



Oasis Rail Transit Project  
Public Involvement Meetings Summary Report  
December 2013 Meetings

## APPENDIX B: PUBLIC INPUT

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# APPENDIX B: PUBLIC INPUT

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## Public Comment Session Notes

- December 10, 2013 Meeting at the R.G. Cribbet Center
- December 11, 2013 Meeting at the Taft Center at Fountain Square
- December 11, 2013 Meeting at the Miami Township Civic Center

## Public Comment Session Notes

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*Following is a summary of the Public Comment Session held as part of the December 11, 2013 Public Involvement Meeting at the R.G. Cribbett Center in Fairfax. Forty-six people signed in at the meeting; some attendees chose not to sign in and therefore were not counted.*

*Andy Fluegemann, Planning Engineer for ODOT District 8 and Oasis Rail Transit Project Manager, moderated the session and addressed comments and questions. Opening remarks were made by Steve Mary, ODOT District 8 Deputy Director, and Richard Dial, Transportation Planning Lead for HDR. In addition, Todd Portune, Hamilton County Commissioner and chair of the Hamilton County Transportation Improvement District, addressed questions and comments made at the meeting.*

*Meeting participants were asked to direct specific questions to project representatives on a one-to-one basis and to use the Public Comment Session to share comments with the project team in a group setting. In the summary below, bolded sentences identify comments and questions from meeting participants which were shared during the group session. The text that follows outlines responses provided. While the material presented captures primary discussion points, it is not a transcript and comments, questions and responses are not recorded verbatim.*

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### **What kind of funding are we talking about for this project?**

Mr. Fluegemann stated that the project is currently in the project development stage and has funding for preliminary planning and environmental studies. At this time, however, no funding has been identified for right of way acquisition, construction or capital funding operations. *[Post meeting note: It is standard practice for large transportation and infrastructure projects to be developed and funded in stages. The preliminary engineering and environmental work currently being completed for the Oasis project is necessary to define the project's full scope and funding needs. Once specific project details and associated costs are more clearly determined, the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners will actively pursue the funds needed for construction, operations and maintenance.]*

Follow-up comments and questions from the same speaker included:

**Anyone driving along US 50 in Fairfax can see that we have major traffic issues. It seems this has gotten worse with recent construction. Will rail help address this?**

*[Post meeting note: Most of the trips using the commuter rail will be diverted from automobiles during the peak travel periods. The commuter rail influence on traffic congestion will depend*

*upon the rate of population and employment growth in the corridor. The project will provide an important travel option for those who cannot, or choose not to drive.]*

**Will the streetcar project affect our ability to get federal funding for the Oasis project?**

Mr. Fluegemann stated that the Streetcar is a separate project being managed by the City of Cincinnati. Because it is not an ODOT project, ODOT cannot speculate on an answer to the question.

**We need better solutions.**

Mr. Fluegemann thanked the speaker for his comments.

**[The proposed Oasis rail line] has always been a big issue with the Village of Newtown. We have been adamant that this project should not be destructive to our community. We want Oasis to follow the existing rail tracks and for the station to be located in a place that it does not disrupt the community.**

Mr. Fluegemann thanked the speaker for his comments.

**If you don't have money to build Oasis yet and don't know how much it will cost, is this a dead project to start with? How will the neighbors to support this project if costs and benefits are not known?**

Mr. Fluegemann explained that the project has not yet advanced to the stage of development at which funding for right of way acquisition, construction, etc., is actively being sought. He stated that ODOT is currently working to refine project scope and services to be offered. This information will enable the project team to determine the level of funding needed and what funding options may be pursued.

Below is a follow-up statement offered by the speaker:

**I'd like this project to serve my transportation needs at a low cost and be safe.**

Mr. Fluegemann thanked the speaker for her comments.

**I don't support this rail project. I'm concerned about environmental disasters that may come from building in sensitive areas. Low ridership does not support this project. I prefer the bike path. Emphasis needs to be put on low build and no build. I understand there is discussion around Wasson Way and I hope there is more emphasis put on that. I support the streetcar.**

Mr. Fluegemann thanked the speaker for his comments. In his closing remarks, Mr. Portune explained that Oasis is the first leg of a much larger commuter rail system envisioned by local and regional agencies to undergo review. There are thoughts of adding the Wasson line and extending rail service to

Eastgate to the Oasis project, though those decisions have not yet been made.

**The low numbers of riders will make costs per rider very high. The difference is going to come from local taxes. We're spending a lot of time on something that is not going to fly.**

Mr. Fluegemann thanked the speaker for her comments. Mr. Portune noted in his closing remarks that the projected Oasis ridership numbers provided in current project documentation are conservative and only represent weekday commuter ridership. The figures do not include weekend, evening or special event service, nor do they include increases in ridership expected to result from development and growth around the station locations. When compared to the ridership levels of approximately 17 other similar rail systems, the proposed Oasis rail line fits right in the middle.

Regarding funding, Mr. Portune stated that there are a number of options available that do not require new taxes including use of casino revenue and debt service on State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) loans. These options and others will be pursued by the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners. He encouraged meeting attendees to tell their commissioners how they want their money to be spent.

**I've read through the reports and there are factual errors in HDR's [Conceptual Alternatives Solutions] report. Mariemont is not being considered for a station while Fairfax is. Are the station location recommendations locked? I know Mariemont is opposing the relocation of SR 32, but if you're going to use existing tracks, we'd like Mariemont to be considered for a station. Also, where can we find a current number for how much this study has cost so far? We've heard \$40 million.**

Mr. Fluegemann stated that ODOT has set aside \$4.4 million for preliminary planning and development of the Oasis project. Mr. Portune later noted that the \$40 million cost estimate referenced by this speaker includes planning and development for **ALL** Eastern Corridor core projects [Red Bank Corridor, the proposed SR 32 Relocation project, SR 32 Improvements in the Eastgate Area and Oasis], not just Oasis. It also includes funds that have been provided for the reconstruction of the I-275/SR 32 interchange, which is now underway.

Mr. Portune stated that the proposed Fairfax/Red Bank rail station location is very important as it is positioned at a major junction point of the existing transportation system, for both roadways and rail. It makes sense to place a station in that area as it has strong potential for becoming a major multi-modal transportation hub. However, no final decisions have been made.

**I grew up in Mariemont. We had a lively railroad when I was young and it went away, though it is quite necessary to get people from Terrace Park. I've always wondered why we don't have a commuter rail and think it would be good to have a rail station. I think this project should be done**

**using the existing tracks, though I'm not sure of the associated costs with doing that. Will the tracks have to be updated? (Ray Sabo, Mariemont)**

Response not captured. *[Post meeting note: The condition of the existing rail tracks varies between locations. Preliminary studies have shown that updates will be needed in multiple locations in order to prepare existing rail tracks for commuter rail use. While there will be a cost involved, upgrading existing tracks that travel through an existing right-of-way is less expensive than building new tracks.]*

### **Meeting Conclusion**

Hamilton County Commissioner Todd Portune concluded the Public Comment Session with a series of remarks about the purpose of the Oasis Rail Transit project and the overall Eastern Corridor Program (to make it easier and safer to travel within the Eastern Corridor, to provide additional travel options for those who cannot or choose not to drive, and to support economic growth and development through transportation improvements). He also addressed some comments and questions posed by meeting participants. Several of Mr. Portune's remarks are summarized in the discussion notes outlined above. Others included:

- The Eastern Corridor Program affects the entire Greater Cincinnati region as its projects will have impact on areas not just within the Corridor, but also those surrounding it and into Northern Kentucky. The Program directly affects more than 135,000 people across 17 jurisdictions. This regional effort is supported by Hamilton County, Clermont County, the Ohio Kentucky Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) and many other local and regional communities and agencies.
- We support commuter passenger rail. We are currently examining the feasibility of using existing infrastructure/rail lines to support this project.
- We're looking at using rail vehicles powered by Diesel-Multiple Unit (DMU) technology. These vehicles are sleek, modern, and efficient and use low-noise, low-emission technology. They are proven in use in other U.S. cities and can be used on existing rail tracks.
- The Eastern Corridor Program is made of four core projects [the Red Bank Corridor project, SR 32 Relocation, SR 32 Improvements in the Eastgate Area and the Oasis Rail Transit project]. These projects work together to accomplish Program goals. However, each project has individual merit and can be implemented on its own.
- The estimated cost for the first leg of Oasis, from downtown to Fairfax, is approximately \$113 million. Approximately \$68M of this amount is for the purchase of rail vehicles and track upgrades.
- Although ODOT is managing the Oasis Rail Transit project, it is being supported by a partnership between ODOT, Hamilton County Transportation Improvement District, Clermont County Transportation Improvement District, OKI, the City of Cincinnati and SORTA/Metro.

## Public Comment Session Notes

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*Following is a summary of the Public Comment Session held as part of the December 11, 2013 Public Involvement Meeting at the Taft Center at Fountain Square. Thirty-seven people signed in at the meeting; some attendees chose not to sign in and were not counted.*

*Andy Fluegemann, Planning Engineer for ODOT District 8 and Oasis Rail Transit Project Manager, moderated the session and addressed comments and questions. Mr. Fluegemann's opening remarks included:*

- ODOT is working to develop a commuter rail project of which we, as a region, can be proud.*
- Funding has not yet been secured for final design and construction of the proposed Oasis project because the project has not yet advanced to that stage of development. At this time, ODOT is currently working with the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners and the Eastern Corridor community to clearly define project parameters, desired services, operational needs and other associated details including projected ridership, number of trains and stations needed, conditions and usability of existing tracks, etc. This information is necessary to determine the level of funding needed.*
- Once project costs have been more clearly defined, the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners will look at possible funding sources and begin the process of securing funding.*
- Feedback received at these public involvement meetings and during the following public comment period will be used to help further clarify project scope and the services to be provided.*

*Richard Dial, Transportation Planning Lead for HDR, gave an overview of the Oasis Rail Transit project and the information being shared at the public involvement meetings. He also discussed how people can share comments and feedback with the planning team and highlighted an interactive, internet-based survey program being used to assess community interests and priorities. The program was available on the Eastern Corridor website until the close of the public comment period on Jan. 10, 2014.*

*In the summary on the following pages, bolded sentences indicate comments and questions from meeting participants and the text that follows outlines responses provided. While the material presented captures primary discussion points, it is not a transcript and comments, questions and responses are not recorded verbatim.*

**How many people here use public transportation? [Approximately four or five people raised their hands]. I take public transit everyday and I've been coming to these meetings for many years. Cost estimates have changed during that time and now the estimate for Oasis is around \$320 million. I don't know that we can justify spending money we don't have for new rail transit. What about other options like Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)? BRT can be an alternative. Can you comment on why continue this study process?**

Mr. Fluegemann responded that there is a well-documented purpose and need for transportation improvements in the Eastern Corridor Program and expanding mass transit options is part of the proposed solution. He explained that there are questions, however, for which answers are needed before final decisions on how or if to move forward can be made. The current study process is about getting answers to those questions. With those in hand, decisions can be made based on known and detailed information.

Mr. Fluegemann used the following analogy to help describe the purpose of the study process: Suppose you need more space at home. Options include moving, adding-on, renovating or doing nothing. To determine which option is best, you need to evaluate the benefits, costs and risks of each option. That process would likely include developing concepts and consulting outside experts. If buying a new home, you will need to evaluate the costs and risks of buying a new home while selling your old one. If building an addition, you need to determine what you want to do, what it would look like, how big it will be and and to consult one or more contractors to determine the costs involved. Same with a renovation. Costs will vary depending on the size of your project, the contractors you use, the materials you use, the finishes you select, timing, etc. Once you have the cost, benefit and risk information in hand, you can make a better decision on how best to move forward. The development process for the Oasis Rail Transit project is very much the same.

Mr. Fluegemann noted that the planning team is working to define project details (services, schedules, number of stations, etc.), what the Eastern Corridor communities want/need and to gather the information needed to make informed decisions about how, or if, the project should move forward.

**I'm trying to gauge the projected ridership. This project seems to be so far into the future -- will we have to redo those projections later? Approximately \$44 million has already been committed to the Eastern Corridor program of projects so far.**

Mr. Fluegemann corrected the statement about project study costs by explaining that four-point-four (\$4.4) million has been set aside for planning and development of the Oasis project. The larger amount referenced includes funds for planning and development of **ALL** Eastern Corridor projects. It also includes funds for the reconstruction of the I-275/SR 32 interchange, which is now underway. He stated that ridership numbers will continue to be refined as the project advances in development. The current



ridership estimates are conservative and only reflect weekday commuter rail service; they do not include evening, weekend or special event service. They also do not include a growth in ridership levels likely to occur as development around the rail stations grows.

**Will Metro work in coordination with the Eastern Corridor Program?**

Mr. Fluegemann answered yes, and mentioned that SORTA/Metro is one of the Eastern Corridor Program's Implementation Partners. He also noted that as the Eastern Corridor Program advances, project planners be working with SORTA/Metro to maximize the efficiency of mass transit services and avoid duplication, and possibly to offer new services, such as bus feeder services to rail stations.

**Is anything being done in coordination with station development? There's a lot happening in that respect in San Francisco.**

Mr. Dial said that station development is a very important component of the Oasis rail project. He noted that land use planning concepts were brought into the project development process from the beginning and communities' visions for future land use are being considered. He also explained that the upcoming Station Area Planning (SAP) process will focus on how best to integrate the rail stations into the communities immediately surrounding them and how best to further develop the surrounding areas. He stated that these efforts will be completed in coordination with the station area communities. Mr. Dial also mentioned that the Oasis Rail Transit Station Area Analysis report (<http://easterncorridor.org/projects/oasis-rail-transit/oasis-rail-transit-documents/>) discusses the development potential for each of the proposed rail stations. *[Post meeting note: More information about Station Area Planning is available at <http://easterncorridor.org/projects/oasis-rail-transit/station-area-planning/>.]*

**There have been meetings on both ends of the project corridor and in Fairfax, but there hasn't been a public involvement meeting in the East End. The train will run through the East End area – impacting and damaging it – but residents won't get any benefit without a station there. Have you considered the damage you would do to neighborhoods if you pass through but do not serve? What will this do to our property values? (Lew Seilez, East End)**

Mr. Dial disagreed with the assumption that the Oasis line would damage the East End community and stated that there are many positive benefits of having a commuter rail line operating in the area. He noted that although there won't initially be a station in East End, there will be one nearby in Columbia Tuscolum. In regards to potential noise impacts, Mr. Dial explained that a quiet zone could potentially be established in the area to reduce train-related noise – such as bells at crossings and horns from the rail vehicles. He also noted that the DMU rail vehicle recommended for the line is generally quieter than most people expect. He stated that typically, property values increase around station areas because it

creates a nexus of activity, and it's easier for people to travel.

Mr. Dial explained that a rail station had been initially proposed for the East End. However, due to siting challenges and spacing needed between stations, it has been recommended that the East End station not be advanced at this time. This does not mean, though, that the concept is being thrown out altogether – a station may be developed at a later time if the market and need requires it.

Mr. Dial mentioned that several past public involvement meetings have been held nearby at the LeBlond Recreation Center and the R.G. Cribbet Center.

The following was asked by the above speaker as a follow-up to his question above:

**Does your study view negative impacts, not just positive impacts?**

Mr. Dial said the studies completed show that commuter rail lines generally have positive impacts on communities. While study documents consider the impacts of a project, they do not have a study that focuses exclusively on negative impacts.

**I lived next to rail in Chicago and there were no complaints. It will help cut the number of cars on roads. (Speaker's name not captured)**

Mr. Fluegemann thanked the man for his comments.

**I'm not sure this is the right line to use for light rail transit. I think there are seven (lines shown on the comparative chart of similar services) that are below fare recovery.**

ODOT is putting in an investment to provide increased mobility options. The projected level of return is in the middle of the group.

**What are the expectations of someone getting a job working on the Oasis Rail?**

Mr. Fluegemann stated that ODOT still needs to figure out if the rail line will be operated by SORTA or a private company, and that answer may provide more information.

**What is the target year for this to start?**

Mr. Fluegemann stated that the line could open in the 2015/2016 timeframe.

**Is anything being done with other abandoned rail lines in Cincinnati?**

Mr. Reggie Victor of the City of Cincinnati said that the City is keeping track of abandoned rail lines and looking at ways to best re-use them. He noted, however, that although a rail track is or may appear to be unused, it does not mean it's been abandoned. There are many of these tracks in the area and how they can be used is up to the owners.

## Public Comment Session Notes

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*Following is a summary of the Public Comment Session held as part of the December 11, 2013 Public Involvement Meeting at the Miami Township Civic Center. Thirty-two people signed in at the meeting; some attendees chose not to sign in and therefore were not counted.*

*Andy Fluegemann, Planning Engineer for ODOT District 8 and Oasis Rail Transit Project Manager, moderated the session and addressed comments and questions. Mr. Fluegemann's opening remarks included:*

- ODOT is working to develop a commuter rail project of which we, as a region, can be proud.*
- Funding has not yet been secured for final design and construction of the proposed Oasis project because the project has not yet advanced to that stage of development. At this time, ODOT is currently working with the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners and the Eastern Corridor community to clearly define project parameters, desired services, operational needs and other associated details including projected ridership, number of trains and stations needed, conditions and usability of existing tracks, etc. This information is necessary to determine the level of funding needed.*
- Once project costs have been more clearly defined, the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners will look at possible funding sources and begin the process of securing funding.*
- Feedback received at these public involvement meetings and during the following public comment period will be used to help further clarify project scope and the services to be provided.*

*Richard Dial, Transportation Planning Lead for HDR, gave an overview of the Oasis Rail Transit project, the information being shared at the public involvement meeting and information about how people can share comments and feedback with the planning team. Mr. Dial also highlighted an interactive, internet-based survey program being used to collect input from those attending the meetings as well as those unable to come. The program was available on the Eastern Corridor website until the close of the public comment period on Jan. 10, 2014.*

*In the summary on the following pages, bolded sentences indicate comments and questions from meeting participants and the text that follows outlines responses provided. While the material presented captures primary discussion points, it is not a transcript and comments, questions and responses are not recorded verbatim.*

**What is the history of project cost estimates on other rail lines? How close were they and what is your track record? (Ray Earls, community of residence not specified)**

Mr. Fluegemann stated that he did not have that information available at the time. He noted however that a significant amount of money has been included in project cost estimates for contingencies. Once the project scope is refined and more specific cost estimates are available, the amount of contingency funds included will be likely be reduced.

**What is the average cost of ridership going to be?**

Mr. Dial responded that the cost per rider is not yet known as it depends on a number of factors yet to be determined. As services to be provided are refined, the service schedule will also be refined.

**What do you think the percentage of farebox recovery will be?**

Mr. Dial stated that project planners don't know at this point and the next phase of project study will be working toward identifying that value.

**What is the recovery of capital costs?**

Mr. Dial responded that capital costs are generally not recovered on projects of this type. It's an investment in the quality of life for the community.

**Mariemont, Terrace Park and Fairfax are not in support of the proposed State Route 32 Relocation project. If the Oasis project is separated from the SR 32 project, we (Newtown) may support it. But if linked together, we don't want it. If Oasis goes through Newtown, we'd prefer it follow the existing line and then we will talk as a community to determine if we want it.**

Mr. Fluegemann said that ODOT will be working to define the overlap of the two projects and to see if the projects can work together or will be completed separately. He also noted that ODOT will continue to work with local communities on this topic. *[Post meeting note: Neither Terrace Park nor the Village of Fairfax indicated that they, as a community, do not support of the SR 32 Relocation project.]*

## APPENDIX B: PUBLIC INPUT

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### Public Involvement Meeting Email Contact Log

Date Received	Name	Message Received	Response Provided/Action Taken
12.12.13	Robert Nita	Please forward project updates and information	<p>Thank you for your request.</p> <p>Your email address has been added to our database for you to receive Program updates.</p> <p>Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team</p>
12.13.13	Peter Seidel	<p>I attended your very interesting, encouraging presentation yesterday at the Taft Center. It would be a very good thing indeed for your rail system to go ahead. You might be interested in this and should find some ideas in it that you can use. I was hired to design the new town in 1969 E. of Cincinnati. After that fell through I was hired as a consultant by OKI to add a new town to their 1990 plan. That didn't happen either when the director was replaced by a new one who proposed sprawl for the region. The following website shows a project that was to be a source of ideas and inspiration for both of these. You may find something in it.</p> <p><a href="http://www.peterseidelbooks.com/communities.php">http://www.peterseidelbooks.com/communities.php</a></p> <p>-- Peter Seidel</p>	<p>Mr. Seidel,</p> <p>Thank you for your email. The link you sent was indeed interesting -- we appreciate your sending it. We've passed it along to the Oasis planning team for their review as well.</p> <p>Thank you also for coming to the public meeting at the Taft last week. Sharing information about this project and getting feedback from the public is very important in its development.</p> <p>We've added your email address to our database so you will receive future updates on the Oasis and other Eastern Corridor projects. Please let us know if you'd prefer not to be included on those distributions.</p> <p>Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team</p>
12.13.13	Kamil Seidl	<p>Project: Oasis Transit Rail</p> <p>Hi, I would like to sign up for project updates. Thank you.</p>	<p>Thank you for your request.</p> <p>Your email address has been added to our database for you to receive Program updates.</p> <p>Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team</p>

Date Received	Name	Message Received	Response Provided/Action Taken
12.13.13	Ellen Dickhaus	Project: Oasis Rail <i>(No message text was provided. It was assumed this was a request to be added to the update distribution list.)</i>	Thank you for your request.  Your email address has been added to our database for you to receive Program updates.  Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team
12.13.13	Abbey Weaver	Project: Cincinnati Please remember those of that cannot hear. Make things visual. Train stops with the visual markers is very much appreciated. For my friend make sure it is easily wheel chair accessible. For my Deaf blind friends make it easily accessible when you design the website etc. I miss the ease of hoping on trains and other public transportation in cities such as Philadelphia, San Diego, New York City, Seattle, and the suburbs of these great cities. I go into the city often for Yoga weekly (3 times), then for the museum, zoo, etc. I used to take classes at Xavier. IT would be nice to just jump wherever you want in the belt without having to go to downtown then out to where you need to go. If it is not more efficient than a car (less headache/less travel time) then it will be hard to change habits. I would love to dump the car on the weekends and weeknights.	Thank you for your email.  These are great comments and we will be sure to forward them to the planning team and include them in the public comment record.  Your name and email address has been added to the Eastern Corridor Program email distribution list for you to receive future updates on this and other Eastern Corridor projects. Please let us know if you'd prefer not to be included on this list  Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team
12.16.13	Bob Young	Subject: My Input  Waste of tax payer money!	Thank you for your comment. We will include it in the public comment record.  Your name and email address has been added to the Eastern Corridor Program email distribution list for you to receive future updates on this and other Eastern Corridor projects. Please let us know if you'd prefer not to be included on this list  Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team



Date Received	Name	Message Received	Response Provided/Action Taken
12.16.13	Cheryl McConnell	<p>Project: SR 32 Relocation &amp; Oasis Rail Transit</p> <p>Please add my email address to receive notices/updates pertaining to these 2 projects. I am opposed to the relocation of SR 32 through the Village of Newtown, as it will detrimentally affect our village tax base with lost businesses. All current Newtown businesses will suffer from a reduced customer base due to the relocation of SR 32. In addition, those wanting to open new businesses in Newtown will be deterred from opening due to the SR 32 relocation. I have not made a final decision on the merits of the oasis line through Newtown via the current railroad tracks, however, I am opposed to the Oasis Line if it is merged with the SR 32 relocation through Newtown. Thank you for this opportunity to submit feedback.</p>	<p>Ms. McConnell,</p> <p>Thank you for your email and outlining your concerns about the proposed SR 32 Relocation and Oasis Rail Transit projects. We have included them in the public comment record and have added your email address to our project update notification database.</p> <p>The planning team is aware that the concerns you expressed about the proposed projects are also echoed by others in your community. We'd like to reaffirm that one of the primary goals of the Eastern Corridor Program is to use transportation improvements to support local communities and their visions for the future, including development and growth. Pushing forward on a project that would devastate a community--no matter how large or small--runs counter to the goals of the Program.</p> <p>In upcoming months, ODOT officials and other project representatives will be working closely with members of your community to further explore your concerns, discuss possible options for the proposed project and ways they can be shaped to better support Newtown, its residents and businesses. At this time, no final decisions have been made and we hope that with your community's participation, these discussions will be productive, regardless of what the end result will be.</p> <p>Thank you for your feedback and we look forward to working more with you in the upcoming months.</p> <p>Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team</p>

Date Received	Name	Message Received	Response Provided/Action Taken
12.29.13	Linda Honolds	<p>We would like meeting information please.</p> <p>Thank you, The Honolds</p>	<p>Good Morning,</p> <p>We are currently planning the next meetings. To ensure you receive that information, we are adding your email address to our stakeholder email update list. Thank you for your interest in the Eastern Corridor Program.</p> <p>Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team</p>
1.3.14	Justin Feldman <a href="mailto:justin@thefeldmanfamily.org">justin@thefeldmanfamily.org</a>	I want to see this program expanded to include rail transit from Union Center or beyond to Downtown Cincinnati.	<p>Thank you for your comments submitted on the Eastern Corridor website. They will be added to the public comment record for the Oasis Rail Transit project.</p> <p>Your email address has been added to our database for you to receive Program updates. Please let us know if you'd prefer not to receive these emails.</p> <p>Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team</p>
1.3.14	John Heilman	When I attended one of the recent public meetings, a display board listed about 16 operating rail transit "systems", along with the percentage of ongoing annual operating costs for each which were being recovered through farebox revenues, with the remainder being borne through public or private subsidies of some form. Seven of these systems recovered 20% or less from the farebox. The Oasis Line was listed as n/a, but I later heard that it too was only expected to recover 20% from the farebox. My question is \"Has anyone gone back to these 'less-than-20%-farebox-recovery' systems to ask if they would build them today, if they knew in advance the true magnitude of on-going subsidies the systems would require, year after year after year?\"	<p>Good morning Mr. Heilman,</p> <p>We wanted to let you know that we received your email and have passed it along to the project team to get an answer to your question. You should hear back from us soon.</p> <p>Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team</p> <p><b>Follow up response from HDR:</b>  <i>The farebox recovery rate is not a key indicator that is typically tracked closely between system planning and service implementation. It is a measure that is impacted by a variety of factors that can change significantly during project development. The key statistics that tend to be followed closely include the construction cost and the ridership.</i></p>

Date Received	Name	Message Received	Response Provided/Action Taken
1.3.14	Laura Whalen	Project: Oasis Rail to Milford I am interested in update regarding this project.	Thank you for your request.  Your email address has been added to our database for you to receive Program updates.  Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team
1.4.14	Greg (last name not provided)	Nice website, however this entire program is not needed. I'm convinced that the Oasis project was merely included to greenwash what's essentially a classic "sprawl" project, and I don't believe the rail will ever get built (not that it's a smart rail plan anyway). The suburban development that this highway project will promote will eliminate any short-term congestion mitigation benefits. The eastward I-74 extension will actually damage beautiful areas like Madisonville, Mariemont, and Newtown. Also it's not hard to get to the eastern suburbs as of today. We need to get our transportation priorities in order.	Good afternoon,  Thank you for your recent comments. As you hopefully saw as part of your review of the Eastern Corridor website, the Oasis Rail Transit project is a key element of the larger Eastern Corridor Program. Local and regional planners, as well as the Eastern Corridor communities themselves have said that the transportation problems of the Corridor (congestion, travel delays, high accident rates, limited travel options, etc.) cannot be addressed by road improvements alone, but that the solution needs to be multi-modal. The introduction of a commuter rail line -- the Oasis line -- is one way in which this can be accomplished. It's for these reasons that Oasis is included as part of the Program.  Also, we wanted to address your reference to the roadway components of this project as an extension of the I-74 highway. The proposed roadway improvements are not an extension of I-74, nor are they intended to be used as such at a later time. The Hamilton County Engineer's Office has made it very clear that it opposes an extension of I-74 as being part of the Eastern Corridor Program. This position has been expressed publicly many times throughout the development of the Eastern Corridor Program - from the late 90's to as recently as last summer by County Engineer Ted Hubbard on WVXU's Cincinnati Edition ( <a href="http://wvxu.org/post/eastern-corridor-program">http://wvxu.org/post/eastern-corridor-program</a> ). Along these lines, ODOT has confirmed that they are not pursuing nor planning to extend I-74 in Ohio. While that concept had been suggested as part of the National I-73/I-74/I-75 Association efforts ( <a href="http://i73.com/default.html">http://i73.com/default.html</a> ) in the mid-90's, the discussion was stopped for various reasons and focus was instead placed on the I-73 corridor.

Date Received	Name	Message Received	Response Provided/Action Taken
			<p>Regarding your comments about the potential impacts of relocating SR 32, thank you. We will include them in the Eastern Corridor Program's public comment documentation. We also encourage you to read through the SR 32 Relocation project's Frequently Asked Questions (<a href="http://easterncorridor.org/projects/sr-32-relocation/frequently-asked-questions/">http://easterncorridor.org/projects/sr-32-relocation/frequently-asked-questions/</a>) which addresses a number of similar concerns. ODOT and the other Eastern Corridor Partners are currently in the midst of determining the feasibility of the project and defining its potential benefits and impacts. Community input is and will continue to be a part of this process. Coordination with local communities (including Madisonville) has helped shape the recommended improvements now being advanced for the Red Bank Corridor project and ODOT hopes to accomplish the same in collaboration with communities along the SR 32 Relocation project corridor.</p> <p>We've added your email address to the Eastern Corridor Program Update distribution list. If you'd prefer not to receive these emails, please let us know.</p> <p>Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team</p>
1.6.14	Ian Blanding	<p>Project: Oasis Rail Line</p> <p><i>(No message text was provided. It was assumed this was a request to be added to the update distribution list.)</i></p>	<p>Thank you for your email.</p> <p>Your email address has been added to our database for you to receive Program updates.</p> <p>Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team</p>
1.6.14	Mark Samaan	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I would like to be involved in the Station Area Planning Process in the future. I live in Columbia Tusculum and my e-mail address is danlikebooks@yahoo.com Thanks,</p>	<p>Thank you for your email Ms. Samaan. We will be putting out information in the next couple of months about how the public can get more involved in the planning process. To ensure you receive that information, we are adding your email address to our stakeholder email update list.</p>

Date Received	Name	Message Received	Response Provided/Action Taken
		Mark Samaan	Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team
1.7.14	Aaron Wagner	I strongly support the rail line project. It's about time the region starts to look at alternative modes of transportation. I think the development around the stations will be just as beneficial as the ease of traffic congestion. Please move forward!!	Mr. Wagner,  Thank you for your email. Your comments outline many of the reasons that the project is being developed and we'll be sure to pass them along to ODOT and the planning team. They also will be included in the project's public comment record.  We are adding your email address to our stakeholder database for you to receive future project updates. If you'd prefer not to receive them, please let us know.  Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communication Team
1.8.14	Andrew Burgess	please please please make this happen, Cincinnati needs a commuting rail line of some sort in order to attract new business. this also is essential for reducing car traffic, and helps lower income workers. MAKE IT HAPPEN!!!	Mr. Burgess,  Thank you for your email. Your comments outline many of the reasons that the project is being developed and we will be sure to pass them along to ODOT and the planning team. They also will be included in the project's public comment record.  We are adding your email address to our stakeholder database for you to receive future project updates. If you'd prefer not to receive them, please let us know.  Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communication Team
1.9.14	Brian Phalen	Dear sir or madam,  I am supportive of rails, pedestrian, and bike ways. However, I have concerns about the impact of the 32 corridor on the Miami River. It	Mr. Phalen,  Thank you for your comments and questions. The yellow corridors shown on Figure 17 of the Feasibility Report are not roadway alignments, but instead depict the broad study corridors within which

Date Received	Name	Message Received	Response Provided/Action Taken
		<p>appears the designers are trying to preserve as much as river valley as possible, which is good... however the corridor still seems too wide. Especially at C1 and G1 on Figure 17 Feasibility study. Can C1 and G1 be smaller, or what exactly is planned here. Bike and Rail access can be relatively narrow. A smaller lighter impact corridor would be better. The space is one of the few beautiful pastoral areas left in the city, especially looking from Ault Park. A 4 lane roadway with winding entrance and exit ramps could harm this.</p> <p>Thanks, Brian Phalen</p>	<p>the proposed roadway could be located. These study corridors are significantly wider than an actual roadway would be. Project planners are looking in comprehensive detail at what is located within these study corridors (natural and cultural resources, land use, geological features, etc.) and will use this information to help identify possible roadway alignment alternatives within each of the study corridors. Once the alternatives are known, the planning team will evaluate the benefits and impacts of each, compare them to each other and use the knowledge gained to help identify a preferred alternative. Public input will certainly be part of this comparative evaluation process.</p> <p>In case you haven't seen them yet, there is a list of Frequently Asked Questions on the SR 32 Relocation project pages of the Eastern Corridor website (<a href="http://easterncorridor.org/projects/sr-32-relocation/frequently-asked-questions/">http://easterncorridor.org/projects/sr-32-relocation/frequently-asked-questions/</a>). If you have additional questions, you may find some answers on that page. However, you are welcome to submit them through this email address as well.</p> <p>Please let us know if we can be of further assistance. We've added your email address to our Eastern Corridor Program Update distribution list for you to receive future project updates. Please let us know if you'd prefer not to receive these emails.</p> <p>Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team</p>
1.10.14	Gary Wright	<p>I would hope more would be done to combine this with a development program in walking/biking distance around the stations between downtown and Milford. I am not as supportive of light rail that primarily connects Milford with downtown and does less to provide counterincentives to continuing sprawl.</p>	<p>Mr. Wright,</p> <p>Thank you for your comments. One component of developing the Oasis Rail service is a Station Area Planning process that will look at opportunities to better integrate this new travel option within the immediate community surrounding each station. Encouraging supportive development around the stations and providing bicycle and pedestrian connections to the station areas are key elements of fostering that kind of targeted development. More about Station Area Planning is posted on the Eastern Corridor website at: <a href="http://easterncorridor.org/projects/oasis-rail-transit/station-area-">http://easterncorridor.org/projects/oasis-rail-transit/station-area-</a></p>

Date Received	Name	Message Received	Response Provided/Action Taken
			<p>planning/.</p> <p>We've added your email address to the Eastern Corridor Program Update distribution list. If you'd prefer not to receive these emails, please let us know and we will remove your address from the list.</p> <p>Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team</p>
1.10.14	J.J. Staples	Signing up for updates	<p>Thank you for your email.</p> <p>Your email address has been added to our database for you to receive Program updates.</p> <p>Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team</p>
1.10.14	Karen Nagel	I would like to receive future information regarding the oasis project.	<p>Thank you for your interest in the Eastern Corridor Program. Your email address has been added to our database to receive updates.</p> <p>Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team</p>
1.10.14	Karen Sullivan	The OASIS Rail Conceptual Alternatives Solutions Report references the Phase 1 History/Architecture Report dated October 8, 2012. Where is this located on the Eastern Corridor website? Also, where can the current Verification Study for the Eastern Corridor Multi-Modal Projects, HAM/CLE-32F; PID 86462 be found? Thank you.	<p><i>The Phase I History/Architecture Report is not currently posted on the website but is available for review upon request (ODOT is arranging to post the report on the website). The Verification Study was incorporated into the SR 32 Feasibility Study (March 2012) which is posted on the Eastern Corridor website in the SR 32 Relocation (Segments II and III) Documents section:</i></p> <p><i><a href="http://easterncorridor.org/projects/red-bank-to-i275-sr32-segments-ii-and-iii/documents/">http://easterncorridor.org/projects/red-bank-to-i275-sr32-segments-ii-and-iii/documents/</a>.</i></p>
1.10.14	Marilyn Wall	We have attached our comments on the Oasis Rail and a link to the	Ms. Wall,

Date Received	Name	Message Received	Response Provided/Action Taken
		<p>attachment via dropbox (you don't need dropbox to access it.)</p> <p>Marilyn Wall</p>	<p>We have received the attachment containing your organization's comments on Oasis. They will be included in the project's public comment documentation.</p> <p>Sincerely, The Eastern Corridor Communications Team</p>



# APPENDIX B: PUBLIC INPUT

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## Comment Letters Received

- Karen Sullivan, Mariemont
- Bill Collins, Madisonville
- Marilyn Wall/Chris Curran, Sierra Club

*(Responses to comments made in the letters received are provided following each letter)*

## Comment Letter Submitted by Ms. Karen Sullivan

Jan. 1, 2014

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Mr. Andy Fluegemann  
Ohio Department of Transportation District 8  
505 S. State Route 741  
Lebanon, Ohio 45036

Dear Andy,

In December 2013 as part of the OASIS public involvement, informational meetings were held and documents were shared with the public. In addition to the Eastern Corridor Boards and the OASIS Information Boards from the meetings, other documents were made available on the Eastern Corridor website. These documents include the Conceptual Alternatives Solution Report (CASR) dated 20 November 2013 and the Station Area Analysis Report (SAP) dated 21 November 2013 and were available for download on the Eastern Corridor website and available at these links: Overall list of public involvement information <http://easterncorridor.org/projects/oasis-rail-transit/oasis-rail-transit-involvement/>, the SAP [http://easterncorridor.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Station-Area-Planning-Report-V12\\_112013-kd.pdf](http://easterncorridor.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Station-Area-Planning-Report-V12_112013-kd.pdf), and the CASR [http://easterncorridor.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Conceptual-Alternative-Solutions-Report-V12\\_FINAL\\_112013B-1.pdf](http://easterncorridor.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Conceptual-Alternative-Solutions-Report-V12_FINAL_112013B-1.pdf)

These documents contain significant inconsistencies, errors, and inaccurate and misleading information. Please note the following comments and questions in response to this publically shared information and as part of the related public record. Also an entire segment (3) has been excluded in the CASR, so until the additional studies mentioned as part of the relocation of SR32 occur, the OASIS rail from Fairfax to ANCOR cannot be evaluated by the public, other than pieces of information provided in other related portions of the Eastern Corridor multi-modal project.

From a budget standpoint and use of taxpayer funds, a couple of questions arise. Is the project financially viable from a construction as well as operational standpoint? Does it meet FTA/FHWA standards for construction and operational costs and ridership criteria for federally funded projects?

The public meeting boards show the cost estimate for construction as \$113.3 on a large chart, but reading the fine print the cost jumps to \$230 to \$323, not including right of way, environmental, utilities, or costs for sharing N&S tracks. In contrast, the ODOT signed Final 2014-2017 TRAC Major New Program List shows \$613 million as the OASIS budget. Why was the more comprehensive budget identified by ODOT not shared with the public to allow better determination of the viability of the project based on costs?

While the public boards do mention that negotiations are necessary with Norfolk and Southern, the message being sent to the region is that OASIS will use existing right of way. However, the CASR describes the challenges of using the NS line, and states that in the OASIS corridor a substantial portion of the planned line is owned by Norfolk and Southern and that there are undetermined costs associated with the use. The CASR discusses the significant work required to make SORTA lines usable, as well as the possibility of instead using private IORY lines. This information is in contrast to the public message that OASIS will use existing right of way for the majority of the line, as well as take advantage of the associated cost savings by using existing lines.

Without an owner/operator identified for OASIS, costs associated with actually operating the system are speculative. The project should be able to be self sufficient without tax payer subsidies and operating costs borne by the operator and users.

Economic development as a result of the new OASIS transit stations is a promoted benefit of the Eastern Corridor project; however calculations in the SAP for development at the stations acknowledge many limitations such as development in floodplains, which are included in the vacant and under-utilized land summary. In addition, the report acknowledges that the map images are outdated, but visual surveys were made. However, there are discrepancies such as existing developed land shown as vacant land. A landfill is shown as 'Susceptible to Change' or under-utilized and factored into development potential. The station locations in the SAP differ from the CASR, and are not shown on existing rail lines, which the project budget is based on. The Station Area Analysis Plan describes ¼ and ½ mile walksheds at potential station locations; however the arrows indicating pedestrian access often originate in parks and involve traversing steep grades as well as crossing major obstacles to arrive at a transit station by foot. All of these factors result in projected development capacity that is unlikely to occur and the development potential should more accurately represent realistic conditions.

The CASR indicates the ridership at the Boathouse in the "10 station scenario" as zero, and the "7 station scenario shows this stop eliminated, but Beechmont with 120 daily boardings going forward. However, maps included in the public involvement do not show Beechmont, but do include the Boathouse. It is difficult to align the ridership numbers indicated on the public meeting boards with the expert reports due to these differences. Also, decisions to keep the stations that do not perform while eliminating those with riders does not make sense. These inconsistencies should be resolved and the actual number of users of the OASIS rail more clearly indicated to allow for better public evaluation of the validity of the project.

The reports table the discussion of segment 3 that would cross the Little Miami River as it is under development along with the relocation of SR32, making it impossible for the public respond to one of the four OASIS segments presented in this public comment period. Since the current OASIS alignment budget shared with the public is based on the use of the existing rail lines, and the Tier 1 record of Decision only allows one bridge crossing the LMR, there is a concern that generating a preferred rail alignment would also include the highway component. While the Norfolk and Southern rail bridge crossing exists, the current OASIS studies state it



has not been evaluated, which leaves open the possibility of a finding that it would have to be replaced. This study should be expedited and shared with the public so that the OASIS proposal as presented may be accurately evaluated. Also, the alignment using existing tracks traverses through the National Wild and Scenic Little Miami River valley and the Mariemont National Historic Landmark which must be considered, in addition to other NEPA requirements.

The Little Miami River is designated as a National Wild and Scenic River, and the purpose of the designation includes ensuring the outstanding scenic, recreational, biological, and geologic features that allowed the designation under section (2a) (ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The location of a new bridge, for rail, highway or combined modes, would have a significant negative impact on the outstanding remarkable values that prompted the designation. A multi-modal bridge crossing the LMR will forever alter and degrade the recreational experiences currently enjoyed by the public, as well as disrupting the peacefulness of the area, which attracts birds and wildlife, as well as hikers and bikers that visit Mariemont's South 80 Park to enjoy these features. With a project of the proposed scale, the severity of noise and visual impacts could not be mitigated. The new bridge crossing of the LMR and relocation of SR32 results in significant, cumulative negative impacts to a National Wild and Scenic River and a National Historic Landmark, Native American archaeological sites across the valley, habitat fragmentation, existing parks that provide access to the LMR, as well as air, light, noise and water pollution throughout the valley and other environmental qualities.

The CASR states that there are no known recreational uses near station 8 nor upstream or downstream of the project area. This is not the case, and ODOT was informed of the public passive recreational uses of the Mariemont South 80 Park, and the FHWA has even toured the Park. Mariemont has also brought this same misstatement to the attention of ODOT. The Tier 1 record of Decision, based on inaccuracies in the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement concludes the land adjacent to the Little Miami River near the Eastern Corridor project river crossing is in private ownership, which results in the only public recreational use in the area takes place on the river. This obvious flaw is being perpetuated in current Tier 2, and demonstrates the need for Tier 1 to be reevaluated and corrected prior to the project going forward. The CASR statement that there is no recreational use and therefore the LMR is not a 4(f) resource is inaccurate and the conclusion that no 4(f) determinations should be made is flawed.

The Village of Mariemont, including the South 80 Park that provides public access to the LMR, is a National Historic Landmark. Section 106 and 110(f) of the National Preservation Act require federal agencies to take into account undertakings on historic properties and districts and to undertake actions to minimize harm to the maximum extent possible. Mariemont has informed ODOT of the NHL designation, but even the revised Feasibility Study Figure 12 dated December 2012 does not show the correct NHL boundary as indicated on the Eastern Corridor website at this link <http://easterncorridor.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Figure-12-SR32.pdf>. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Federal Agency Historic Preservation Programs state that the agency shall provide for the timely identification and evaluation of

historic properties affected by agency actions. In this case ODOT/FHWA is the 'agency' that has failed to timely identify and accurately depict the affected National Historic Landmark.

The location for the Fairfax/Redbank OASIS rail station indicated in the CASR is actually located within the Mariemont NHL boundary and NHPA will require Section 106 review of this use, yet this was not mentioned as part of the public presentations. The NHPA also applies to other culturally significant resources including archaeological sites. The CASR references a "Cultural Resources Report" and a "Phase 1 History/Architecture report dated October 8, 2012" which are not included in the OASIS links on the Public Information page. Not providing these as part of the public involvement limits the public's ability to evaluate the OASIS project and accurately respond to significant cultural resource impacts.

Maps indicating noise analysis along segments 1 and 2 of the OASIS rail line were shared at a public meeting related to the Redbank Corridor, but were not available at the OASIS public meetings, nor was a link provided on the Eastern Corridor OASIS public involvement webpage. Why were these not part of the public discussions and provided for feedback? The Little Miami River has been indicated as the only noise receptor in the Eastern Corridor river crossing segment, and this misinformation is being perpetuated in the OASIS public information as no noise concerns are identified along the LMR and at tracks through Mariemont where homes are located at the top of the bluff. In fact these homes are not a new development and have been located on Miami Bluff just above the proposed OASIS rail line since the inception of the Eastern Corridor project. The Mariemont South 80 Park has been an integral part of the Village since John Nolen's vision in the 1920's providing public access to the National Wild and Scenic Little Miami River and currently providing passive recreation opportunities such as hiking, camping, bird watching and other activities that depend on a peaceful environment.

Vibration is another concern due to homes located at the top of the bluff adjacent to the existing rail lines. This area, as well as near the "Fairfax/Redbank" station location identified in the CASR, has been indicated as a high concern for hillside stability in the Tier 1 EIS. Adding rail capacity at speeds higher than existing could further negatively impact the hillsides, which are an integral part of the viewshed and visual qualities of the National Wild and Scenic Little Miami River Valley. In addition, significant Native American sites are located at the top of the bluff as well as within the entire valley, adding to the need to avoid impacts that could disturb these significant cultural resources.

Under NEPA, No Build is an option. However, the No Build option was not presented as part of the Eastern Corridor or OASIS Boards at the public involvement meetings, nor was it included in the OASIS public involvement on-line survey. In fact, NEPA is only mentioned in the CASR and SAP in regards to having an alternative to comply with a needed alternative. Since the alternative of building new tracks is not detailed in the studies or shared as part of the public involvement, it is difficult to consider that an alternative actually exists. The budget is based on using existing tracks and the public message shared in the media has been that this is the proposal; however, at this point a preferred alignment should not have been made. While the OASIS presentation focuses on the use of existing track, the CASR maps indicate



this is the alternative approach and that a new line crossing the LMR South of Horseshoe Bend is the OASIS Rail Corridor Alignment. This inconsistency on a preferred alignment makes evaluating what is really being proposed and addressed in the studies difficult to determine, and more importantly a preferred alignment should not have been decided at this point without fulfilling the requirements of NEPA.

In the OASIS public documents no clear NEPA study area is defined. Small station study areas are noted and the Land Use Vision area is outlined, but the study area scope is unclear related to environmental, cultural, historic, and other associated studies required by NEPA. Furthermore, the CASR notes that only segment 3 involves the relocation of SR32; however a portion of segment 4 falls within the Eastern Corridor SR32 relocation study area and, the entire ridership projections using bus feeder routes are related for segments 2,3 and 4 are related to relocating SR32.

Based on the public information provided and false information from Tier 1 that is perpetuated in this study, the OASIS rail line and as well as the relocation of SR32 and the Redbank Corridor of the Eastern Corridor project should reevaluate Tier 1 decisions rather than moving forward. The Tier 1 Record of Decision contains significant oversights that did not allow adequate opportunities for federal agency responses under NEPA. Also, per NEPA regulations a written reevaluation is required of the Final EIS if within 3 years major steps have not occurred. In addition, a supplemental EIS is required whenever impacts were not evaluated or new information and circumstances arise. This is clearly the case with the Eastern Corridor project, including the OASIS portion. I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback during the OASIS public comment, and look forward to ODOT's response as to how this project plans to address the noted inconsistencies, inaccuracies, and outdated information prior to the Eastern Corridor project moving forward.

Sincerely,  
Karen Sullivan

## **Response to Letter from Ms. Karen Sullivan**

The Oasis Rail Transit planning team thanks Ms. Sullivan for her comments on the Oasis Rail Transit project. The planning team agrees that there are issues associated with the potential Eastern Corridor option that would see the rail line in Oasis Segment 3 (Fairfax/Red Bank to Ancor) co-located with the relocated SR 32. Until that alignment alternative has been determined, questions for the rail line in Oasis Segment 3 will remain in flux. The team has recognized this and is continuing to refine and advance the level of planning for the portions of the Oasis Rail project which are in public ownership (Oasis Segments 1 and 2, which extend between the Riverfront Transit Center and Fairfax/Red Bank) and could potentially offer an opportunity for initial service while the details of service in Segments 3 and 4 (Ancor to Milford) are resolved.

Following are responses to other points raised:

- Project cost estimates are still at a planning level, with a significant range between the low and high estimates, recognizing the need for contingencies and also noting that there are costs that remain to be determined (including possible right of way acquisition and operating agreements that might be required to use the Norfolk Southern tracks). The planning team has sought to share the information we currently have as part of our ongoing efforts to keep the public informed. Certainly as these costs are refined, the public and Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners will have revised figures to use when making decisions about whether or not to advance the project from the planning and environmental clearance phase to construction and implementation.
- The areas for potential development in both the Conceptual Alternative Solutions and Station Area Planning reports recognize the limitations that exist along the Oasis corridor, but other development has taken place notwithstanding these issues. The purpose of these reports is to identify existing conditions in the station areas and to identify the potential for possible change. The estimated costs for the stations are included in the project budget.
- The Oasis Rail Transit planning team will continue to refine ridership forecasts as additional details about potential service hours desired by the public is collected and analyzed.
- Parameters of the Oasis Rail Transit project currently assume that the rail line would cross the Little Miami River using a multi-modal bridge that would also support the relocated SR 32 as well as bike and pedestrian paths. Options for this river crossing and its potential impacts (including noise, vibrations, impacts to nearby recreational areas, etc.) are being studied as part of the Eastern Corridor's proposed SR 32 Relocation (Segment II/III) project and are therefore not addressed in the CASR report. Once those studies are complete, pertinent information as it relates to the Oasis project will be incorporated into Oasis project documentation and will be made available to the public for review. Comments offered in your letter that pertain to the SR

SR 32 Relocation project have been forwarded to the SR 32 Relocation project team to be incorporated into relevant study documentation.

- Tier 2 work for the Eastern Corridor involves further analysis and development of the Program's four core projects, including Oasis Rail Transit. Recommendations made in Tier 1 are being examined in much more detail and evaluated for impact, function, context, constructability and affordability, and preliminary alternatives are being narrowed and refined. Feedback, clarifications, and other input received by communities such as Mariemont through these more detailed studies will be incorporated into Tier 2 project documentation and will therefore be considered in the decision-making process. Your participation and feedback are a valuable part of the public input process and your efforts are appreciated.
- The CASR report and associated information shared at the public meetings were intended to provide the public with an update as to how the project is progressing and to get public input on the information gathered to date. The reports presented are not yet final. Feedback received during the public comment period will be reviewed and incorporated into project documentation as appropriate. Once completed, these reports will be used to inform the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners in more detail about the benefits, costs and impacts of the proposed rail line and help determine whether or not the project will be advanced for further development. Should the project be advanced, the information through these studies will be incorporated into any environmental documentation reports required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- At this time, the CASR and SAP reports analyze options that have been proposed for introducing the Oasis rail line as a new means of transportation within the Eastern Corridor region, and their results will be incorporated into any environmental documentation required by NEPA. NEPA-based documentation will include analysis of a No-Build Alternative along with other project alternatives. This information will be presented to the public for review and input before a final decision on whether or not to build the rail line is made.

## **Comment Letter Submitted by Mr. Bill Collins**

**Jan. 1, 2014**

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### **Executive Summary**

I oppose construction of the proposed east/west Oasis Line commuter rail from Downtown Cincinnati to Cincinnati's eastern suburb of Milford.



My position is that the \$613 million \*\*\* which ODOT has estimated as necessary build this 17-mile commuter-rail project should be redirected to another light-rail/commuter-rail project. This “better” project, I would argue, would be a north/south light-rail alignment that has greater potential than the Oasis Line to create development/jobs and improve the quality of life broadly throughout the Northern Kentucky/Southwest Ohio region.

This other project where that I am suggesting that the \$613 million in Ohio funds would make an excellent start would be a north/south “trunk” line through the Mill Creek and Great Miami River valleys. *[By “trunk” line, I mean to suggest that as the intra-city rail network is developed in this region in the future, this north/south “trunk” line is the logical core line, off which other electrified light-rail lines could branch.]*

At its southern end, this light-rail trunk line would link up with the light-rail-ready Phase 1 of the Cincinnati Streetcar project, linking up at the upper end of this Phase 1 of the streetcar project currently now under construction near Findlay Market in the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood. This north/south Mill Creek/Great Miami light-rail line that I am proposing could be built northwards in stages (as these kinds of transportation projects usually area), starting with the \$613 million in Ohio funds redirected from the Oasis proposal. *[Please note that for much of the length of this proposed north/south light-rail line (for example, all the way from Ivorydale to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base), the line would have the option of either following or paralleling existing railroad rights-of-way.]*

As per this scenario, \$613 million would probably be enough funding in this first phase to build the project out in a first Phase as far north as one of three stations -- Ivorydale/St. Bernard, Lockland/Wyoming or GE/Lincoln Heights. During the following years (after the \$613 million is spent for this first phase) then this project could be “built out” to its full length of approximately 60-65 miles so that transit line would serve (from south to north)

- Queensgate
- Camp Washington
- Cumminsville
- Northside/Clifton
- Ivorydale/St. Bernard
- Lockland/Wyoming
- GE/Lincoln Heights
- Tri-County/World Park
- West Chester/Becket Ridge
- Hamilton
- Middletown
- Franklin
- Miamisburg
- West Carrollton
- Dayton (multiple stops, and

- I-70/ Wright-Patterson Air Force Base

Please note that this 60-mile light-rail line that I am proposing (which might not be completed to its full length for 15-20 years) is comparable in concept to the existing 46-mile MetroLink commuter rail -- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MetroLink\\_\(St.\\_Louis\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MetroLink_(St._Louis)) in St. Louis. MetroLink runs east/west across the St. Louis metro area of Missouri and Illinois from St. Louis Lambert International Airport in the west, through St. Louis's western suburbs, through Downtown St. Louis, crosses the Mississippi river, extending to its eastern terminus at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois.

Obviously, a complement to this north/south line would be to extend the Cincinnati streetcar from the riverfront, across the Ohio River, through Covington, Kentucky and out to the CVG/I-275/Park West Intl. Business Park area in Boone County. Because a project like this in Kentucky could not be connected to the potential \$613 million that Ohio's DOT may seek for the Oasis Line, I do not address these Kentucky-funding issues in this document.

### **Preface: The key long-term challenges that our region faces**

Here in 2014, six years into the USA's sluggish economic period of high unemployment, slow economic growth and downward pressure on residential property values, our Northern Kentucky/Southwest Ohio region faces some daunting challenges. Some of these challenges are caused by the slow national economy, but many of these economic and social challenges which we face in this region predate this recession. For example:

- **Our region is losing too many of its young adults:**

According to an article -- see <http://goo.gl/iQBVy> --- published in the Cincinnati Enquirer on March 22, 2012 under the headline "*Ohio's Work Force Aging, Shrinking*," six of the "bottom ten" metro areas of the USA in terms of the average age workers are in Ohio. In other words, young people are leaving these six metro areas in Ohio -- Cleveland, Youngstown, Dayton, Akron, Toledo, and Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky/Hamilton/Middletown -- at a rate that places these six Ohio metro areas in the bottom ten nationally along with economically challenged metro areas across the USA such as New Orleans, Detroit, Birmingham, and Buffalo/Niagara Falls.

- **Property values have fallen in too many KNY/SW Ohio communities, but property values in the Eastern Corridor planning area have actually held up quite well:**

During the last 50 years or so, across our region, we've seen a massive decline in employment in basic industry (machine tools, consumer products manufacturing, aerospace, automotive, metals, printing/graphic arts, food processing, chemicals, paper products, furniture, shoes and apparel) that defined this region's economy into the 1970s. At the same time, we moved from a rail and public transit-oriented region where jobs were concentrated in the industrial valleys (the Mill Creek, the Great Miami and the Ohio River in Ohio, and the Licking River in Kentucky) to a largely automobile-dependent region where the population and new jobs being scattered. The effect here was that the bulk of the new jobs developed in this region since the 1970s

shifted to areas near the new interstate highways – in particular I-71, the suburban areas in both Kentucky and Ohio near I-75 and the northern and eastern reaches of the I-275 ring road. As the Cincinnati Enquirer's reporting on June 16, 2013 --- see <http://goo.gl/wqGBPF> -- reminded us, the trends in property values as a result of this jobs shift has caused residential property values to “tank” on the West Side of the City of Cincinnati (where most people historically worked in the Mill Creek Valley), along the Great Miami River in small cities like Hamilton and Middletown, and in the northwestern suburbs of Cincinnati that lie between the lower Mill Creek Valley and the Great Miami Valley.

According to this property-value data reported by the Enquirer, from 2007 until 2012 the communities in Hamilton County that lie within the Eastern Corridor planning clearly benefit from this scattering of jobs out of the traditional industrial valleys. The result is that within the Eastern Corridor planning area, none of these communities experienced trends with residential property values that above the metro average of a 20% property-value decline. In contrast, we see communities in and between the Mill Creek valley and Great Miami Valleys with terrible numbers in terms of property-value trends between 2007 and 2012. See the tables below. In other words, communities located inside the Eastern Corridor planning area of Hamilton County don't need this investment of \$613 million. The need (and the available land for development in “brownfield” sites) lies to the west of the Eastern Corridor planning area, as this data demonstrates. This geographic area that badly needs jobs and better transportation sits the western part of Hamilton County and in those portions of Butler County that are located near the traditional industrial valley of the Great Miami River.

**Recent property value trends of Hamilton County communities  
that are located in the Eastern Corridor planning area**

Community	Residential property value trends: 2007-2012, as reported by MLS	Median Home Price, in 2012, as reported by MLS
Hyde Park	- 5%	\$300,000
Mount Lookout	- 7%	\$317,500
Oakley	- 7%	\$181,500
Mariemont	- 12%	\$291,250
Madisonville	- 13%	\$70,450
Columbia-Tusculum	- 19%	\$253,500
Anderson Township	- 20%	\$192,000
Mount Washington	- 20%	\$123,000

**Recent property value trends of communities located on Cincinnati's West Side, the lower Mill  
Creek Valley, northwest Hamilton County  
and the Great Miami Valley area of Butler County**

Community	Residential property value trends: 2007-2012, as reported by MLS	Median Home Price, in 2012, as reported by MLS
Wyoming	- 5%	\$252,500
Bridgetown	- 19%	\$126,000
Trenton	- 23%	\$108,150
Fairfield	- 25%	\$130,000
White Oak	- 25%	\$113,500
Montford Heights	- 28%	\$130,000
Miami Heights	- 29%	\$200,000
Green Township	- 30%	\$103,000
Finneytown	- 31%	\$93,800
Delhi Township	- 32%	\$94,500
Middletown	- 36%	\$50,000

Springdale	- 37%	\$85,000
Forest Park	- 38%	\$65,750
College Hill	- 41%	\$54,950
Westwood	- 42%	\$57,100
City of Hamilton	- 44%	\$52,000
Springfield Township	- 45%	\$55,000
Covedale	- 46%	\$ 57,500
Price Hill	- 46%	\$17,035
Cheviot	- 52%	\$50,500
North College Hill	- 59%	\$35,000
St. Clair Township	- 66%	\$27,450

### **Clear Weaknesses of the proposed Oasis Rail plan**

- **Low Ridership projections, plus only one new station would likely be built inside the City of Cincinnati:**

According to pages 98 and 99 of the Eastern Corridor document prepared by HDR entitled “OASIS Rail Conceptual Alternative Solutions” under the subhead “Modeling Approach and Assumptions”—it appears that the most likely proposed rail-station scenario for the Oasis Line would be six stations: the existing Regional Transit Center (RTC) on Cincinnati’s Downtown Riverfront, along with five new stations [one new station located inside the City of Cincinnati at Columbia-Tusculum, along with four stations in suburban communities: Red Bank (located slightly north of Otto Armleder Park), Newtown, Ancor and Milford].

According to this document, the estimated number of Monday-Friday commuters who would be using the Oasis Line each weekday at those five new stations would only be 1,365 people by the year 2030.

- **The potential for new economic development along the Oasis Line is very limited, ODOT/HDR document shows**

On page 26 of the document cited above, under the subheadline “Station Area Analysis,” the “Development Potential Within One-half Mile Buffer” is evaluated. The only one of the ten stations reviewed that has “high” potential for development is the existing RTC on Cincinnati’s Downtown Ohio River riverfront. With the explosion of development that is occurring now in Downtown Cincinnati near the RTC at “The Banks” on the Ohio River riverfront, it’s very clear that this development is happening *today without any regard to the Oasis Line*.

As for the other nine potential new stations reviewed, only two (Columbia-Tusculum and Newtown) have development potentials that this document lists as “medium.”

The remaining seven potential passenger stations (Boathouse, East End, Lunken Airport, Beechmont, Red Bank/Fairfax, Ancor and Milford are listed as having a “low” development potential. The reason given for the “low” development potential at those seven stations is usually stated in the document as “Distance, topography, patterns and roadways.”

By “roadway,” apparently what HDR is referring to in its document is that almost all of these proposed rail passenger stations are not located near walkable established neighborhoods and neighborhood business districts. [They tend to be located either along hillsides (the proposed Columbia-Tusculum station, for example) or in the flood plain of the Little Miami River (the Fairfax/Red Bank station, for example)]. Thus, in order for commuters to access these proposed new stations (it’s still not clear from the documents exactly where these passenger stations would be built), *either* a significant amount of new roads would need to be built so that commuters could be dropped off at those stations by automobile, *and/or* perhaps new “side tracks” of rail will need to be built in order for the rail vehicles to reach those station locations.

### **The high potential for Public/Private Partnerships for the Mill Creek/Great Miami north/south line as compared to the Oasis Line**

When arguments are made for building Oasis Line, it is often stated that there is great potential for “Public/Private Partnerships” (PPPs) to fund the development of the rail stations. To date, I have seen no evidence that this is the case.

As was mentioned earlier, HDR/ODOT documents describe the limited opportunity for development within one-half mile of these proposed Oasis Line stations, so it is no surprise that PPP opportunities have not been forthcoming.

In contrast, if a light-rail line is built along the north/south “trunk line” that I mentioned above, several large existing employers – including Procter & Gamble at Ivorydale (with possible bus-shuttle service from an Ivorydale station to P&G’s Winton Hill Business Center), GE Aircraft Engines at a Lincoln Heights/GE station, the Tri-County Mall, numerous employers in Downtown Dayton and the U.S. Department of Defense at Wright-Patterson Air Force -- would be good candidates for PPPs.

## **Response to Letter from Mr. Bill Collins**

The Oasis Rail Transit planning team thanks Mr. Collins for his comments on the Oasis Rail project and suggestions on transit corridors to be considered.

The Oasis Rail corridor was selected for planning level consideration based on a number of factors including previous studies, the fact that much of the rail right-of-way is already publicly-owned (by SORTA), and because Oasis Segments 1 and 2 (Riverfront Transit Center to the Boathouse and Boathouse to Fairfax/Red Bank, respectively) would be critical not just for providing rail access between downtown Cincinnati and the Eastern Corridor communities, but also from other areas such as Eastgate, Evendale, Sharonville, and Blue Ash (to name just a few).

## Comment Letter Submitted by Ms. Marilyn Wall and Ms. Chris Curran, Sierra Club, Jan. 1, 2014

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### REASONS WHY OASIS RAIL DOESN'T MAKE SENSE

**The Oasis Rail Line has too few riders to be cost effective. Even future projections (2030) are very low.**

**The Oasis Rail Line has very limited development potential because too much of the area near stations is already developed or undevelopable because of steep slopes, floodplains, or is in the Ohio River, is landslide prone, is a golf course or park, or an airport!**

**The cost is high – somewhere between \$230 million and OKI's cost of \$1 billion.**

**The estimated \$60 for a round trip is too expensive and saves too little time, if any.**

**There are more cost effective mass transit options and routes that will get more people to jobs, schools, etc.**

1. Oasis Rail will cost over a billion dollars according to OKI<sup>1</sup>'s 2040 Long Range Plan.
2. The much lower (yet incomplete<sup>2</sup>) costs in the OASIS Rail Conceptual Alternatives Solutions are very high. Capital costs (trains, track, etc.) are estimated to be between \$230,288,791 and \$322,530,539.  
<sup>3</sup> The Conceptual Alternatives Report identifies numerous issues that have not been evaluated yet and the costs are unknown.
3. Annual operating costs are estimated to be \$3,500,000.<sup>4</sup>
4. The number boarding the train in the "Six Station Scenario"<sup>5</sup> is 3,060. This figure represents 1,530 people boarding the train in the morning, between Milford and Columbia-Tusculum and 1,530 people boarding the train in the evening at the Riverfront Transit Center and getting off between there and Milford.

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<sup>1</sup> Ohio Kentucky Indiana Regional Council of Governments, the local governmental planning agency. 2040 Long Range Plan Figure 10-11: Public Transportation Fiscally Constrained Plan Recommendations. OKI also says "Being in the financially constrained portion of the plan means that there is evidence of sufficient funds to cover the cost of the included projects by the year 2040. The remaining rail transit recommendations serve as a vision plan for potential future projects and are not included as part of the fiscally constrained portion of this plan."

<sup>2</sup> Railroad agreement costs are not included, right-of-way costs are not included; many costs have yet to be analyzed. Costs may well be higher.

<sup>3</sup> Oasis Rail Conceptual Alternative Solutions page 55

<sup>4</sup> Oasis Rail Conceptual Alternative Solutions page 28

<sup>5</sup> Oasis Rail Conceptual Alternative Solutions page 100



5. The cost per trip, assuming the low capital cost of \$230,288,791 is \$29.18 in 2019 and \$36.94 in 2019 if the higher capital cost is used. Remember, not all the costs are yet included in the capital costs.<sup>6</sup>
6. Also, the low cost per trip \$29.18 is just one-way. It will be another \$29.18 to return home.
7. OKI and the Oasis Rail Conceptual Alternative Solution focus on Environmental Justice as part of the rationale for the project. However, anyone who is economically disadvantaged surely will not be able to afford \$60 to get to work and back. Secondly, this rail line is intended to run from Milford in the morning to downtown, returning workers in the evening. The census data used shows that the most affected low-income population isn't in the Milford area, but downtown and East Walnut Hills. If "no-car" households have no car because of economic necessity, they won't benefit from a \$60 cost to go to work each day. This project attempts to use Environmental Justice as a justification for a project that does nothing for the disadvantaged or for those disproportionately affected by environmental impacts.
8. Much is made of the development potential of the Oasis Line. The extremely limited development potential of the station locations is well illustrated by the maps in the Draft Final Station Area Analysis. Most of the area in the ¼ to ½ mile radius of the stations is in the Ohio River, and up steep, landslide prone hillsides along Columbia Parkway, or is in the floodway or floodplain, or is a Park or Golf Course, or on a landfill, lakes and wetlands or industrial and unsuited to transit-oriented development. The development potential is almost non-existent. Even future ridership projects expect a minimal numbers of riders.
9. The feeder bus system is largely impractical due to geography, better bus routes, and low numbers of expected riders. The cost of such buses is not included and given the challenges SORTA and METRO have getting money to increase service, and the fact that this project offers no source for revenue for SORTA/METRO it is highly unlikely the feeder bus system is worthwhile.
10. The cost of a METRO/SORTA trip, on the other hand, is about \$4.39, coming from fare boxes, local taxes and other revenue. This is incredibly cost effective compared to the OASIS. In fact, METRO/SORTA were just ranked as one of the most cost-effective transit systems in the country by University of Cincinnati Economics Center. Even with the same subsidy ratio (fare box to other funding sources) the Oasis is still extremely expensive.
11. There is a lot to be said for fixed rail systems, but they don't work without riders and development potential. The Wasson Line from the East to the Universities (Xavier, UC), Hospitals (UC Health, Children's, etc.) to downtown. Wasson connects people and job centers. Oasis doesn't.

Submitted by:

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<sup>6</sup>. OKI estimated much higher costs probably representing life cycle costs (repair and maintenance over a few decades, more stations, increased costs of fuel, etc.) One of the alternatives is to put the Oasis Rail Line on the relocated SR 32 highway. That cost is not included.

## Response to Letter from Ms. Marilyn Wall and Ms. Chris Curran, Sierra Club

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The Oasis Rail Transit planning team thanks Ms. Wall and Ms. Curran for their letter regarding the Oasis Rail Transit project. Following are responses to their comments.

**Comment: The Oasis Rail Line has too few riders to be cost effective. Even future projections (2030) are very low.**

**Response:** The ridership forecasts for the rail service have used a very conservative estimation approach. This approach is based on existing travel patterns and development and does not include any potential new ridership which could accrue as a result of new development along the corridor or through a mode shift away from travel by automobile toward more environmentally-friendly alternatives such as rail transit, walking, bicycling, or a combination of modes. More recent ridership forecasts using the recently adopted Federal Transit Administration ridership model (STOPS) have resulted in greater ridership estimates.

**Comment: The Oasis Rail Line has very limited development potential because too much of the area near stations is already developed or undevelopable because of steep slopes, floodplains, or is in the Ohio River, is landslide prone, is a golf course or park, or an airport!**

**Response:** In Segment 2 (Boathouse to Fairfax/Red Bank), the Oasis Rail Corridor uses an existing rail alignment that passes through a number of developed neighborhoods within the City of Cincinnati. In Segments 1 (Riverfront Transit Center to the Boathouse), 3 (Fairfax/Red Bank to Ancor), and 4 (Ancor to Milford), the line would either share an alignment with a new roadway or require exclusive right of way for track. The Station Area Planning document examined both a ¼ and ½ mile radius around potential station locations, and did note that there are extensive areas where development might be limited as a result of the challenges of developing in areas with steep slopes, which were within or near floodplains, or where there is an existing land use that is unlikely to change (such as a park or Lunken Airport). However, the catchment areas outside the station area radii have development potential, and the presence of the rail transit service could be a catalyst for development, which could take best advantage of this new travel option. Just as redevelopment and new development have occurred already in areas along the corridor, such as in the areas around the Boathouse, East End, Columbia-Tusculum, Newtown, and Milford Stations, so could the addition of Oasis help spur more travel by way of rail and new investments.

**Comment:** The cost is high – somewhere between \$230 million and OKI’s cost of \$1 billion.

**Response:** When the OKI Board adopted the Regional Transportation Plan in June of 2012, the estimated construction costs for Oasis were very preliminary. The estimate used at that time was \$556M in 2012 dollars. Additionally, our best estimate for year construction was 2030. Therefore the cost shown in the Plan is the project cost in terms of 2030 dollars. Our assumption on inflation is 3.5% per year. The current capital cost estimates contained in the Conceptual Alternative Solutions (CAS) Report range between \$230 and \$322.5 million. Those estimates do not include the costs of acquiring right-of-way (ROW) or other undetermined needs at this time. OKI’s estimate of \$556 million did include provision of an estimate for ROW costs. As the project advances toward the identification of a preferred alternative, project cost estimates will continue to be refined. Table 8 from the CAS provides a breakout of capital costs estimates, by the project element.

**Table 8: Capital Cost Summary**

Cost Category	Low Cost Estimate	High Cost Estimate
Guideway and Track Elements	\$52,032,960	\$84,741,000
Stations	\$28,125,000	\$39,375,000
Maintenance Facility	\$19,968,000	\$26,574,000
Sitework and Special Conditions	\$13,860,134	\$28,331,850
Systems	\$21,021,120	\$24,117,840
Right of Way / RR Agreements	\$0	\$0
Vehicles	\$46,200,000	\$49,500,000
Professional Services	\$32,402,956	\$44,936,791
Unallocated Contingency	\$15,356,851	\$21,297,058
Finance Charges	\$1,321,769	\$3,657,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$230,288,791</b>	<b>\$322,530,539</b>

**Comment:** The estimated \$60 for a round trip is too expensive and saves too little time, if any.

**Response:** In general, rail fare structure is comparable to express bus service in a region. It is not driven by the cost per ride. Although fare structure has not yet been established for the Oasis commuter rail project, it is anticipated that fares would be comparable to the cost of fares for using the Metro bus service.

**Comment 1: Oasis Rail will cost over a billion dollars according to OKI's 2040 Long Range Plan.**

**Response:** See response provided for Comment 2 (below).

**Comment 2: The much lower (yet incomplete) costs in the OASIS Rail Conceptual Alternatives Solutions are very high. Capital costs (trains, track, etc.) are estimated to be between \$230,288,791 and \$322,530,539. The Conceptual Alternatives Report identifies numerous issues that have not been evaluated yet and the costs are unknown.**

**Response to Comments 1 and 2:** When the OKI Board adopted the Plan in June of 2012 the estimated construction costs for Oasis were very preliminary. The estimate used at that time was \$556M in 2012 dollars. Additionally, estimate for year construction was considered to be 2030. Therefore, the cost shown in the Plan is the project cost in terms of 2030 dollars. Our assumption on inflation is 3.5% per year. The current capital cost estimates contained in the Conceptual Alternative Solutions (CAS) Report range between \$230 and \$322.5 million. Those estimates do not include the costs of acquiring right-of-way (ROW) and other undetermined costs. OKI's estimate of \$556 million did include provision of an estimate for ROW costs. As the project advances toward the identification of a preferred alternative, project cost estimates will continue to be refined. Table 8 from the CAS provides a breakout of capital costs estimates, by the project element. Refer to Table 8 on the previous page for the Capital Cost Summary.

The difference between the low and high capital cost estimate ranges reflects potential uncertainties and unknowns that will continue to be identified and accounted for as the project proceeds through the planning and environmental clearance process.

**Comment 3: Annual operating costs are estimated to be \$3,500,000.**

**Response:** This estimate is correct, though it is subject to review and refinement as the project team receives and incorporates public input on the proposed service schedule.

**Comment 4: The number boarding the train in the "Six Station Scenario" is 3,060. This figure represents 1,530 people boarding the train in the morning, between Milford and Columbia-Tusculum and 1,530 people boarding the train in the evening at the Riverfront Transit Center and getting off between there and Milford.**

**Response:** Ridership forecasts for the rail service have used a very conservative estimation approach. This approach is based on existing travel patterns and development and does not include any potential new ridership which could accrue as a result of new development along the corridor or

through a mode shift away from travel by automobile toward more environmentally-friendly alternatives such as rail transit, walking, bicycling, or a combination of modes. More recent ridership forecasts using the recently adopted Federal Transit Administration ridership model (STOPS) have resulted in greater ridership estimates.

**Comment 5: The cost per trip, assuming the low capital cost of \$230,288,791 is \$29.18 in 2019 and \$36.94 in 2019 if the higher capital cost is used. Remember, not all the costs are yet included in the capital costs.**

**Response:** The costs per trip suggested are inaccurate, as is the methodology used to create them. Also, rail transit fares are not determined based on their associated capital costs. Although fare structure has not yet been established for the Oasis commuter rail project, it is anticipated that fares would be comparable to the cost of fares for using the Metro bus service.

**Comment 6: Also, the low cost per trip \$29.18 is just one-way. It will be another \$29.18 to return home.**

**Response:** The costs per trip suggested are inaccurate, as is the methodology used to create them. Also, rail transit fares are not determined based on their associated capital costs. Although fare structure has not yet been established for the Oasis commuter rail project, it is anticipated that fares would be comparable to the cost of fares for using the Metro bus service.

**Comment 7: OKI and the Oasis Rail Conceptual Alternative Solution focus on Environmental Justice as part of the rationale for the project. However, anyone who is economically disadvantaged surely will not be able to afford \$60 to get to work and back. Secondly, this rail line is intended to run from Milford in the morning to downtown, returning workers in the evening. The census data used shows that the most affected low-income population isn't in the Milford area, but downtown and East Walnut Hills. If "no-car" households have no car because of economic necessity, they won't benefit from a \$60 cost to go to work each day. This project attempts to use Environmental Justice as a justification for a project that does nothing for the disadvantaged or for those disproportionately affected by environmental impacts.**

**Response:** As mentioned in the previously, the fares/costs per trip of \$60 suggested in this letter are inaccurate, as is the methodology used to create them. Fare structure for Oasis will be determined in subsequent phases of project development and will be focused on balancing the revenue needed to operate the service with attracting ridership. It is anticipated that fares for Oasis would be comparable to the cost of fares for using the Metro bus service. Providing a high quality transportation option that could offer a dependable and affordable rail connection for commuters would be a benefit to those living within the Oasis Rail Corridor, as well as for the region. The Oasis Rail Corridor is the first project considered as part of a larger rail network that could better position

the Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana tri-state region to meet the transportation needs and economic challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, in a way that is sustainable and more-sensitive to the environment than a continued dependence on the automobile and roadways as the primary travel mode.

**Comment 8: Much is made of the development potential of the Oasis Line. The extremely limited development potential of the station locations is well illustrated by the maps in the Draft Final Station Area Analysis. Most of the area in the ¼ to ½ mile radius of the stations is in the Ohio River, and up steep, landslide prone hillsides along Columbia Parkway, or is in the floodway or floodplain, or is a Park or Golf Course, or on a landfill, lakes and wetlands or industrial and unsuited to transit-oriented development. The development potential is almost non-existent. Even future ridership projects expect a minimal numbers of riders.**

**Response:** The Station Area Planning documents provide an assessment of the potential development opportunities and constraints that exist around the proposed station locations. The documents recognize and discuss the limitations that exist, though they have not precluded others from developing within the station areas. The Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners will continue to provide the public with economic and financial assessments for review and comment, and landowners and the development community will be invited to participate and comment on the viability of differing opportunities around each station. Ultimately, development around the stations will be dependent on market conditions and demand as the neighborhoods change over time.

**Comment 9: The feeder bus system is largely impractical due to geography, better bus routes, and low numbers of expected riders. The cost of such buses is not included and given the challenges SORTA and METRO have getting money to increase service, and the fact that this project offers no source for revenue for SORTA/METRO it is highly unlikely the feeder bus system is worthwhile.**

**Response:** The information provided regarding any potential or proposed bus feeder services was meant to be representative and to assist in identifying station area planning issues for future consideration, as well as to consider how bus feeders might support the Oasis rail service. Before the establishment of any actual rail transit services, the Oasis Rail service would need to be part of a comprehensive analysis of transit options (including the rail service as a spine to provide high-capacity service throughout the corridor.) This planning effort for feeder services will be done in partnership with SORTA at the appropriate time and would include as part of the analysis consideration of available funding for transit services.

**Comment 10: The cost of a METRO/SORTA trip, on the other hand, is about \$4.39, coming from fare boxes, local taxes and other revenue. This is incredibly cost effective compared to the OASIS. In fact,**

**METRO/SORTA were just ranked as one of the most cost-effective transit systems in the country by University of Cincinnati Economics Center. Even with the same subsidy ratio (fare box to other funding sources) the Oasis is still extremely expensive.**

**Response:** As discussed, fares per trip are not based on the capital costs, but instead are based on a number of factors, including available funding and fares on other types of transit. Many transit agencies that provide a rail service use a zone system for determining fares, and in some cases, the fares reflect the costs of travel by automobile. Fares per trip on Oasis have yet to be determined as project details are still undergoing refinement, however, Oasis fares are anticipated to be comparable to the cost of using the Metro bus service.

**Comment 11: There is a lot to be said for fixed rail systems, but they don't work without riders and development potential. The Wasson Line from the East to the Universities (Xavier, UC), Hospitals (UC Health, Children's, etc.) to downtown. Wasson connects people and job centers. Oasis doesn't.**

**Response:** Oasis is the first corridor in what could become a regional rail network. The Wasson line, which could be planned to connect with the Oasis line in the future, would add capacity and ridership to that already shown for Oasis. Typically, as new destinations are added, overall ridership increases because the expanded service attracts new riders that the lines by themselves might not.