



**EASTERN CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT TEAM
MEETING SUMMARY**

Anderson Center · February 22, 2012

Prepared by:

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Meeting Attendees

ECDT Representatives

- Chris Curran,
- Sierra Club, Village of Newtown
- John Brannock, Mt. Lookout
- Greg Brown, Linwood
- Tom Caruso, Anderson Township
- Bill Collins, Madisonville
- Tim Daugherty, Cincinnati Children's Home
- Susan Doucleff, Mt. Washington
- Jon Doucleff, Mt. Washington
- Tom Fiorini, Cincinnati Sports Club
- Jay Gohman, Terrace Park
- Ross Hamre, Hamilton County Parks District
- Jenny Kaminer, Village of Fairfax
- Laurie Keheler, East End
- Sharon Lally, Village of Fairfax
- Michael Lemmon, Columbia Township
- Charlene Metzger, Village of Fairfax
- Eric Miller, Anderson Chamber of Commerce
- Sheila Mixon, Urban League Greater Cincinnati
- Dan Policastro, Village of Mariemont
- David Ross, California
- Anthony Russo, Linwood
- Tom Salamon, Linwood
- Carson Shelton, Village of Fairfax
- Dennis Wolter, Village of Mariemont
- Cory Wright, Union Township

Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners

- Steve Mary, Ohio Department of Transportation District 8, Deputy Director
- Joe Vogel, Ohio Department of Transportation District 8, Planning & Engineering Administrator
- Andy Fluegemann, Ohio Department of Transportation District 8, Planning Engineer
- Jay Hamilton, Ohio Department of Transportation District 8, Traffic Planning Engineer
- Todd Portune, Hamilton County Commissioner/Hamilton County Transportation Improvement District Chair

Project Team Members

- Deb Osborne, Stantec (SR-32 Relocation Project and the SR-32 Improvements, Eastgate Area Projects)
- Laura Whitman, Saybrook Marketing Communications
- Sarah Schneider, Saybrook Marketing Communications

Meeting Summary

The following is a summary of the Feb. 22, 2012, Eastern Corridor Development Team meeting. A meeting transcript was recorded and is available for review on the Eastern Corridor website, www.EasternCorridor.org, under the Recent Activity, Public Participation links.

Presentation Overview

Following introductions, Mr. Steve Mary, ODOT District 8 Deputy Director, began the evening's presentation. The presentation included the following:

- A review of the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners
- An overview of the background, history, scope and goals of the multi-modal Eastern Corridor Program
- Roles and responsibilities of the Eastern Corridor Development Team members and purpose of the project-focused Community Partner Committees
- Updates on the core Eastern Corridor projects
- An update on bike path integration
- A Program funding update
- A public involvement status update

[POST MEETING NOTE: a copy of the meeting presentation is posted on the Eastern Corridor website (www.EasternCorridor.org) under the Recent Activity, Public Participation links.]

PROJECT UPDATE SUMMARY

SR-32 Improvements, Eastgate Area – presented by Jay Hamilton, ODOT

SR-32/I-275 Interchange – Final plans will be done sometime this year. ODOT and Clermont County are currently acquiring right-of-way for portions of the project and are working to get some of the work started as early as 2013. Work will be completed in phases, but it's not known yet how many. The goal is to have this project ready to undergo construction as soon as funding is secured.

SR-32 Improvements – Mr. Hamilton reviewed the scope of this project noting that the five alternatives originally considered have been narrowed down to three based on preliminary engineering and public input. Further analysis on these options is currently underway and results will likely be presented to the public for review and comment this summer. At that point, ODOT hopes to achieve consensus on a preferred alternative.

SR-32 Relocation – presented by Andy Fluegemann, ODOT

The SR-32 Relocation study area extends west from Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road through the Newtown area and continues across the Little Miami River toward Fairfax. Mr. Fluegemann reported that ODOT received confirmation of the Tier 1 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in February and is now proceeding with the Tier 2 study.

The project team is currently preparing the project schedule. It is also conducting remote sensing (ground-penetrating radar) studies around the Hamilton County Park District and Motz properties to identify archaeological resources in the area. Next steps will be to continue with Tier 2 environmental studies and begin developing alignment alternatives, consistent with the 2006 FHWA FEIS Record of Decision.

ODOT will be holding a Community Partner Committee (CPC)/Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) meeting on March 14 at the Miami Valley Christian Academy in Newtown to begin identifying and addressing project impacts and concerns. This meeting is targeted toward regulatory agencies (such as FHWA, US Fish and Wildlife, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources, etc.), interest groups (such as Sierra Club, Little Miami Inc., local historic preservation societies, etc.) and representatives of the communities along the project corridor. This meeting will also be used to begin establishing a SR-32 Relocation Community Partners Committee. The CPC will be a team of community, interest group and other stakeholder representatives who will meet with the project team throughout the study process to receive progress updates; exchange information and feedback; discuss project alternatives; represent the interests, concerns, of their organizations/affiliations to the project team; and relay information back to the larger community. The CPC is a communications channel to be used to supplement larger-scale community-wide meetings, which will be held periodically during the study process.

Red Bank Corridor Project – presented by Andy Fluegemann, ODOT

This project extends along the Red Bank corridor from I-71 to US-50, near Fairfax. To date, the project team has completed basemapping exercises and is in the process of conducting traffic analyses. The team has completed a Red Flag Summary Report (now posted under Study Documents on the Red Bank Corridor project section of the Eastern Corridor website). This report identifies issues that need to be considered during the alternative development and evaluation process including natural and man-made environmental resources, historic structures and areas, hazardous materials, topography, etc.

The project team held a Red Bank Corridor Community Partners Committee (CPC) meeting in December and had a follow up meeting with the Red Bank Community Action Committee and CPC members in early February. During these meetings, the project team and participants discussed the background, purpose and goals of the project; community expectations, goals and visions; and context-sensitive development strategies. The next Red Bank Corridor CPC meeting will likely be held in April.

Next steps for the Red Bank project include completing environmental and traffic studies, continuing to meet and work with stakeholders and begin developing project alternatives.

Oasis Rail Transit Project – presented by Todd Portune, Hamilton County Commissioner

The Oasis Rail Transit project will introduce a new passenger rail service that will use mostly existing railroad right-of-way and track, and will initially run between the Riverfront Transit Center (RTC) in downtown Cincinnati to the I-275 interchange in the City of Milford.

Rail stations will be built along the way. The RTC will see much more regular use as it becomes the downtown hub for the Oasis line. Other preliminary station locations were identified during the Tier 1 process and part of the project's next steps will be meeting with communities to determine whether those locations are still appropriate. Different types of stations can be constructed to suit the needs and goals of the station locations and communities including regional hubs, district stations and local transit centers. Major hubs will be located at the rail line's terminus locations in downtown Cincinnati and Milford. A regional center could be built in the Fairfax area, near the intersection of the Red Bank Corridor and SR-32 Relocation projects. From here, the rail line can eventually be expanded to include the Wasson line, which would extend west to the Xavier University area.

The Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners and Oasis project team are now focusing on station locations, how to connect the train from where the track stops today at the Boathouse to the RTC, and determining the type of rail vehicle to be used on the line. Of interest are vehicles that use new hybrid technology and can run on battery power for some segments of operation and use new diesel technology for others. These kinds of trains are modern, sleek, low noise and low emission, as opposed to the heavy diesel commuter trains used along the eastern seaboard.

The Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners and project team are also focusing on funding. For much of the Eastern Corridor Program, and for Oasis in particular, the Partners are looking at financing primarily through Public/Private Partnerships (P3s). The most significant cost for Oasis is the construction of the stations, which can become anchors in community business districts or retail or commercial centers. This creates significant private investment opportunities which lend well to P3 financing arrangements.

BIKE PATH UPDATE

ODOT District 8's Joe Vogel reported that there has been considerable interest in bike trail planning and a lot of work is being done by multiple entities throughout the study area. Mr. Vogel showed several maps of the region highlighting bike routes that either already exist, are under construction or are being planned [these maps are included as part of the Powerpoint presentation shared at the meeting]. He also reported that ODOT is working with Red Bank Corridor stakeholders to integrate bike solutions in to that project as well.

Mr. Portune mentioned that while the Wasson corridor is not part of the current Eastern Corridor Program, the Partners consider it a significant opportunity in terms of future transit enhancements. One option currently under consideration is a shared use corridor for both rail and bike. Hamilton County

and ODOT are currently working with advocates of the Wasson bike trail to further explore that option.

FUNDING UPDATE

Mr. Vogel discussed that funding is secure for the current Tier 2 study phase but that construction funding has not been identified at this time. Most financing for the current study came from FHWA and ODOT, with support from the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partner agencies. Once Tier 2 is complete and the projects are advanced forward, funding must be secured for detailed design and construction.

Mr. Vogel also discussed current Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) funding challenges. TRAC funding is used for major new (expansion) projects which are currently estimated at approximately \$1.5 to \$1.6 billion, but approximately \$100 million will be available annually for the foreseeable future. As a result, funding priorities for projects across the state of Ohio have been shifted, including funding allocated for improvements at the SR-32 and I-275 interchange. Approximately \$48 million was allotted for this project in 2014 and that has now been pushed back to 2019. Mr. Vogel noted, however, that ODOT and Clermont County are working closely together to identify ways to obtain money for this project through other channels and are optimistic that work can still begin this year.

Although Program funding is a challenge, ODOT and the Implementation Partners will continue developing the projects, identifying preferred project alternatives and ensuring the projects are ready to go as soon as funding is secured. They will also continue to actively pursue funding through a combination of federal, state and local resources, both public and private. Possible funding sources include:

- Federal Transportation Bill
- The proposed Regional Infrastructure Investment Zones (RIIZ) bill – would provide favorable tax incentives for private investments into public infrastructure
- TRAC funding
- Bonding against future funding streams
- Grants
- Redirected/leftover funds
- Reallocation of OKI funds
- Public/Private Partnerships (P3s)
- Transportation Enhancement funds
- Ohio Public Works Commission funds
- Municipal Road Funds
- Funding set aside for bike trails, environmental and historic projects

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement efforts are moving forward. The ECDT meets quarterly. ODOT requests that ECDT members share information provided at these meetings with their constituents and bring questions and concerns back to the Program team at subsequent ECDT meetings.

This information exchange process will also take place through the project-focused Community Partner Committee (CPC) meetings. The Red Bank Corridor CPC has already begun meeting and the first one for the SR-32 Relocation project is scheduled for March 14 at the Miami Valley Christian Academy. Oasis meetings will be scheduled as more information pertaining to that project comes available. A community meeting was held for the SR-32 Improvement, Eastgate area project last September and a follow up community meeting will be scheduled for that project in upcoming months.

Other on-going community outreach efforts include the Eastern Corridor website (www.EasternCorridor.org), the Eastern Corridor Newsletter (now posted on the Program website), and the Program's telephone hotline at (513) 888-7625. Information related to the Program is also exchanged through Facebook and Twitter.

Discussion Summary

After the presentation, Mr. Mary opened the meeting to questions and answers. Following is a summary of the issues discussed.

Q1: Are any other cities using the type of trains being considered for Oasis?

Cities and rail lines currently using rail technologies similar to those being considered for Oasis include the Austin, Texas; Ottawa, Canada and the Riverline in New Jersey. The hybrid rail technology discussed during the meeting is a new technology and is not currently being used in the United States. However, the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners and Oasis project team are actively exploring the options and opportunities that this technology presents for commuter rail in the Eastern Corridor region.

Q2: How will the recent changes in TRAC funding affect progress of the Eastern Corridor Program?

The funding schedule for transportation projects across the Ohio was pushed back considerably for many projects. However, the schedule pertained mainly to projects ready for construction and the SR-32/I-275 project is the only Eastern Corridor project at that stage; the other projects are still under development. ODOT and the Program Partners are looking at alternate ways to fund the SR-32/I-275 interchange project and are optimistic that the work schedule will be moved up again. Mr. Portune noted that the Eastern Corridor Program as a whole retained its priority status on TRAC's list of future projects to be funded when many other projects around the state dropped off the list.

ODOT and Mr. Portune stated that TRAC funding is not the only financing source for the Eastern Corridor Program. Currently, there is a big push in Washington for the Federal Transportation Bill, which if

passed, would have a significant impact on Program funding. The House and Senate are currently working on separate versions of the bill which actually have very similar features including streamlining of regulatory processes, developing an account for alternative transportation issues and limiting the time period over which the NEPA process can take place. It is hoped that an agreement between the versions will be reached and the bill will pass soon, although this may not happen until after the November election.

Mr. Portune emphasized that the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners will continue to actively pursue additional funding sources and will take full advantage of available opportunities. The Program is currently fully funded through the Tier 2 study, which when complete, will enable the projects to be well-positioned to receive construction funding as soon as it is available.

Q3: Will the Eastern Corridor projects be constructed from west to east or east to west?

It depends on how each project progresses. Each project is on its own development schedule. Funding will be applied for as each project completes the Tier 2 study process and is advanced for detailed design and construction. Right now though, funding can't be sought as the costs for each project are not yet known.

Q4: Can you give an example of a project for which you've used multiple funding sources? And what were the sources?

The Paddock Road bridge over I-75, completed approximately 10 years ago, is an example. Funding sources included interstate money, Ohio Public Works monies, Transportation Enhancement money and several others. Another example given was the 8th Street Viaduct Reconstruction. Funding sources for that project included OKI, State of Ohio, City of Cincinnati, and the Hamilton County Engineer's Office. It is not unusual to have multiple funding sources for major transportation projects.

Q5: Will ODOT have access to new economic development sources through its new Economic Development liaison, Melissa Taylor?

It depends. The economic development group offers a funding resource for some transportation-related efforts but it is not large and it's provided in small increments. But it can be used to support appropriate projects and does offer some flexibility. Ms. Taylor's appointment reinforces that there will be a focus on supporting economic development through transportation projects and this will make it easier to get further support from the Department of Development.

Q6: Will the slides that you showed tonight be available on the website, especially the bike trails and the possible transit stations?

Yes. [POST MEETING NOTE: The presentation is now posted on the Eastern Corridor website under the Recent Activity, Public Participation links]

Q7: Do you have any updates on bus routes and service plans?

Much of Metro/SORTA's ability to restructure their bus routes rests on the implementation of the other Eastern Corridor enhancements, particularly the rail transit service and the transit stations. The speed

at which these changes will take place depends on the how quickly the other improvements happen. Also, while not tied directly to the Eastern Corridor Program, TANK (Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky), SORTA (Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority), OKI (Ohio-Indiana-Kentucky Regional Council of Governments) and the local Transportation Improvement Districts meet each month to discuss and identify opportunities for integrating Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along the interstate corridors.

Q8: What input are the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners offering on the Federal Transportation Bill? The bill's possible effect on streamlining the environmental study process is of concern.

From ODOT's standpoint, input on the bill is being managed at the state level in Columbus and the local offices are not involved. Mr. Portune said that Hamilton County and OKI's lobbying efforts have focused primarily on having a bill adopted that provides funding dedicated to transportation projects and alternative transportation initiatives.

Mr. Portune addressed the comment about streamlining the environmental process by saying it is an issue about balance. No one is talking about eliminating environmental protections and standards. When going through the project development process however, the necessary environmental studies need to be able to be performed in a concurrent rather than sequential manner, which will better manage timeliness, relevance of study results and project development costs.

ODOT noted that while the House's version of the new transportation bill reduces the amount of programs on the federal level, individual states can still implement the programs they would like to continue. The difference is that these programs will no longer be mandated at a federal level. The Senate's version of the bill may differ this issue, but how is not yet known.

Q9: Can you provide an update on the status of the SR-32 Relocation project's Tier 2 EIS?

The Tier 1 EIS was completed in 2005 and in 2006, the FHWA issued a Record of Decision (ROD) that advanced Tier 1 recommendations for further study in Tier 2. Tier 2 is now underway. Currently, the project team is updating information from Tier 1. The next step will be the CPC/CSS meeting on March 14. The team will take feedback gained from that meeting and use it to help narrow the study corridor to two, maybe three, possible alignment alternatives. Meetings will be held with the larger community to share information about that process and gather input and feedback on the proposed alignments. Further environmental studies will be completed to assess the potential impacts of those alignments and information gathered will be discussed with the community in additional meetings. This process should lead to the selection of a preferred alternative and will be documented in a Tier 2 Environmental Impact Statement to be submitted to FHWA for approval.

Q10: Is the Red Bank Corridor Red Flag study complete?

Yes. The summary report is posted on the Red Bank Corridor study documents section of the Eastern Corridor website.

Q11: What is the status of track ownership for the Oasis Transit Rail line?

SORTA owns the portion of the line from downtown to near Fairfax. At that point, the line is owned by Norfolk Southern. ODOT will be setting up a meeting with Norfolk Southern and SORTA in the near future to start working on those issues.

Meeting Conclusion

Mr. Mary concluded the meeting by encouraging participants to

The Program team mentioned that additional questions can be sent to the Eastern Corridor Program team by clicking on the Submit Feedback link on the Eastern Corridor Program website. Mr. Mary then concluded the meeting by encouraging participants to take and review one of the Eastern Corridor newsletters [a copy of the newsletter is posted on the Program website].

The next ECDT meeting date, time and location will be announced via email in the coming weeks.