



Eastern Corridor Development Team

MEETING NOTES

Date/Time: March 16, 2016 / 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M
Place: Miami Valley Christian Academy
Next Meeting: TBD
Attendees: SEE ATTACHED
Distribution: Attendees, Invitees, Eastern Corridor website

MEETING OBJECTIVES

- Provide a status update on the Eastern Corridor Program
- Explain and answer questions about the design and public engagement approach on Eastern Corridor Segments II and III (Red Bank to I-275/SR 32 Interchange), starting with a fresh look at the purpose and need
- Gain input on the design of six proposed Focus Area Workshops

HANDOUTS

The following materials were distributed at the meeting. Copies of each are posted on the Public Involvement, Recent Activity page of the Eastern Corridor website, under the heading for the March 16, 2016 ECDT meeting (<http://easterncorridor.org/involvement/recent-activity/>):

- ECDT Meeting Agenda
- Eastern Corridor Segments II and III, Red Bank to I-275/SR 32 Focus Area Map
- Tentative Workshop Schedule, Locations and Invitation List
- MetroQuest Overview
- Performance Based Practical Design Fact Sheet

In addition, copies of the ODOT NEPA Assignment Public Involvement brochure were also made available to attendees for review. A copy of this brochure is available on the ODOT website at <http://www.dot.state.oh.us/NEPA-Assignment/Pages/default.aspx>.

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

Stefan Spinosa, ODOT District 8 Planning & Engineering Administrator, opened the meeting welcoming attendees and thanking them for coming. He acknowledged Eastern Corridor Partner representatives in attendance and reviewed the objectives for the evening:

- Discuss the role of Eastern Corridor Development Team (ECDT) members
- Provide an update on the status of the major Eastern Corridor Program segments
- Discuss next steps for Segments II and III, Red bank to I-275/SR 32 and gather feedback

Mr. Spinosa explained that the role of ECDT members is to represent the interests of their respective communities/organizations in discussions related to the Eastern Corridor Program, share information and materials with their respective communities/organizations, bring questions, concerns and comments back to the Eastern Corridor team and, as needed, assist with outreach and notification efforts.

PROGRAM STATUS AND UPDATES

Mr. Spinosa used a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation to provide a status update on the various components of the Eastern Corridor Program. A copy of the presentation is posted on the Public Involvement, Recent Activity page of the Eastern Corridor website, under the heading for the March 16, 2016 ECDT meeting (<http://easterncorridor.org/involvement/recent-activity/>). Key discussion topics included:

Oasis Rail Transit

- A significant number of studies have been recently completed for the Oasis Rail Transit project. Results of the studies indicate that the project is worthy of further advancement.
- The project is now well-positioned for a local sponsor to advance the project to the next phase of study (FTA Project Development). ODOT will continue to be a partner for the project, but will no longer be managing its development.
- Open House meetings were held in February. Copies of meeting materials as well as recently completed reports are available for review on the Oasis Public Involvement and Project Documents pages of the Eastern Corridor website.

Eastern Corridor Segment I: Red Bank Corridor

- The preferred alternatives were vetted by the community and approved by ODOT in January 2014.
- Red Bank Corridor Improvements consist of five separate projects, the first of which – the Duck Creek Road Extension to Madison Road at Medpace Way – is being put out for rebid as initial bids came in too high. However, construction is still scheduled to begin this summer.
- Plans for the Babson Place and Hetzel Street extensions are currently being advanced and efforts will continue as long as funding remains available. Remaining funds are being used to develop work limits and complete environmental clearance efforts. Funding for construction has not yet been identified.
- The remaining Red Bank Corridor improvement projects will be advanced when funding becomes available.

Segment IV: I-275/SR 32 Interchange

- The reconstruction of this key Eastern Corridor interchange and related ancillary projects are now complete and operational (as of Fall 2015). These completed projects are all part of the Eastern Corridor transportation improvement program.

Segment IVa: Eastgate to Batavia

- A preferred alternative was vetted by the community and approved by ODOT in July 2015.
- Plan development is moving into the final stages of design and the project team is wrapping up environmental documentation and clearance efforts.
- Funding has been secured for the design of the SR 32/Bach Buxton Road interchange, however ODOT is still looking for construction funding. Local road improvements to Old SR 74 and Clepper Lane are funded for construction through the Clermont County TID.

SEGMENTS II AND III (RED BANK TO I-275/SR 32) UPDATE

Following completion of the Eastern Corridor Program status update, Mr. Spinosa turned the presentation over to Tom Arnold, ODOT District 8 Traffic Planning Engineer. Mr. Arnold is ODOT's Project Manager for Eastern Corridor Segments II and III, Red Bank to I-275/SR 32. Mr. Arnold stated that he is a lifetime eastside Cincinnati resident and is looking forward to working with local communities and organizations to find solutions that address the region's on-going transportation needs.

Mr. Arnold emphasized that the Eastern Corridor Program is not "dead" and that false perception expressed by some does not accurately represent the status of the Program as a whole. He reiterated that there are many components to the Eastern Corridor Program, all in varying stages of planning, development, construction and completion. Although ODOT determined to no longer pursue the relocation of SR 32 through the Little Miami River Valley last summer, that effort was just one component of the broader Program. Therefore, ODOT will be moving forward in two key ways:

- First, ODOT is no longer pursuing relocating SR 32 through the Little Miami River Valley and is revisiting the Purpose and Need, focusing on the existing transportation network within the Segments II and III Study Area (a copy of the Study Area map was shown as part of the Microsoft PowerPoint presentation)
- Second, ODOT is considering separating Segments II and III into two individual projects.

Project Development Process Overview

Mr. Arnold provided an overview of ODOT's Project Development Process which is comprised of five primary steps:

- Planning – Identify Purpose and Need. The Purpose and Need focuses on an understanding of the issues that need to be addressed by the project and includes analyses of traffic and crash data and establishes project goals (such as promote economic vitality, expand bike/pedestrian accommodations, etc.)

- Preliminary Engineering (PE)– Explore feasibility of alternatives and conduct associated environmental studies
- Environmental Engineering – Complete environmental documentation and obtain necessary permits and approvals
- Final Engineering and Right of Way Acquisition – Complete project designs, obtain approvals and acquire the necessary property
- Construction

(More information about activities performed in each step was provided in the presentation graphics.)

Mr. Arnold acknowledged that the PDP process can often be long and said ODOT is always looking for ways to expedite the process if possible. As part of that effort, ODOT has applied for and received approval from the Federal Highway Administration to manage National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) responsibilities within the State of Ohio for environmental review, consultation or other actions required under federal environmental law that pertain to the review or approval of specific highway, railroad, public transportation and multimodal projects (NEPA Assignment). The assigned responsibilities are subject to the same procedural and substantive requirements as previously applied to FHWA. Mr. Arnold stated that the ability for ODOT to manage the associated NEPA responsibilities and approval process should be a step to help expedite the Project Development Process.

Mr. Arnold explained that as part of the Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase of the PDP process, ODOT will be using FHWA's new Performance Based Practical Design (PBPD) approach to develop transportation improvements for Segments II and III. *(A fact sheet about the PBPD approach was distributed to all attendees; a copy of the fact sheet is posted along with other meeting materials on the Eastern Corridor website).*

Mr. Arnold explained that the intent of the upcoming planning efforts for Eastern Corridor Segments II and III is to:

- Capitalize on the good work already completed
- Update key data (such as traffic counts and crash data)
- Gather feedback from the public that will determine investments to be made

ODOT intends to use this information to revise and update the Purpose and Need Statement for Segments II and III and present it to the public this fall. ODOT intends to begin working on alternative development by the end of 2016. Public input is key to this effort and critical to its success.

Project alternatives will be developed using the PBPD approach, which will provide the project team the flexibility to develop alternatives that focus on improvements to the existing transportation network and can be developed in consideration of existing constraints. This is a change from ODOT's previous approach which focused more on the adherence to design requirements and considered less customization to an area's actual needs, physical and environmental constraints and funding limitations. This former approach generally results in much bigger and more expensive projects.

When discussing the PBPD approach, Mr. Arnold described the process as choosing between spending limited funding dollars either on a few perfect projects or spending the same funds on

more good projects. Upcoming Segment II and III project development efforts will focus on the latter scenario. He also noted that all alternatives developed for Segments II and III will meet safety requirements and the project team will use input gathered from public engagement efforts to develop measures by which proposed alternatives will be evaluated.

Public Engagement Process Overview

Mr. Arnold stated that ODOT has multiple channels in place through which the public can provide input to the Segments II and III planning team. These include:

- The Eastern Corridor website – This resource is robust and contains a significant amount of information. The public can submit comments and questions to the Eastern Corridor team at anytime through the website using the Submit Feedback tool or by sending an email to EasternCorridor@EasternCorridor.org.
- An Interactive, online public feedback tool (developed using MetroQuest software) is now housed on the homepage of the Eastern Corridor website – This online survey tool asks respondents to identify their transportation priorities, asks more detailed questions about the priorities they select, and allows respondents to identify improvements they think are needed within and around the Study Area. Because it is online, people can use it any time, anywhere. It can also be used on mobile devices. This tool is the primary means through which ODOT will be collecting feedback from the community. As such, Mr. Arnold requested the assistance of the ECDT to help spread the word about the survey and post links to it on their websites and through their social media channels. ECDT meeting participants were given a handout that provided additional information about the survey tool and included sample social media posts that can be used to help inform audiences about the feedback opportunity.
- Focus Area Workshops – ODOT will be hosting a series of six workshops held at different locations throughout the Segments II and III Study Area. Although each workshop will include elements focused on the particular section of the Study Area in which the workshop is located, the primary content and topics to be discussed at each workshop will be the same. Anyone wishing to participate can choose among the six sessions and come to the meeting most convenient for them. Each workshop will tackle the same general questions addressed by the online feedback tool, but the in-person meetings allow for interaction and discussion among participants and with the project team. Results of all sessions will be posted on the Eastern Corridor website for everyone's review as the workshops are completed. ECDT meeting participants were provided with a tentative list of meeting locations and dates and a map that identified the different focus areas. Mr. Arnold also requested ECDT members' assistance with helping communicate meeting dates and locations among their respective audiences.

FOCUS AREA WORKSHOP PLANNING

Following the overview of upcoming public engagement efforts, Mr. Arnold turned the discussion over to Ms. Carri Hulet of Consensus Building Institute (CBI). Ms. Hulet stated that CBI was engaged by ODOT to help ensure that the many different opinions and views about transportation improvement needs in the Segment II and III Study Area are brought to the table and considered as part of the Project Development Process. She explained that the purpose of the Focus Area Workshops is to help encourage the public to provide information and engage in discussions about how they prefer to travel within and through the Study Area and what obstacles get in the way.

Ms. Hulet then explained that the remaining portion of the meeting will be focused on obtaining information and input from ECDT members that the planning team will use to better develop the Focus Area Workshops and to obtain feedback on the proposed meeting dates, locations, times, and focus areas.

Team Exercise

Ms. Hulet divided ECDT meeting participants into six different tables and asked them to discuss the following question and record their ideas on the papers provided: "If you were in charge of writing up the Purpose and Need [for this project], and you wanted to get input from your neighbors, what questions would you ask them?"

Following the discussion period, each group presented several of the questions they prepared. Some of the questions are summarized below (a complete list of questions offered by the groups are included as an attachment to these meeting minutes):

- What intersections are most problematic?
- Is roadway lighting an issue?
- What problems do you want the Eastern Corridor Program to resolve?
- What slows you down as you travel within and through the study area?
- Are you willing to pay to fix the problems?
- How much are you will to pay to fix the problems, and if so, how much?
- How bad are the problems? Are they bad enough to make you want to move?
- What modes of transportation do you value?
- What areas would benefit most from introducing new transportation modes?
- What locations do you feel are unsafe?
- What is your biggest frustration with getting around your area?
- What problems are we trying to solve?
- What can we do to get the biggest bang for your buck?

After each group presented their questions, Ms. Hulet noted that when the questions are posed to the public, the answers received will all help the planning team zero in on the Purpose and Need for the Segment II and III study effort. She also noted that while there was a wide range of good questions, they also fell under several general discussion topics such as travel mode, problems, safety concerns, and cost. Following her comments, several meeting participants offered additional questions including:

- What about pollution?
- What should the improvements look like?
- What solutions add value for residents and businesses?

Regarding process, some ECDT members asked ODOT to consider the following:

- How do we speed this process up? We've been doing this for 20 years already!

- It appears from the materials provided that the workshops only focus on the Study Area itself and the people located therein. How will the team encourage input from people who may not live or work in the Study Area but travel through it on a regular basis? Their input is needed as well.
- How do you get the right people to the workshops?

Ms. Hulet stated that the group will discuss some of these questions as part of the publicity discussion, coming up next. But first, she asked the group for feedback regarding the geographic areas encompassed by each Focus Area, the timing of the workshops (day of week, time of day, number of meetings, meeting locations), intended invitees, etc. *(This information was provided on the Focus Area Map and Tentative Schedule, Location and Invitation List handout distributed to meeting participants. Copies of these materials are posted on the Public Involvement, Recent Activity page of the Eastern Corridor website).*

Comments received and responses provided include:

- You can't think of each Focus Area exclusively and hold workshops that are focused only on a single location. Solutions developed for each area all have to work together; you can't have buy in on solutions for one area without knowing about the others. Ms. Hulet responded that though there will be area-specific components discussed at each meeting, the content of each meeting will generally be the same and everyone will have a chance to comment on improvements applicable to other areas. An ECDT member suggested that if that is the case, make sure that information is included in workshop notification materials.
- Add the City of Cincinnati to the invitation list for meetings focused on the Red Bank-related areas.
- Having six meetings may be confusing for the public - having longer meetings across a fewer number of nights may increase participation. Another ECDT member suggested however, that holding more meetings gives people more opportunities to participate.
- ODOT needs to emphasize that people need to think about improvements in this area in two ways: first, as low-build options which will address transportation needs in the near-term and secondly, as long-term improvements that will accommodate future transportation needs and changing conditions such as shifts in economy, population growth, etc.
- The reach of Greater Cincinnati's Eastern Corridor is much broader than just Segments II and III. The handouts shared tonight don't mention outreach to those who travel through Eastgate, along I-471 through Northern Kentucky and into downtown Cincinnati. ODOT needs to broaden it's outreach to make sure that feedback from those audiences are also included in this effort.
- Businesses also need to be included in outreach efforts. ODOT should put together two or three quick bullet points highlighting the purpose and content of the meetings so they can quickly determine 1) if they should participate and 2) if they should distribute the information among their employees and encourage their participation. Ms. Hulet noted that the team has already been discussing outreach tactics along those lines. She also said that in addition to getting their input, ODOT wants to ask local businesses to assist with distributing information about the online feedback tool to their employees and local communications networks.

- The US 50 Corridor Focus Area should be expanded to include the Plainville/Madison road interchange. The expansion of the Medpace campus is creating additional traffic and congestion problems in the area and that needs to be addressed as part of this project.
- If not already included, add the following property owners, businesses and business associations to the notification/outreach lists:
 - Mt. Washington Business Association
 - Ancor area property owners (Martin Marietta, Evans Landscaping, etc.)
 - Cincinnati Eastside Rotary
 - Oakley Community Council
 - NIOSH
 - Cincinnati Parks/Hamilton County Parks (Lunken Playfield, Armleder, etc.)
 - Anderson Township Parks
 - Cincinnati Bike Association
 - Wasson Way
 - Little Miami Trail
- What is the workshop format? Ms. Hulet responded that though the workshops will be open to the public and they will be working meetings.
- What is the focus of the workshops? Ms. Hulet responded that the goals of the workshops are to help establish the purpose and need for transportation improvements within the Study Area, determine what needs to be done and why, and tell ODOT where the problem areas are.
- It would be helpful in these workshops to revisit the Purpose and Need statement drafted by community representatives 15 years ago and the rationale behind them. Then ask, are these still valid? If not, what's changed? Rather than give the impression of starting again from scratch, let people know that you are building upon an existing foundation. Another ECDD member added that local neighborhoods have changed dramatically since the Eastern Corridor Program first began.
- Mr. Spinosa mentioned that part of the plan for the Focus Area Workshops is to use feedback received to help establish goals upon which the planning team can develop performance criteria. These criteria will be used to help evaluate the effectiveness of proposed solutions.
 - Traditionally, planners were tasked with looking 40 years out into the future and developing projects to address the anticipated future transportation needs. With the current level of funding, these designs are more difficult to construct. By using the PBPD approach, ODOT is changing this practice so that they now have the flexibility to look at what is needed now and determine project-specific performance criteria. These criteria will help planners and local communities better determine what are acceptable improvements and trade-offs. They will help communities determine what they are willing to live with.
 - The Hamilton County Engineer's Office used a similar approach for the Colerain Corridor. The County and local community did not have the resources available to

develop a project that met traditional design standards. Instead, they developed a smaller, customized, lower-cost project that effectively improved existing conditions. It was not the best solution possible, but it was better than what was there originally and the community has been satisfied with the result.

- In terms of publicity, go to local community council meetings and share information about the upcoming workshops and online feedback tool directly with council members and meeting participants.
- The project team for the Western Hills viaduct project used a real-time push button response system to keep track of feedback received during public meetings. Participants liked this tool as it was engaging and provided them with an immediate picture of the feedback being shared.
- There has been a real tension between those looking at transportation needs from a regional perspective and those looking at them from a local perspective. The different views and the tension associated with each need to be acknowledged on both sides if an effective solution is to be developed.
- When you hold Eastern Corridor meetings, there is a disconnect between your intended purpose and what public thinks your intentions are. You may be truly asking the public for input, but they think that you simply want them to say it's ok for you to do what you want to do. You need to really explain to people that you want to understand their neighborhood goals and that you want to partner with them to develop projects that address local and/or regional transportation needs but at the same time, respect their goals. ODOT's PBPD approach offers a unique opportunity for communities to integrate their goals (such as improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians) into local and regional transportation improvement plans.
- You need to help people understand that there are trade-offs that must be made when deciding between one solution and another. Ms. Hulet asked if anyone had ideas on how to help convey that message. Responses included:
 - Ask people how much money they would be willing to spend out of their own pockets to help fund the projects they are advocating
 - Determine how much money can truly be obtained within the next five to 10 years from local and state governments, and ask if people are willing to spend that money on the projects they are advocating
 - Ask people how long they are willing to wait for their suggested improvements to be made

CLOSING THOUGHTS AND ADJOURN

Before closing the meeting, Ms. Hulet asked if anyone had additional questions or comments. Questions and comments received included:

- We are where we are today because we were trying to address this region's transportation problems in part by constructing a new roadway corridor. If a community doesn't want any transportation improvements made within their immediate area, then we are in a pickle. Columbia Parkway cannot be widened, nor can Riverside or I-471. Other existing roads

have similar limitations. We need buses and trains because we can't widen these corridors. There are a lot of jobs in the suburbs...People need to wake up to the fact that if we can't widen these roads or add new ones, what else can we do? There needs to be some recognition of the need for transit within this region.

- An ECDT member asked Ms. Hulet if the CBI contract was available for review and if he could get a copy of it. Ms. Hulet said she yes (Mr. Spinoza also stated that it is public record) and that she would follow up with him after the meeting.
- I struggle with what [ODOT] did in the Village of Fairfax, reducing the number of traffic lanes from four to two. That's created even more traffic in an already congested area. Mr. Andy Fluegemann, ODOT District 8 Planning Engineer responded to this statement saying that the lane reduction project in Fairfax was a locally-sponsored project. It was developed by the local community to upgrade out-dated traffic signals and address safety issues and community values. The Village obtained a grant from the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments to fund the project and ODOT was involved only because federal dollars were included in the funding mix.

Mr. Spinoza concluded the meeting by having present ODOT representatives introduce themselves and their roles:

- Stefan Spinoza, ODOT District 8 Planning & Engineering Administrator
- Tim Hill, Administrator, ODOT Central Office, Office of Environmental Services (and Community Engagement)
- Heather McColeman, ODOT Central Office, Office of Environmental Services
- Keith Smith, ODOT District 8 Environmental Engineer, Project Manager for Eastern Corridor Segments I, Red Bank Corridor
- Tom Arnold, ODOT District 8, Traffic Planning Engineer, Project Manager for Eastern Corridor Segments II and III, Red Bank to I-275/SR 32
- Charlie Rowe, ODOT District 8, Transportation Engineer, Project Manager for Eastern Corridor Segments IVa, Eastgate to Batavia
- Andy Fluegemann, ODOT District 8 Planning Engineer

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.