transit Center. We also will be looking at and recommending the rail technology—or types of trains—to be used. We will discuss these plans in more detail at the Hamilton County Transportation Improvement District this coming Monday. This meeting is open to the public.

In addition to evaluating alignments and technology, the Oasis project team is now working on station area planning efforts for the rail stations along the proposed rail corridor. This will include public involvement activities in the upcoming months.

**Q14. Environmental groups should be just fine with the rail alignments since we are already running freight through these areas.**

No response given.

**Q15. Can you tell us more about the dollar breakdown for the Oasis project?**

Thus far, we only have the financial estimates that were provided as part of the Tier 1 study. We are developing more detailed estimates as part of the Tier 2 study. We will try and have more information on this for the next Development Team meeting.

**Q16. Can you tell us more about the use of existing lines? Wasn't there going to be two tracks as part of the rail line through the Newtown area?**

SORTA owns the OASIS Line, which was purchased with public funds for the intention of providing passenger rail. The line through Newtown is owned by Norfolk-Southern and any public use would require a purchase from them or an operating agreement with them. The number of tracks can be planned but would not be determined until much later in the planning process.

**Q17. Let's assume the Red Bank Corridor project is one of the first projects implemented. Considering the improved access this will create in combination with the new Kennedy Connector, is there concern about creating a choke point in this vicinity on I-71? This may result in cut-through traffic in Oakley and Madisonville. Has there been traffic modeling done in this area to determine the impact? Rail will be fantastic.**

Traffic modeling will be done as part of the current Tier 2 study. We need to update the traffic counts and this is something we are currently working on. However, we don't initially think increased traffic along the Red Bank connector will be as much of an issue on I-71; we are actually looking at Norwood Lateral-related issues as more of a concern. We are taking this all into account and once we get the updated traffic counts, we will re-run the traffic models. This will allow us to better predict what will happen and if there will be any problem areas that will need to be addressed. We then will review improvement suggestions with our central office in Columbus. The traffic model is not just local, it's regional and takes regional issues into account. Running the model is time consuming and expensive. We want to make sure we do this right the first time.

**Q18. Can you give us dates on when the various parts of the projects will take place?**

We can give you dates on the engineering and project development functions and milestones for the projects. However, anything beyond that will depend on when we obtain funding.

**Q19. Are you going to discuss all four projects at the Eastern Corridor Development Team meetings?**

Yes. We will also have Community Partner Committee workshops that will focus on the finer details of the individual projects. While those workshops will be project-specific, all are invited to attend.

**Q20. Is there a concise version of how you have gotten this far in the study process (Tier 1)?**

The 2004 Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and the 2005 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), as well as the Federal Highway Administration's 2006 Tier 1 Record of Decision documents are available on the Eastern Corridor website ([www.EasternCorridor.org](http://www.EasternCorridor.org)). They are listed under the Tier 1 Archives, Milestone Documents section listed in the left-hand

navigation bar. The executive summaries of these documents should give you a good summary of how we got to where we are. The 2004 DEIS might be of most use to you.

**Q21. Can we get a one-pager on the Tier 1 study process?**

We could do a presentation on Tier 1 at one meeting or we could put a summary on the website. We can send everyone an email letting them know when it is available.

**Q22. Would it make sense to look at/pursue the rail project first and see what impact it has on traffic counts? That might help eliminate congestion without needing to complete the other projects.**

The Eastern Corridor Program is a multi-modal plan and all four components need to be moved forward together to accomplish the overall Program goal. We must consider the whole region and how the projects integrate with each other. If we take one project out of the Program scope, it can significantly change the entire Eastern Corridor model and impact the other projects. The Implementation Partners are committed to carrying out all the recommendations made at the end of Tier 1 study.

**Q23. I understand, but with funding not yet obtained, why not focus on just the rail portion first? You may find that you don't need the other parts. Especially with funding being tight, this might help determine the overall need and implementation schedule.**

We had an economist come in as part of the program development process. The up-shot of the information he provided is that multi-modal programs such as the Eastern Corridor build upon themselves and implementing the various elements together are necessary to make it work. When it comes to programs like this, it is not  $1 + 1 = 2$ ; it's more like  $1 + 1 = 4$ . For example, an enhanced roadway can expand businesses in a way that rail won't necessarily do. And transit oriented development associated with rail can expand/grow a local market significantly.

**Q24. [The following is a summary of a conversation between ECDT members]:**

[Speaker 1]: If rail goes from downtown to Milford, and nothing else is done, it serves only part of the overall transportation needs in the Eastern Corridor and doesn't address the needs of people elsewhere.

[Speaker 2]: Build it and see if rail is used. We are lovers of our personal cars. If there is a nice, new road, people will be more inclined to use it instead. But if rail is built first, then a road may not be needed.

[Speaker 1]: This is a generation driven project. Young professionals like rail transit.

[Program Representatives]: It is important to note that the Oasis line is just the first portion of a regional network of potential transit projects that would extend across the region. Once implemented in its entirety, it can make a tremendous impact. For example, you could run rail from the Riverfront to Lawrenceburg. We are looking at this as a regional transit plan, not just local.



**Q25. Isn't there a potential boom of freight predicted in the next 20 years or so?**

Yes. The thinking is that this will come from the widening of the Panama Canal.

**Q26. Is the new Project Development Process (PDP) approach going to be used for every project but Red Bank?**

The new PDP process will be used for the SR-32 Relocation project but not Red Bank. The Red Bank Corridor project is much further along using the older process (up to 1/3 of the way through). It doesn't make sense to change it now.

The new process is six steps whereas the older version is a 10 and 14 step process. We will be presenting the new process to districts in the next couple weeks.

**Q27. Is the older 10 to 14-step PDP process on the website?**

We can put a summary on the Eastern Corridor website under the Red Bank page.

**Q28. You mentioned the Red Flag summary. Can you tell us more about that?**

This is based on geometric configurations, literature searches and windshield surveys. For example, we note where the gas stations, utilities, landmarks, etc. are located. We identify any issues that may exist in the project area. We also look for buildings on the National Register and will pay close attention to landmarks with historical significance. These elements are noted in the Red Flag Summary as resources to be aware of when completing our environmental impact analyses.

**Q29. We would like more information on the bus and bike components of the Eastern Corridor Program.**

We are working with SORTA, the Little Miami River Trail, Cincinnati Parks, the Kellogg Trail and the trail from Lunken to downtown. We will be working more with SORTA to plan station locations for the rail transit project and how bus service can support those stations and the surrounding areas. The City and Hamilton County are working on bikeway elements. Much more work is happening locally and we are looking at incorporating or linking these plans into the Eastern Corridor Program.

**Q30. Where is SORTA tonight?**

SORTA comes to our monthly Implementation Partners meeting.

# Meeting Conclusion

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Mr. Vogel thanked the ECDT members for coming. Mr. Vogel and Mr. Portune reiterated the invitation to the Nov. 21 Hamilton County Transportation Improvement District meeting, stating that it is always the fourth Monday of every month at 12:30. The meeting is held in Room 610 of the Hamilton County Administration building, 138 E. Court Street and typically lasts for one hour.

The next ECDT meeting date, time and location will be announced at a future date.