

SECTION 2 - INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

The Western Hamilton County Transportation Study Area generally comprises the townships, cities and villages lying west of the Millcreek Valley. Due to the topography and its transportation network, this portion of Hamilton County remained generally rural throughout most of the 19th Century and into the first decades of the 20th Century.



The first major transportation improvement was the construction of the Cincinnati Whitewater Canal connecting the Cincinnati Riverfront to the Whitewater Canal in Dearborn County, Indiana during 1839. The canal remained active until the 1850s when the railroads began to dominate long distance travel. A tunnel section of the canal in Cleves is being studied for restoration into an interactive park.



Due to the area's topography, the railroads were generally restricted to following the river and stream valleys. The majority of railroads in Cincinnati followed the Mill Creek, Little Miami River and Licking River Valleys to points north and south. Acceptable routes for railroads in Western Hamilton County were limited. Two railroads were established along the north bank of the Ohio River (in the former canal bed and tow path). This led to industrial development in Addyston, Sedamsville, Saylor Park and other areas of west of Cincinnati along the Ohio River. At North Bend, the railroads split with one corridor following the Ohio River west to Lawrenceburg while the other turned north and followed the White Water River Valley to Harrison, Brookville, Indiana and points north to Indianapolis which included the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the Big Four Railroad. The second railroad corridor, the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway of Indiana, followed a tributary of the Mill Creek through South Fairmont and Westwood and then westward through Green Township following the Taylor Creek Valley to the Great Miami River on its way to Cottage Grove, Indiana, just south of Indianapolis. Today, all but a few portions of this railroad's right-of-way have been developed for commercial and residential uses.



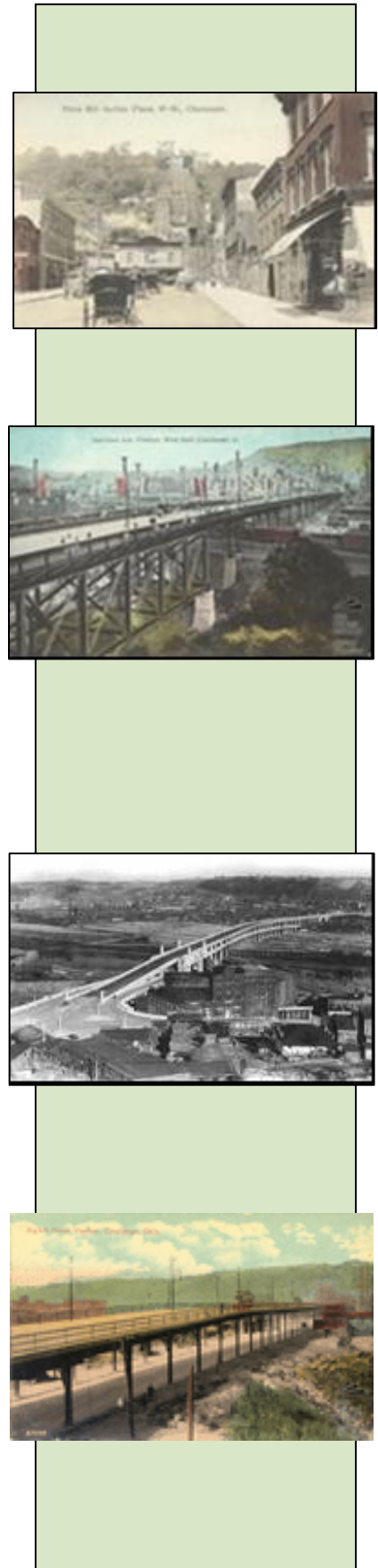
Hilltop communities such as Westwood, College Hill and Price Hill that lay within commuting distance to the industrial Mill Creek Valley gradually became urbanized as services such as the electric streetcar, water, police and fire protection was extended to those areas. The City of Cincinnati annexed these adjacent independent communities during the turn of the 20th Century. Their location above the polluted and congested Mill Creek Valley and the downtown basin made these communities desirable for those who had the means to construct a residence there. As the 20th Century progressed, development gradually moved towards smaller lots and more affordable housing as commuting became affordable to a growing percentage of Cincinnati's residents.

During the middle decades of the 20th Century, these communities experienced their greatest growth in development and population. By mid-century most of the former suburbs within Cincinnati city limits had become fully urbanized and residential growth and development shifted to the eastern portions of Colerain, Green and Delhi townships. Townships and municipalities west and north of this area including Crosby, Harrison, Miami and Whitewater townships remained primarily rural. The older municipalities of Harrison, Addyston, Miamitown, Cleves and North Bend grew modestly as they were not part of the rapidly growing residential expansion as commuter suburbs. Riverfront communities along River Road where access to the Ohio River, the Whitewater Canal and later to railroad and trucking, allowed for the development of heavy industry, limited neighborhood retail development and residential, recreational and institutional uses.

Most of the major roadway arterials that serve Western Hamilton County can trace their origins to the 19th Century as radial routes from Cincinnati to Cleves, North Bend, Harrison and north to the City of Hamilton and Butler County. Due to the rolling topography, these arterials followed the ridge lines or traversed one of many Western Hamilton County waterways including the Mill Creek and Great Miami River. Because of the paths followed, these routes are circuitous and geometrically obsolete by current engineering standards. As automobile traffic became commonplace and streetcar and interurban service declined during the 1930s, plans to straighten, widen and generally improve the major routes in Western Hamilton County were undertaken. These attempts to add capacity and improve safety have continued to the present day on such corridors as Montana Avenue, Harrison Avenue, River Road, Glenway Avenue, Queen City Avenue, Hamilton Avenue, North Bend Road and Colerain Avenue. The highly developed nature of the communities and constrained right-of-way make improvements challenging. A major transportation facility, the Western Hills Viaduct, connecting Harrison Avenue to Central Parkway, was completed in 1932.

During the 1940s, the planning and construction of the Westwood-Northern Boulevard was accomplished in an effort to provide more direct access to the rapidly growing Westwood neighborhood of Cincinnati as well as construction of the Sixth Street/Waldvogel Viaduct to provide improved automobile access to Price Hill.

During the latter half of the 1950s, the State of Ohio, Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati began planning and construction of the new interstate highway system as well as a proposed cross-county highway. What would become the Ronald Reagan Cross County Highway and Interstates 74 and 275 were planned to alleviate the need for new expressway type routes connecting the Western Hamilton County to the planned Mill Creek (Interstate 75) and Northeast Expressways (Interstate 71).





Throughout the 1960s, construction of the interstate network was occurring. The interstate system had a major impact on transforming travel behaviors and land use patterns in the region. Interstate 74 from Green Township to Indiana opened in 1969 followed by the remaining link to Interstate 75 in 1974. Interstate 275 was opened to traffic in sections during 1970s and also provided a new link to Boone County and Northern Kentucky via a new Ohio River bridge (Carroll Cropper) near Lawrenceburg, Indiana. Construction of the Ronald Reagan Cross County Highway was another significant addition to the transportation system.

This area experienced significant demographic changes as the established middle class residents began to move to newer communities outside of the City of Cincinnati limits. The majority of the residential growth during the 1960 to 1980s period occurred in northern and eastern portions of Hamilton County driven in part by infrastructure needs such as available sewer and ease of access throughout these areas. As the remaining developable land within Hamilton County, where sewer was readily available, began to dwindle, suburban development began in earnest in Butler, Warren and Clermont counties. As an option, the unincorporated townships in the western half of the Hamilton County became more attractive alternatives for residential growth. Population growth in Green and Colerain townships was very significant as over 60,000 new residents moved into the townships. The western suburbs lying within Cincinnati and older municipalities such as North College Hill and Cheviot also peaked in population during this period. Congestion and lack of access management controls following the development of the interstate system and the Ronald Reagan Cross County Highway caused several townships to consider and implement land use controls and zoning throughout many portions of Western Hamilton County.

Throughout most of the 20th Century, transit service to the suburban communities within the City of Cincinnati was provided by the Cincinnati Street Railway Company and later by the Cincinnati Transit Company. The City of Cincinnati purchased the assets of the Cincinnati Transit Company in 1972 and, along with a 1968 Resolution passed by the Hamilton County Commissioners to address issues of vehicular congestion, proceeded to facilitate the creation of the publicly funded Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA). In 1973 the City dedicated a portion of its payroll tax to assist in funding the agency. SORTA has provided public bus transit since that time.

During the last two decades, Hamilton County and City of Cincinnati, in particular, have lost population and, to a lesser extent, employment (the City of Cincinnati, however has shown a slight increase in population since the 2000 Census). While all of the urbanized western neighborhoods including the City of Cincinnati have lost population, some parts of Western Hamilton County continue to grow in the townships. The Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) has been actively installing new sanitary sewer lines to accommodate a number of new residential and commercial developments.

Working from this historical context, the Study's goal was to address Western Hamilton County's diverse existing and future transportation needs.

