

Chapter 3

Discussion of Recommended Transportation Improvements

Consideration of the Transportation Plan

Each consultation session provided for a geographic-based comparison of the regional transportation plan and Regionally Significant Environmental Resources. Participants identified locations where environmental resources might be affected by individual transportation projects or the cumulative or long term results of combined projects or related development. Discussion included both harmful and beneficial environmental effects.

In the consultations process, the “transportation plan” represents the recommended transportation system, which is a combination of the existing system and recommended improvements. On the map used for comparison, the transportation plan is represented as:

- Developed Area (corresponds to area served by centralized sewer), which represents area with major investment in roadways and other urban infrastructure and services that support development, and
- Transportation Improvements, which are recommendations for expanding highway capacity per OKI’s 2008 regional transportation plan and are classified as:
 - scheduled (committed to be built) or
 - recommended (eligible for funding), and further classified as:
 - lane additions to widen existing roadways or
 - new roadways to be built on new alignment.

The map in Appendix B shows transportation improvement locations, classifications, and code. Table 1 in Appendix B lists project codes by county and includes project descriptions.

Local Agency Perspectives on the Plan

Each session provided opportunity for considering the transportation plan’s cumulative environmental effects or regional-scale environmental issues. The basis for discussion was: For comparison at a regional scale, please consider the potential for cumulative effects. Do you have comments on the transportation plan’s potential environmental effects? on where Environmental Resources may be affected by the plan – in the region, or in your county?

Local agency comments were related to the plan’s focus on highway improvements and to the potential for transportation projects to improve environmental conditions.

Comments related to the plan’s focus on highway improvements were:

- *The transportation system is still too auto-oriented. It’s not diverse enough. Can there be more transit? Can there be more bike facilities? The system is too light on buses, and too light on bikes. Cleveland provides an example for increasing transit use – it has dedicated lanes for bus.*
- *In developed area, scrap improvements to roads. Put in transit.*

Comments related to the potential for transportation projects to improve environmental conditions were both project-specific, which are included in the following sub-section, and general. General comments viewed highway improvements as potential opportunity to remedy environmental problems and new roadways as opportunity to make investments up front that can avoid costly impacts later. Storm water management agencies advocate for highway projects to be integrated with effective stormwater management technologies and avoid stream impairments that lead to future public expenditures related to Total Maximum Daily Loads, flood damage, restoration projects, etc. Agencies involved with parks and conservation advocate for highway projects to be used to maintain or restore stream and wildlife corridors by including such provisions as tree cover, day-lighted streams, and bridge spans that provide habitat connectivity below. Comments included:

- *Roadway projects are opportunity to fix what we know is broken with the stormwater system.*
- *How will increased runoff from the increased pavement be handled? Will bio-swales be used?*
- *Examples of Sanitation District No. 1 and community partnerships with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet include 1) working for use of Goebel Park in Covington as a project area for water quality mitigation (instead of discharging highway runoff into the Ohio River), 2) retrofit of a state/KYTC detention basin to be a bio-detention basin, and 3) terraced reforestation along I-75.*
- *The Eastern Corridor project includes advanced mitigation concepts for Clermont County in which green infrastructure projects outside of the project area would be used to mitigate for project environmental impacts (advanced mitigation projects are being identified for Hall Run and Salt Run).*

Local Agency Perspectives on Projects

Each session's opportunity for considering place-based environmental impacts at a project-level was framed by questions: Do you have comments on any individual transportation projects? Have you comments on any individual Environmental Resources or sites?

Comments on individual transportation projects, environmental resources, or sites are provided below by county session (same county as the project location with one exception). Comments identified local agency concerns about adverse environmental effects and also identified opportunity for capitalizing on transportation projects to reduce existing environmental problems.

Environmental resources for which local agencies identified concerns about impairments from recommended transportation improvements are:

- aquifer (Great Miami River buried valley aquifer),
- environmentally sensitive area (Dearborn County habitat for the Indiana bat, which is federally endangered),
- farmland; Agricultural Districts (in Northern Kentucky),
- flood plain (Little Miami River and tributaries), and
- stream quality; headwater streams (related to ridge top impacts in Northern Kentucky); Gunpowder Creek in Boone County, Tanners Creek in Dearborn County, Wilson Creek in Dearborn County).

Environmental impacts mentioned as concerns are:

- flooding,
- management of stormwater from the transportation project, and
- secondary impacts (environmental impacts from development facilitated by the transportation improvement).

Opportunities that local agencies identified for using transportation projects to improve environmental conditions were related to:

- addition of green infrastructure for stormwater management (along I-75),
- creation of greenway in a highway corridor (along I-74 and I-75 in Ohio),
- improvement to water quality by reducing combined sewer overflows (in Hamilton County and Northern Kentucky),
- reconnection of habitat (along I-74) and
- reforestation (along I-75 in Ohio).

The potential impacts and opportunities listed above are associated with the following projects. Projects preceded by an asterisk were mentioned for their potential to improve environmental conditions. Numerical codes that precede the project can be used to reference information on project status and description in Table 1 of Appendix A (note that this table applies to data in the 2008 regional transportation plan).

Butler County Session

SR63 Extension between US 127 and SR 63 at SR4 #20499

- The SR63 Extension goes through a part of St. Clair Twp. that is over the aquifer and zoned for industrial use; it will bring development to that area. Care needs to be taken as the road is constructed and as development occurs. Major industry already in the area wants to protect the aquifer quality. Marketing for new development should be focused on water users that are also interested in protecting water quality. Development will happen.
- The area proposed for SR63 extension is 10% sink: storm water runoff does not flow to surface streams but percolates downward. Permeable soils over the aquifer have a high rate of infiltration and tend to soak up runoff – these are recharge areas. Area around the Village of Seven Mile has unique storm water infiltration issues that will need another whole level of coordination if development occurs.

Clermont County Session

Eastern Corridor/SR32 Relocated as new 4-lane facility between U.S. 50 and Eight Mile Road #669 in Hamilton County

- Concern about impacts of the Eastern Corridor project on Clermont County.
- What happens in Clermont County is affected by what happens outside of the county near its borders.

(Note that concern is for this project's secondary impacts, which are environmental impacts related to development facilitated by transportation improvement.)

Hamilton County Session

Eastern Corridor/SR32 Relocated as new 4-lane facility between U.S. 50 and Eight Mile Road #669

- The Eastern Corridor project will cross the Little Miami River and be in the flood plain.

I-71 Martin Luther King Interchange part of #692

- This project will be a “game changer” that will affect that area’s transportation pattern and bring new challenges and opportunities.

***I-74 project code not available / not applicable**

- When I-74 is upgraded, the park agency will work for Shepherd Creek in Mt. Airy Forest to be removed from the culvert, which will allow for re-connection of wetlands and forested area (recommended in *Cincinnati Highways Greenspace Master Plan Strategy*).
- The county park district is looking at the potential to develop an I-74 greenway.

***I-75 expansion (Ohio approaches to Brent Spence Bridge and Thru-the-Valley/I-75 Interchange reconstruction and widening between Paddock Rd. and I-275) #75119, #76256, #77889, #82286, #82288**

- Planning is underway to use the entrance to the bridge as an opportunity to green the interstate.
- I-75 corridor expansion through Clifton provides the Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati/MSD with an opportunity for major sewer separation. MSD is working with the Ohio Department of Transportation/ODOT to build a conduit under the highway for stormwater storage (stormwater will be discharged into the river’ a 12’ diameter pipe is planned). Sewer separation will be extended east to Burnett Woods.
- Interchange reconstruction creates new area that can be used for preservation, raingardens, and green technologies.
- The Cincinnati park department will be requesting an expanded bridge crossing over the Mill Creek to allow for connective greenspace underneath and for reforestation along the entire length.

Warren County Session

SR123/SR63 Connector (Glosser Road widening and extension) #NP22

The new connector will cross nice floodplain.

Northern Kentucky Session concerning KY 536

KY 536 overall #6-158.00, #6-352.00, #702, #6-17.03, #6-17.04

- Recommended improvements warrant further consideration because the alignment passes through very rough terrain and through a lot of farmland.
- Understand the need of this project for improving transportation but stress the need for understanding its water quality impacts.

KY 536 in Boone County (widening to 5 lanes between US42 and I-75) #6-158.00

- Stormwater management improvements are needed for this facility. The provisions for managing runoff from this facility should be similar to what the county would require from a private development project, but that determination will be made by Sanitation District No. 1/SD1 and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet/KYTC. This project should be subject to requirements that address consistent standards, but there is history of exceptions for managing stormwater from roadway projects.
- Uncertain about how runoff will be managed from Mt. Zion Road's proposed expansion, which will affect Gunpowder Creek -- and the potential to develop a 20-acre site as a park if flooding will not occur.

KY 536 in Campbell County (extension of existing roadway between US 27 and KY 9) #6-352.00

- Two recommended projects in Campbell County go through Agricultural Districts.

KY 536 in Kenton County (widening to 5 lanes between Boone County line and KY 17, major widening and relocation between KY 17 and KY 16, 2-lane facility on new alignment between KY16 and KY 177) #6-162.00, #719, #734

- The Conservation District has concerns about the SR536 extension across Kenton County.
- The SR536 extension across Kenton Co. has environmental implications related to crossing ridge tops.

Northern Kentucky Session concerning I-75

***I-75 in Kenton County reconstruction and widening and Brent Spence Bridge replacement #702, #6-17.03, #6-17.04**

- The I-75 improvement and Brent Spence Bridge replacement is opportunity to address water quality impacts of stormwater. To retroactively deal with stormwater impacts is more costly than dealing with impacts on the front end. This transportation improvement can be used to help eliminate combined sewer overflows all the way from Kyles Lane.
- The construction of a new bridge to replace the Brent Spence Bridge is potential opportunity to fix the largest combined sewer overflow in Northern Kentucky.

Dearborn County Session

Pribble Road (widening between SR48 and SR 1) #512

- A re-visit **to the proposal for the SR 48 bypass** would raise environmental concerns for the effects of cuts through environmentally-sensitive areas (bat habitat) and for Tanners Creek.

Scenic Drive (widening between Wilson Creek Road and SR 48) #501

- If this project moves forward, there will be concerns for impacts to Wilson Creek.

*Potential for improving environmental conditions