



# SR 32 Relocation Project

## Frequently Asked Questions

July 2012

### 1. What is the SR 32 Relocation Project?

The SR 32 Relocation project is a core element of the Eastern Corridor Program, which is being developed to improve regional mobility and connectivity between central Cincinnati and the communities extending east through Hamilton County and into western Clermont County. The SR 32 Relocation Project extends from US 50 in Fairfax to the I-275/SR 32 interchange in Clermont County. It involves an improved SR 32 roadway coordinated with new rail transit and bike/pedestrian improvements. The project will consolidate access points along SR 32, improve safety and connectivity and decrease travel times through the region.

### 2. Why relocate SR 32?

There are few direct routes connecting Eastern Corridor communities with Greater Cincinnati's central employment, shopping and entertainment areas. Instead, people use I-275, I-471 and crowded surface streets to reach their destinations. This means more time in the car, more fuel consumption, more traffic and more congestion. It also means more accidents. These problems are expected to get worse as population and development increases within the Eastern Corridor region.

Many strategies for managing Eastern Corridor traffic have been explored through comprehensive studies and public involvement. These efforts are documented in previous Eastern Corridor Tier 1 studies posted on the project website at [www.EasternCorridor.org](http://www.EasternCorridor.org). Based on Program goals, local land use vision, study results and public input, four projects were identified as the core elements of the Eastern Corridor's transportation improvement program: SR 32 Improvements Eastgate Area; SR 32 Relocation; Red Bank Corridor Improvements; and Oasis Rail Transit. These projects work in concert with each other to provide maximum benefit to the region. Key components of the SR 32 Relocation project include:

- Shifting the west end of SR 32 which currently intersects with Beechmont Avenue, north to create a new link with the Red Bank business corridor and I-71
- Construct a new, clear-span crossing of the Little Miami River to link SR 32, US-50 and Red Bank Road
- Make improvements to the local roadway network by expanding capacity and consolidating the many entrances and exits to SR 32
- Develop the project in coordination with Oasis Rail Transit, support expanded bus service, and accommodate the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians

### 3. What work has been completed?

The Eastern Corridor is following a tiered (or staged) development approach for evaluating potential project impacts on the natural and social environment, as required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). After reviewing comprehensive program scoping and environmental impact studies, the Federal Highway Administration issued a Tier 1 Record of Decision (ROD) in 2006 that outlined the current multimodal Eastern Corridor Program to improve regional mobility. The Program includes expanding and improving local roadway networks, establishing a new rail transit line, expanding bus options, and better accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians. These recommendations have been divided into the Eastern Corridor's four core projects which are now undergoing further evaluation and development in Tier 2. Tier 2 studies are focusing on completing in-depth project impact assessments, identifying measures that can be taken to minimize or avoid negative impacts, and determining specific project alignment locations and configurations. Initial Tier 2 work completed for the SR 32 Relocation Project is presented in the SR 32 Relocation Feasibility Study, which can be viewed on the Eastern Corridor project website.

# Frequently Asked Questions

*(continued)*

## **4. What is the SR 32 Relocation Feasibility Study about?**

The Feasibility Study takes an in-depth look at the 21 preliminary corridors identified in Tier 1 for the relocation of SR 32. The Study concludes with recommendations about which of these corridors should be eliminated from further consideration and which should be advanced for additional study. Corridors recommended for advancement represent broad study areas in which more detailed alignments for the roadway, rail transit line and bike and pedestrian paths will be developed in the next step of the study process. As part of the project development process, these corridors will undergo further analysis to determine options for minimizing negative impacts, and to eventually identify a Preferred Alternative.

## **5. What is a Preferred Alternative?**

A Preferred Alternative is the alternative which project planners identify as best fulfilling a project's purpose and need, giving consideration to environmental, economic, technical and other factors, including public input.

## **6. Maps in the Feasibility Study show a number of shaded bands or “corridors” that seem to affect a large area. What’s the difference between a study area, a study corridor, and an alignment?**

Avoiding and minimizing negative environmental and community impacts is an important consideration in ODOT's project development process and under the requirements of NEPA. In the Tier 1 study, important resources (such as rivers, floodplains, historic and archaeological resources, homes, etc.) were identified and mapped within a large study area to help identify key constraints. Study corridors were then developed within the large study area that avoided important resources to the greatest extent possible. In order to provide flexibility for further project development, study corridors were generally 400 feet to 800 feet in width and much wider than the footprint needed for an actual roadway alignment. As additional studies have been performed within the broad study corridors in the early part of Tier 2, some have been recommended to be eliminated from further consideration due to impacts, costs or other issues, as described in the Feasibility Study.

For corridors that remain under consideration, more detailed alignments will be developed in the next step in the study process. Alignments are much narrower than the study corridors and represent the footprint needed for an actual roadway, including the travel lanes, shoulders, median, ditches, slopes and other design components. Multiple alignment alternatives will be developed within the broad study corridors, and a comparative evaluation of impacts and costs will be performed to help identify a Preferred Alternative, including consideration of the No Build (Do Nothing) Alternative. Public input will continue to be considered when developing and evaluating alignments as the SR 32 Relocation project continues.

## **7. I’ve heard that the traffic modeling done for the Eastern Corridor used 2005 data? Is that correct?**

Existing and future traffic volumes developed in January 2012 for the Eastern Corridor Program (as reported in the SR 32 Relocation Feasibility Study) used the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana's 2005 Regional Travel Demand Model (OKI RTDM). The 2005 OKI RTDM is the currently accepted travel model used by ODOT and all of the local jurisdictions in the eight-county OKI region as a starting point in traffic analyses. Traffic data used to evaluate the Eastern Corridor project, however, was not from 2005. Traffic volumes were based on traffic counts taken in 2011 and 2012 along key roadways in the Eastern Corridor. These volumes were then adjusted based on traffic trends from updated population and employment data entered into the model. Traffic data will continue to be updated as more detailed alignments are developed and evaluated.

## **8. What decisions have been made about the SR 32 Relocation Project and who makes the final call?**

The SR 32 Relocation project is still in the development and evaluation stage and no decisions have been made on selecting a preferred alignment, including the No Build alternative. As part of the Eastern Corridor Program, the SR 32 Relocation project has evolved through extensive planning over the years, with various decisions being carried forward from one project development phase to the next based on appropriate levels of analyses and public input. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in cooperation with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) will issue a Tier 2 Record of Decision (ROD) upon completion of the SR 32 Relocation Tier 2 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that identifies a Preferred Alternative. This decision will be made based on equal consideration of all feasible project alternatives, including the No Build alternative.

# Frequently Asked Questions

*(continued)*

## **9. Why aren't other transportation corridors that follow existing roadways being considered?**

The Eastern Corridor Major Investment Study (MIS) evaluated a broad range of transportation improvement options within a 200 square mile study area based on travel performance, costs, environmental issues and public input. The MIS was conducted at a level of detail appropriate for the regional planning issues under consideration. It documented the elimination of a number of roadway improvement options as part of the Eastern Corridor Program, such as various interstate improvements, US 50 widening, Wilmer/Wooster Road widening, the Five Mile Connector, and a relocated SR 32 linking US 50 and SR 125 using the Beechmont Levee, amongst others. These options were eliminated because they didn't effectively fulfill the purpose and need for the project and Program goals or other options were determined to be more efficient, offer more opportunities, etc. A summary of the MIS can be downloaded from the Eastern Corridor Program website.

## **10. How will the project affect businesses and residences in local communities in the area?**

Avoidance and minimization of negative impacts to communities within the project area have been and will continue to be a key consideration for the SR 32 Relocation project. Potential impacts to businesses and residents were recognized and addressed during Tier 1 by incorporating the Eastern Corridor Land Use Vision (2002) and Green Infrastructure (2005) planning efforts into the project development process. Project development in Tier 2 will continue under this context-sensitive framework where proposed transportation solutions are designed to help support local land use planning based on input from affected communities. More information about the Eastern Corridor Land Use Vision Plan and the Green Infrastructure Plan can be found on the project website.

## **11. What is a Context-Sensitive Framework?**

The SR 32 Relocation project is being developed using the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Context-Sensitive Solutions (CSS) approach. CSS is a collaborative, interdisciplinary, holistic approach to the development of transportation projects. It involves a broad range of stakeholders, including community members, elected officials, interest groups, and affected local, state, and federal agencies. It puts project needs and both agency and community values on a level playing field and considers the trade-offs in decision making. The CSS approach is guided by four core principles:

1. Strive towards a shared stakeholder vision to provide a basis for decisions
2. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of contexts
3. Foster continuing communication and collaboration to achieve consensus
4. Exercise flexibility and creativity to shape effective transportation solutions, while preserving and enhancing community and natural environments

## **12. What could the roadway look like?**

The initial concept for the SR 32 Relocation is a four-lane divided roadway with limited access. Rail transit and bike/pedestrian components would be separated from the roadway by grass berms or barriers. The location of the roadway will need to be identified before considering design details including specifics on the roadway width, bridge type, multimodal connections, access, aesthetics, etc. All of these will depend on drainage, floodplain, topography, minimization of environmental and community impacts, public input, and other considerations identified during the project development process. It is possible that the roadway and rail modes could be split, with the rail transit line following the existing railroad tracks that run through Newtown and the relocated roadway traveling on an alternate alignment along the north edge of Newtown. Specific alignments have yet to be determined.

# Frequently Asked Questions

*(continued)*

## **13. I've heard the SR 32 Relocation referred to both as a roadway project and a highway project. Which is it?**

The vision for the relocated SR 32 is a road that looks and feels like a boulevard or parkway – two lanes traveling in each direction, a grassy or landscaped median in the middle, and possibly trees or other aesthetic treatments lining the road. Stoplights placed at key intervals along the road's corridor would manage access on and off the roadway. It will not be a highway like I-71 or I-75.

## **14. How are important environmental resources such as the Little Miami Scenic River being considered?**

The SR 32 Relocation study area includes a number of sensitive resources. A key commitment from Tier 1 is to develop a clear-span crossing of the Little Miami River to minimize impacts to this scenic river resource (a clear-span bridge is a bridge that is completely spans a watercourse and does not require construction of supports within the river channel or alterations to the riverbed or banks.) A preliminary strategy for addressing potential negative impacts to important resources is described in the Eastern Corridor Tier 1 EIS. Through development of the Eastern Corridor Land Use Vision Plan and subsequent Green Infrastructure planning efforts, environmental protection measures initially identified in Tier 1 will be carried forward into more detailed development in Tier 2. More information about these planning efforts can be found on the project website.

## **15. How will the SR 32 Relocation Project be funded?**

Construction funding for the SR 32 Relocation project has not yet been identified. ODOT and the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners are actively working to identify and secure funding for all of the Eastern Corridor Program components. Possible funding sources include but are not limited to: the Federal Transportation Bill, regional infrastructure improvement zones, bonds, grants, redirected funds and public-private partnerships. In the meantime, ODOT and the Implementation Partners are continuing development of the various Eastern Corridor projects so they can be 'shovel-ready' when construction funding becomes available.

## **16. How do I find out more about the SR 32 Relocation project?**

More information about the Eastern Corridor Program and the SR 32 Relocation Project can be found on the project website at [www.EasternCorridor.org](http://www.EasternCorridor.org). Visit the website regularly to review new information and sign up to receive project updates, submit comments and questions, and find out about upcoming public meetings. You can also follow the Eastern Corridor Program on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) (@EasternCorridor), or contact Mr. Andy Fluegemann, Ohio Department of Transportation District 8 at 513-933-6597 ([andy.fluegemann@dot.state.oh.us](mailto:andy.fluegemann@dot.state.oh.us)).