

4.0 Comments and Coordination

A detailed public involvement plan was created and submitted in April, 2005 for this project. The plan defined when to engage stakeholders and what tools are planned to encourage involvement. This plan involves stakeholder, public involvement meetings, newsletters, an updated website, and a mobile display.

4.1 Implementation Committee

A stakeholder group, call the Implementation Committee, was established for the project. The committee is comprised of representatives from the community groups, public and private organizations, businesses, and local government officials. The purpose of this group is to provide input on the project for the duration of the process. Continuing stakeholder meetings are held as a part of the project's progress. A list of stakeholders is found in Table 4-1.



Figure 4-1: Implementation Committee Meeting

Table 4-1: Implementation Committee

Name	Title	Representing
William Brayshaw, P.E., P.S.	Hamilton County Engineer	Hamilton County Engineer's Office
Tim Gilday, P.E., P.S.	Planning & Design Engineer	Hamilton County Engineer's Office
Joe Vogel, P.E.	Principal Engineer	City of Cincinnati Transportation
Martha Kelly, P.E.	Principal Engineer	City of Cincinnati Transportation
Douglas Heesten	VP for Institutional Advancement	Cincinnati State
Michael H. Setzer	CEO & General Manager	SORTA
Tim Reynolds		SORTA
Steve Schuckman		City of Cincinnati Parks
Nancy Ellwood	Executive Director	Mill Creek Conservancy District
Dale McGirr	Sr. VP for Planning, Finance and Community Development	University of Cincinnati
Greg Vehr	VP for Government Relations and University Communications	University of Cincinnati
Kathy Schwab		Cincinnati Zoo (Uptown Consortium)
Lou Jannazo	Chief, Project Development	Ohio Rail Development Comm.
Donald Damron, AICP	State Rail Planner	Ohio Rail Development Comm.
Joe Gorman		Camp Washington
Mayor Richard Ellison	Village Mayor	Village of Elmwood Place
Gerry Wiedmann	Director of Development	City of St. Bernard
Joe Kempe	Director of Service	City of St. Bernard
Mayor John Estep	City Mayor	City of St. Bernard
Tim Hill	Office of Environmental Services	ODOT Central Office
Larry Hoffman	Office of Environmental Services	ODOT Central Office
James Young	Office of Roadway Engineering	ODOT Central Office
Mark Locker, AICP	Office of Urban & Corridor Planning	ODOT Central Office
Stefan Spinoso, P.E.	Technical Services Engineer	ODOT District 8
Diana Martin	Planning Administrator	ODOT District 8
Mark Clark	Planning Department	ODOT District 8
Rex Dickey	Production Administrator	ODOT District 8
Jay Hamilton	Planning & Programs	ODOT District 8
Hans Jindal	Planning & Environmental	ODOT District 8
Tom Arnold		ODOT District 8
Brandon Collett		ODOT District 8
Mark Vonder Embse	Urban Programs Engineer	FHWA
Andy Johns, AICP		OKI Regional Council
Bob Koehler, P.E.		OKI Regional Council
Bob Sala		Northside Business Association



The stakeholder group was contacted for all implementation committee meetings throughout the project's progress.

Meeting 1: A kickoff meeting for the implementation committee was held on November 29, 2004 at the ODOT District 8 office. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the committee to the project and each other. As well as explaining the role of the committee. The study area, relationship to other projects, public involvement plan, and the study process and schedule were explained. Comments and concerns about the project from the implementation committee were noted by the study team.

Meeting 2: This meeting was held on January 24, 2005 at the St. Bernard municipal building. Susan Swartz did a presentation on the purpose and need of the project. Following the presentation attendees were asked to point out any concerns or points of interest for the project on project area maps, these ideas and suggestions were then summarized at the end of this exercise. The group worked towards and succeeded in creating a problem statement for the project.

Meeting 3: The third meeting for the Mill Creek Expressway project was held on March 14, 2005. At this meeting an update on the Project Development Process (PDP) was given to the group. The group was informed that goals were established and the traffic and accident analyses were complete with existing plans reviewed, putting the project in Step 3 of the PDP process. The group was also updated on documents in the process. The Purpose and Need document had been submitted revised and resubmitted, and the Existing and Future Conditions report was in its initial submission. VISSIM models were discussed and shown at the meeting and conceptual alternatives for the project were discussed.

Meeting 4: A fourth meeting was held on June 6, 2005. This meeting included a discussion on alternatives and receiving comments from the implementation committee.

Meeting 5: This meeting was held on November 14, 2005. An update on the status of Step 5 studies including engineering, environmental, park coordination, etc. was given to the group. The alternatives developed for Step 5 were shown to the group to get their thoughts on them along with the exhibit format and comparisons to help prepare for the public meeting in January, 2006.

Meeting 6: A sixth meeting to discuss the January public involvement meeting and outcome thereof was held on April 24, 2006. A comment summary was discussed. A recap of the schedule and progress of the project was discussed and Step 6 of the PDP process was outlined for the group. Also an update on when the next mobile display was given.

Meeting 7: A seventh meeting was held on August 21, 2006, to display the feasible alternatives presented in this document. At this meeting, the project team also provided an introduction to the Aesthetic Committee process that will occur in early 2007.

All materials from the stakeholder meetings including sign-in sheets, invitations, handouts, and minutes are found in Appendix E.

4.2 Public Mailings and Notifications

A mailing list developed for this project to contact property owners with property within and near the study area of the project. The database includes 2827 property owners and is updated throughout the process with the names and contact information from meeting attendance sheets and submitted comment forms. The database is used to keep those property owners up-to-date on the latest project progress, as well as informing them on necessary environmental studies that include their properties, and upcoming public meetings.

Newsletter April, 2005 The introductory newsletter sent out gives basic background information on the project, the purpose of the project, and study area. It also included website information, project team contact information, implementation committee and future challenges information, as well as project schedule.

Newsletter May, 2005 This second newsletter gave a more in-depth description of the purpose and need for the project. A detailed description of the study area is also included in this installation.

Newsletter July 2005 The third issue of the newsletter gave insight to the conceptual alternatives developed by the study team and pre-recommended for further work. This issue included graphics showing each of the various alternatives with brief descriptions of each.

Newsletter December 2005 This fourth installation of the newsletter gave public involvement meeting information for the January 11 and 12 meetings held in two locations for convenience along with directions to each of the meeting locations. This newsletter also gave some insight on what type of alternatives were on display at the meetings and what is expected in the future of the project and where on the project schedule the current progress is at. The newsletter also gave ways to access information on related projects.

Public Meeting I Notice In December of 2005 residents within or near the study area were notified of the two possible Public Meetings and their locations held on January of 2006.

Environmental Studies Notice In April of 2005 a letter was sent to property owners within the study area to inform them of upcoming environmental studies and the possibility of necessary property entrance for these studies. A copy of the study area was attached to the letters as well.

Newsletter September 2006 / Public Meeting II Notice The fifth installation of the newsletter gave public involvement meeting information for the September 28 meeting held at the St. Bernard Municipal Building.

Surveying Notice In January of 2007 a letter was sent to property owners within the study area to inform them of upcoming surveying and the possibility of necessary property entrance.

All public mailings and notifications are found in the Appendix E.

4.3 Public Meetings

Public Involvement Meetings are an integral part of the development of alternatives as well as the NEPA process. Meetings are held during this process to gather input from the general public that the proposed action affects on a daily basis. As such, the project team organizes public meetings at each juncture during the PDP process for the project. These meetings are described in the following sections.

4.3.1 Public Meeting I: Conceptual Alternatives

A Public Meeting to display conceptual alternatives and to solicit comments was held on January 11th and 12th of 2006. Two meetings were held to accommodate more people in the wide study area and at different times making it possible for those on alternative schedules to attend. The first meeting was held at the Este Conference Center at 6270 Este Avenue in Cincinnati from 2:00pm to 7:00pm. The second meeting was held at the St. Bernard Municipal Building at 120 Washington Avenue in St. Bernard from 4:00pm to 8:00pm. Both meetings were open-house style allowing those attending to come at their convenience and peruse the displays and ask questions. Representatives from ODOT District 8, ODOT Southwest Region Real Estate, and TranSystems Corporation were in attendance to answer questions.

There were 61 people signed in at the first public meeting, including 47 members of the public. The second meeting had 136 people sign in, including 132 members of the public.

At the sign-in table, visitors were greeted and given a comment sheet and a handout. The handout gave background on the project and the alternatives displayed at the meeting, contact and schedule information, and what the next steps for the project are.

Both areas were set-up to encourage a flow of people from the boards describing the background and purpose and need for the project through the displays of the mainline and then the interchange alternatives. In the middle of each room, tables were set up with pens and a comment box for people to write and submit comments at the meeting if they so chose.

From this meeting, a total of 19 comments were received during the comment period, which lasted through January 26, 2006. These comments are distributed as follows: five comments concerning the mainline alternatives, seven concerning the interchange alternatives, and seven miscellaneous project comments. All materials concerning this meeting including; the notification letter, sign-in sheet, handout and comment sheet, comments received, comment summary, and CD with the exhibits are found in Appendix E.

4.3.2 Public Meeting II: Feasible Alternatives

A Public Meeting to display feasible alternatives and to solicit comments was held on September 28, 2006. The meeting was held at the St. Bernard Municipal Building at 120 Washington Avenue in St. Bernard from 4:00pm to 8:00pm. The meeting was held in an open-house style. Representatives from ODOT District 8, ODOT Southwest Region Real Estate, and TranSystems Corporation were in attendance to answer questions.

A sign-in sheet was located at the entrance. There were 215 signatures on the sign-in sheets, with 200 of these members of the general public. Handouts with the latest information about the project were also given to attendees at the door along with a comment sheet.



Figure 4-2: (top) Public Involvement Meeting at the Este Conference Center

Figure 4-3: (bottom) St. Bernard Municipal Building Meeting

The area was set-up to encourage a flow of people from the purpose and need boards, environmental documents table, to a VISSIM modeling display through the displays of the mainline and then the interchange alternatives and onto the real estate tables. In the middle of the room, tables were set up with pens and a comment box for people to write and submit comments at the meeting, if desired.

Comment sheets were received at the meeting and for a period that extended to October 30, 2006. 150 comment sheets were received during the comment period.

Of the 150 comments received, 94 (62.7%) were regarding issues in the Northside neighborhood, 21 (14%) were regarding St. Bernard, 10 (6.7%) were regarding Clifton, and the remaining 25 (16.7%) were miscellaneous. The bulk of the comments were regarding access (80 or 53.3% of all comments addressed this topic) and the impacts to businesses in the Northside area (66 or 44% of all comments received addressed this topic).

A CD with the public involvement materials for this meeting is located in Appendix E. The CD includes: notice for the meeting, sign-in sheets, handouts, comments, and comment summary, as well as displays from the meeting.

As a follow-up to the large number of comments received concerning Northside, ODOT District 8 and the project team coordinated with neighborhood leaders and meetings of the Northside Business Association on 10/2/06 and the Northside Community Council on 10/17/06. Materials from these meetings are included in Appendix E.

As a result of public input, ODOT agreed to consider improvements at the Colerain/Beekman interchange to offset the removed local access ramps to Northside. For more information, please refer to the discussion in Chapter 2.



Members of the project team speak with attendees about the project at the public meeting on Sept. 28, 2006 in Figures 4-4: (top) and Figure 4-5: (bottom)

4.4 Mobile Display

A mobile display was used in 2005 and 2006 to provide up-to-date project information in various public locations throughout the study area. The display included handouts with the information displayed at the time. The mobile display was updated on a regular basis as new information became available. Topics shown on the Mobile Display included:

- Purpose and Need
- Strategic Plan/Planning Study
- January 2006 Public Meeting Follow-up

Based upon a low level of interest by potential venues, no future updates of the mobile display are planned.

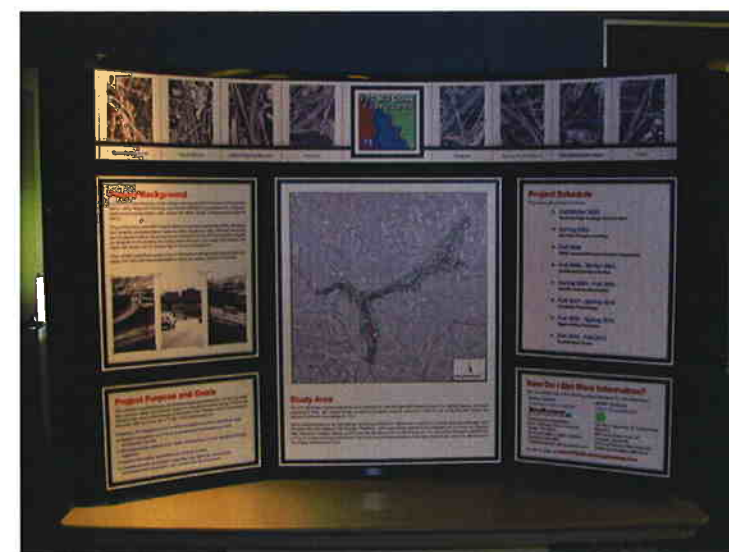


Figure 4-6: Mobile Display

4.5 Website

A project website, www.i75millcreekexpressway.com, was created in 2005 to provide general project information, updates, schedule, and graphics of the alternatives. The website accepts comments after public meetings. It is intended to stay active throughout the project. The website also offers access to other correlating project websites including the Thru the Valley, Brent Spence Bridge, Uptown Study, and OKI's Western Corridor Study.

4.6 Section 106 Consultation Process

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. Historic properties are defined as those buildings, sites or objects that are either listed in, or meet the eligibility criteria for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places. The Federal Agency therefore, is responsible for identifying potential resources and evaluating them for NRHP eligibility, assessing the effects on the historic properties if present and resolving any adverse effects.

This process involves coordination with a committee of consulting parties. According to Section 106, the Federal Agency must identify the appropriate consulting parties that need to be involved in working through the planning process. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation defines this process as "a good faith [effort] of seeking, discussing and considering views, and where feasible, seeking agreement regarding matters in the Section 106 process." Any agency, person or organization may be a consulting party.

For the I-75 Mill Creek Expressway project, over 35 agencies, persons, and organizations were invited by letter to become consulting parties for the project. Preliminary Area of Potential Effect (APE) maps for the study area were included in the announcement for a consulting parties meeting to be held August 3, 2006. Twenty-one individuals representing various agencies and organizations formally applied and/or attended the first consulting parties meeting. They include:

- ODOT District 8 – Stefan Spinosa, Mark Clark and Diana Martin
- ODOT Central Office OES – Paul Graham, Noel Alcala, Joan Randall, Susan Gasbarro
- Federal Highway Administration – Mark Vonder Embse
- State Historic Preservation Office – Nancy Campbell
- Mill Creek Watershed – Nancy Ellwood
- Cincinnati Park Board – Steve Schuckman
- City of St. Bernard – Joe Kempe

- Cincinnati Historical Society – Ruby Rogers
- Catholic Cemeteries – Steve Bittner
- City of Cincinnati – Skip Forwood
- Cincinnati Preservation Association – Margo Warminski
- Public Participant – Jeffrey Jakucyk
- Cincinnati Northside Community Urban Redevelopment Corp. – Stefanie Sunderland
- TranSystems – Susan Swartz, Andrew Schneider, David Shipps

The purpose of the August 3, 2006 meeting was to introduce the project and Section 106, describe the consulting parties process, solicit comments on the APE maps that were distributed with the invitations and distribute the findings of the Phase I history/architecture reconnaissance survey for comments. The comment period extended to September 3, 2006. Ten comments were received and addressed as a result of the meeting. The comments, comment summary, list of attendees and handouts from the meeting are included in Appendix C – Agency Coordination.

The Phase II History/Architecture report was completed and sent to the consulting parties on 10/17/06. Minor comments were received. ODOT summarized the recommendations resulting from the Phase II report in a letter to the OHPO on 2/9/07. The next step is the determination of effects and resolution of those effects through the consultation process. According to Section 106 however, the Federal Agency is ultimately the responsible party and the final decision maker. The consultation process is expected to continue through 2007.

For more information on the project's involvement with cultural resources, please refer to Section 3.12.