



INTRODUCTION

Background

In 2000, the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) and the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission (MVRPC) cooperated on a regional multi-modal transportation plan named the North South Transportation Initiative (NSTI). The primary focus of the NSTI was to determine how to improve the safety, efficiency and reliability of transportation networks within Southwest Ohio, Northern Kentucky and Southeast Indiana. Analysis of the existing and future travel corridors was combined with input obtained from stakeholders and the public. As a result, several projects were established to address the original focus of the NSTI. One of the most important corridors established by the public and stakeholders was Interstate 75. The I-75 Mill Creek Expressway study is intended to build upon this major investment study and refine the recommendations within this portion of the I-75 corridor.

Study Organizational Structure

The I-75 Mill Creek Expressway study's organizational structure was assembled at the outset of the project. Listed below are the core groups and their functions:

Sponsor – This project is sponsored by ODOT District 8, located in the City of Lebanon in Warren County, Ohio.

Review Agencies – ODOT's Central and District 8 Offices are review agencies for the I-75 Mill Creek Expressway study. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Ohio Division, located in Columbus, Ohio, is also a review agency because the modification of the Interstate Highway System is considered a Federal action, subject to FHWA review and approval.

Implementation Committee – Prior to the start of the project, an Implementation Committee was created by ODOT to properly represent the project area. The IC member organizations include; Federal Highway Administration, Ohio Rail Development Commission, OKI Regional Council, SORTA, Hamilton County Engineer's Office, Mill Creek Conservancy District, City of Cincinnati, City of St. Bernard, Village of Elmwood Place, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati State and the Uptown Consortium. The Implementation Committee's role is discussed further in the Public Involvement Plan document and the Public Involvement section of this report.

Project Manager – The project manager for the I-75 Mill Creek Expressway is Stefan Spinosa of ODOT District 8. Additional ODOT employees routinely involved in the project provide representation from multiple disciplines, including planning, environmental, roadway geometrics, and structures. From ODOT Central Office, these are Leonard Evans, Tim Hill, Larry Hoffman, Mark Locker, Suzann Rhodes and James



Young. From ODOT District 8, these include Tom Arnold, Mark Clark, Brandon Collett, Rex Dickey, Jay Hamilton, Hans Jindal and Diana Martin. As needed, specialists from hydraulics, geotechnical engineering, or specific environmental disciplines also are consulted.

Related Studies and Projects

North South Transportation Initiative (NSTI)

In 2000, the NSTI determined ways to improve safety, efficiency and reliability of the transportation networks within Southwest Ohio, Northern Kentucky and Southeast Indiana. One of the most important corridors established by the public and stakeholders was Interstate 75.

The NSTI's original preferred program of projects was divided into three classifications: Corridor Capacity Alternatives, Systems Modification Alternatives and Access Modification Alternatives. Listed below are the projects that are directly related to the I-75 Mill Creek Expressway Project.

Corridor Capacity – 4-lane Continuity with Auxiliary Lanes. The NSTI used information from previous travel demand model runs, including Average Daily Travel (ADT), per-lane capacity and number of lanes, to create a planning level study to determine the approximate number of through lanes needed on the interstate mainline. At minimum, this alternative would provide 4-lane continuity along the I-75 mainline with possible additional lanes should they be warranted. Within the I-75 Mill Creek Expressway study area this applies north of the I-74 interchange to the northern extents of the study area.

The NSTI study determined that the I-75 mainline from I-74 to Ronald Reagan Cross County Highway (located within the HAM-75-10.10 Thru the Valley Project) would need at least 6 lanes to receive a level of service (LOS) D. However, feasibility of additional lanes (beyond 4-lanes) includes numerous factors beyond acceptable level of service.

System Modification - I-74/75 Interchange, Hopple Street Interchange, Mitchell Interchange and Local improvements. This alternative recommended improvements to the I-74 and I-75 interchange along with the nearest southern interchange, Hopple Street, and the nearest northern interchange, Mitchell Avenue. The project was adopted as the number one priority system modification in the entire region and appears in OKI's 2030 Transportation Plan (# 636).

Access Modifications. The final element of the NSTI was the evaluation of access points along the interstate mainlines. Based upon identified need and possible funding sources, the modifications were classified into three categories.

- Category I Project: A high priority project to be completed in 0 to 15 years.
- Category II Project: A medium priority project to be completed in 15 to 25 years.



- Category III Project: A low priority project to be completed beyond a 25-year threshold.

The following access modification projects, along with their categorization, are within the I-75 Mill Creek Expressway study area:

Location	Category	Identification Location	Dollars (millions)
Norwood Lateral Interchange	Category I	OKI's 2030 Transportation Plan (#635)	\$18.1
Towne Street Interchange	Category I	OKI's 2030 Transportation Plan (#633)	\$12.6
Paddock Road Interchange	Category I	Not specifically identified, but included with OKI's 2030 Transportation Plan (#639)	Not Listed
Western Hills Viaduct	Category II	OKI's 2030 Transportation Plan (#698)	\$13.3

Source: North South Transportation Initiative (NSTI), 2000.

I-75 Projects and Adjacent Studies

This project serves as the link between two additional I-75 studies within Hamilton County. To the north, the [Thru the Valley](#) project involves the evaluation of I-75 from Paddock Road (on the south) to I-275 (on the north). To the south, the [Brent Spence Bridge](#) project involves a feasibility and constructability study of the replacement or rehabilitation of the functionally obsolete bridge over the Ohio River connecting Ohio and Kentucky. The study area begins at the Western Hills Viaduct and continues to the Kyle's Lane Interchange in Northern Kentucky.

Sharing the eastern boundary of the Mill Creek Expressway Project is the [Uptown Transportation Study](#) which is examining the transportation infrastructure on the Cincinnati neighborhoods of Avondale, Clifton, Clifton Heights, Corryville, East Walnut Hills, Evanston, Fairview/University Heights, Mt. Auburn, North Avondale, and Walnut Hills. The Uptown area is home to institutions such as the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Children's Hospital, VA Hospital and the Tri-Health and Health Alliance hospitals. A major component of the Uptown Transportation Study is the access to interstate highways bordering the Uptown area, including I-75.

OKI's 2030 Transportation Plan

The OKI 2030 Regional Transportation Plan, originally composed in 2001 and updated in 2004, serves as a blueprint for transportation projects in Southwest Ohio, Northern Kentucky and Southeast Indiana through the year 2030. The plan addresses current and future needs created by growth and development. At the same time, it responds to Federal Highway Administration and Clean Air Act requirements to mitigate congestion, and to address air quality and other environmental, social and financial issues. The following



plans and projects are listed in OKI's 2030 Transportation Plan 2004 Update as either having committed funding (2004-2007 TIP) or as future projects.

OKI's Western Hamilton County Corridor Study. The Western Hamilton County Corridor Study was originally recommended in OKI's 2030 Regional Transportation Plan. This major investment study will incorporate functionally-classified roadways of the western portion of Hamilton County stretching from approximately Colerain Avenue and the Mill Creek on the east, to the Indiana state line on the west; Butler County, Ohio on the north, to the Ohio River on the south. The study will focus on improving mobility and safety for residents, commuters, and freight. The study area is very large and comprised of numerous individual transportation corridors and therefore will take into consideration recommendations from several recent and on-going studies and projects including the I-75 Mill Creek Expressway Project.

Regional Light Rail Plan. The Regional Light Rail Plan includes several proposed corridors with Southwest Ohio and Northern Kentucky. Several proposed corridors are located within the existing I-75 Mill Creek Expressway Study Area. Installation of a starter line is estimated to cost about \$800 million. Preliminary Engineering and Draft Environmental Impact Statements are estimated to cost \$20 million.

Spring Grove/Central Parkway Modifications. Access management and signal priority system modifications are expected to be done along both roadways within the next ten years. It is estimated to cost \$800,000.