



## The Eastern Corridor

# NEWS

## Eastern Corridor Program Moves Forward

Spanning nearly 165 square miles, the Eastern Corridor extends east from downtown Cincinnati through Hamilton County to just beyond the I-275 corridor in western Clermont County (see map on back page).



There are few direct routes connecting Eastern Corridor communities with Greater Cincinnati's central employment and socio-economic centers. Instead, people use I-275, I-471 and crowded surface streets to reach their destinations. This means more time in the car, more fuel consumption, more traffic and congestion. It also means more accidents. These problems are expected to get worse as population and development within the region increases.

Travel through the Eastern Corridor is also limited primarily to vehicular traffic (cars, trucks, motorcycles, etc.). There are very few other ways to get from one place to another available. Nowadays, people want and need more options.

### The Plan

In 2005, a document called the Tier 1 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) presented a plan to address the Eastern Corridor's transportation challenges. Developed in response to extensive studies and public input, this plan outlined a solution that:

- Includes new and expanded roadways and improvements to existing road networks
- Establishes new rail transit and expanded bus route options
- Accommodates bicyclists and pedestrians

- Incorporates local and regional economic development, land use and environmental stewardship visions

In 2006, a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Record of Decision (ROD) advanced the Tier 1 FEIS recommendations for further study. However, work was placed on hold while funding for the next study phase was secured. Recently, that funding was made available through the FHWA and Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), with support from local municipalities and agencies. Now, work on the Eastern Corridor Program is once again underway.

### The Tier 2 Study

The current phase of the Eastern Corridor Program development process, the Tier 2 study, is taking a closer look at the Tier 1 FEIS recommendations. Program elements are being examined in much more detail and evaluated for function, context, feasibility and cost. Preliminary alternatives will be refined and narrowed down. The Tier 2 study will conclude by identifying preferred alternatives to eventually undergo detailed design and construction.

As part of this study process, the Eastern Corridor Program has been divided into four project groups. Each of these projects is highlighted on the following pages of this newsletter. Additional information is available at [www.EasternCorridor.org](http://www.EasternCorridor.org).

### When complete, the Eastern Corridor Program will:

- Ease travel through the Eastern Corridor region and facilitate economic growth and development
- Establish safer and more efficient travel connections
- Provide additional travel options within the Corridor such as rail transit, expanded bus service and improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians
- Reduce congestion, travel times and daily wear on local roadways
- Eliminate up to 50 million vehicle miles of travel from the region's roadways each year, reducing fuel consumption, air pollution and accidents
- Support the land use, economic development and environmental stewardship visions developed in concert with Eastern Corridor communities

### Did You Know?

The Eastern Corridor Program is following the detailed project development and evaluation process prescribed by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. The process focuses on identifying a proposed project's potential effects on the natural and man-made environment and identifying ways to avoid or reduce negative impacts. The NEPA process also requires extensive public involvement throughout the project development process.

## Oasis Rail Expands Options For Travel Through Eastern Corridor

The proposed Oasis Rail Transit is a regional rail line designed to transport residents, workers and visitors between downtown Cincinnati and the City of Milford, and the communities that lie in between. The rail corridor extends 17 miles between downtown's Riverfront Transit Center and I-275 in Milford. The line would serve communities throughout the Eastern Corridor and stations have been proposed for 10 possible locations (see box at right).

The rail line is divided into four segments and would run on tracks that follow a combination of new and existing rail alignments:

- **Segment 1** (1 mile): Riverfront Transit Center to the Boathouse
- **Segment 2** (7 miles): Boathouse to to US 50 in Fairfax
- **Segment 3** (4 miles): US 50 in Fairfax to Ancor (slightly northeast of Newtown)
- **Segment 4** (5 miles): Ancor to Milford

Segments 1 and 2 may be considered for construction first. Segment 3 is being developed in close coordination with the SR-32 Relocation project. This portion of the rail line will run in conjunction with SR-32's new alignment through this area and across the Little Miami River. Segment 4 will be constructed with Segment 3 or independently.

In addition to providing a valuable transportation alternative for Eastern Corridor communities, the Oasis project also offers valuable community enhancement and development opportunities, particularly in relation to the proposed rail stations. Comprehensive station area planning is in progress for each station. This process will consider the current and future land use visions of the communities in which the stations are located. Development plans for the stations – and the surrounding area – will then

be prepared in a manner that supports local needs and goals for future growth. During upcoming months, the Oasis project team will be working with local communities to develop these plans.

### Current Project Status

Work on the Oasis project's Tier 2 study began in 2010. To date, the project team has completed assessments of passenger rail technologies, the Riverfront Transit Center and the condition of the project corridor. The team has also completed environmental and demographic studies, economic modeling of the project corridor and has started the station area planning process. Three community meetings were held in the spring of 2011 to introduce and discuss the project with local communities.

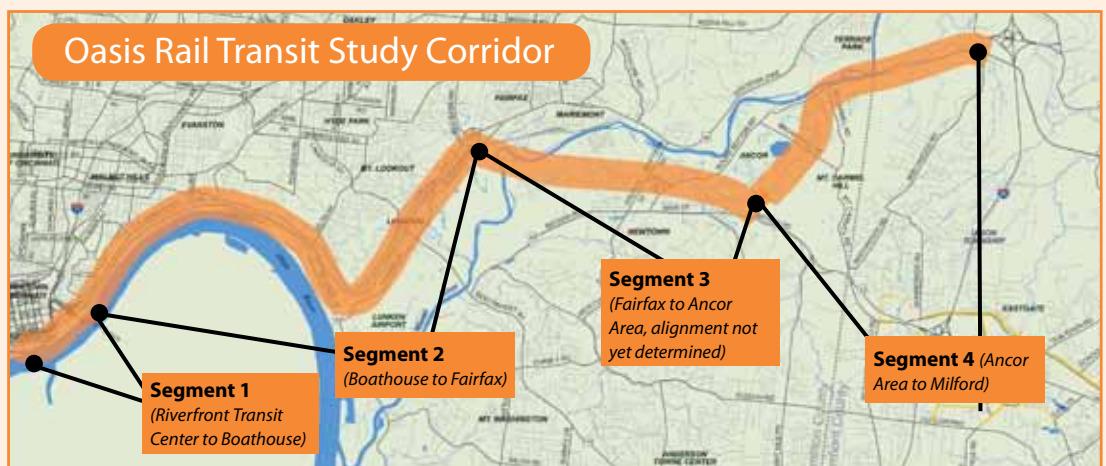
Over the next few months, the Oasis project team will continue with station area planning and will complete ridership projections as well as additional economic analyses and environmental studies. The Oasis Tier 2 study is scheduled to conclude in 2012 with the identification of:

- The type of trains that will be used
- Conceptual rail service requirements
- Station locations and station area land use plans
- A conceptual financing plan
- A locally-preferred rail transit alignment alternative

### Possible Oasis Rail Station Locations

- Riverfront Transit Center (*Downtown Cincinnati*)
- East Riverfront (*Adams Crossing area*)
- East End (*near Torrence Parkway*)
- Columbia Tusculum (*at Columbia Parkway and Delta Avenue*)
- Lunken Airport (*along Wilmer Avenue*)
- Beechmont Avenue (*at Wooster Pike*)
- Red Bank Road area (*south of Fairfax*)
- Newtown Area (*near Newtown Road*)
- Ancor/Broadwell Road Area (*slightly northeast of Newtown*)
- Milford (*near the I-275/US-50 interchange*)

*These locations were identified during previous studies. The options will be revisited and fine-tuned through public input as part of the current study.*



## Red Bank Corridor is Important Link for Eastern Corridor Program

The Red Bank Corridor extends between US-50 (Columbia Parkway) in Fairfax and the I-71 ramp in Madisonville. Its primary road, the Red Bank Expressway, is one of the only north-south thoroughfares east of I-71, and the local roadway network supports multiple sites that are experiencing a resurgence of development and growth.

The goal of the Red Bank Corridor project is to create a balance of mobility and access through this area to better serve the local communities, businesses and neighborhoods, while at the same time, improve connections to and between US-50 and I-71.

Proposed project elements include:

- Improve the Red Bank transportation corridor to better support current and future traffic volumes

- Coordinate intersection improvements with roadway design to improve accessibility, safety and traffic efficiency
- Accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians as part of overall design

It has yet to be determined what shape and form these improvements will take. Over the next several months, the Red Bank Corridor project team will be working closely with local stakeholders through the Tier 2 study process to develop a series of preliminary alternatives to be considered for the project.\*

Once a set of alternatives has been identified, the project team will perform the preliminary engineering and environmental studies needed to refine the alternatives and determine their feasibility (see article below). Study results will be shared with the public and feedback

received will be used to help narrow down the options and identify a preferred project alternative.

*\* Development of the preliminary alternatives will be consistent with the stated objectives and purposes identified in the Tier 1 FEIS and the Federal Highway Administration's 2006 Tier 1 Record of Decision.*

### Current Project Status

Thus far into the Tier 2 study, the Red Bank Corridor project team has been:

- Preparing and compiling base mapping and survey data for the study area
- Identifying specific natural and man-made environmental and design issues that need to be considered during project development
- Conducting traffic analyses to evaluate current and future problem areas

This work will continue over the next several months. The project team will also work with stakeholders to share study results and data gathered to date; identify stakeholders' concerns and visions for the corridor; and begin developing preliminary project alternatives.



## A Look At Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Analysis

Much of the Tier 2 work for the Eastern Corridor projects will include preliminary engineering and environmental analysis of the feasible alternatives.

### Preliminary Engineering

The primary purpose of preliminary engineering is to establish and develop project designs to a level such that the scope, schedule, and budget for the remainder of the design process can be determined. Preliminary engineering also

provides a level of design that allows for an educated selection of the preferred alternative.

### Environmental Analysis

Environmental analysis is used to quantify and qualify the characteristics of the natural and man-made environment. Environmental field studies are conducted for alternatives defined in the preliminary engineering study. Reports generated from these environmental field studies

are used to determine whether further investigations are needed. If it is determined that additional field work is necessary to further refine potential impacts, this work will be conducted only for the preferred alternative during future design development phases.



## SR-32 Project To Provide More Direct, Efficient Connections For Corridor Communities

As one of the primary thoroughfares within the Eastern Corridor region, SR-32 is a key element of the Eastern Corridor Program. Currently, this roadway experiences high volumes of commuter, heavy truck, and residential traffic. This creates high levels of congestion and accident rates and poor levels of overall service. In addition, like all transportation routes in the region, travel is primarily limited to vehicular traffic.

The proposed SR-32 Relocation project is intended to address these issues. The project would make local roadway network improvements, expand capacity and consolidate the many entrances and exits to the roadway, making it safer for travel and requiring less time in the car. The western end of SR-32, which currently intersects with Beechmont Avenue, would shift north to create a new direct link with

the Red Bank business corridor and I-71. This connection would be established through a new, clear-span bridge to be built across the Little Miami River and a new intersection linking SR-32, US-50 (Columbia Parkway) and Red Bank Road.

Improvements to SR-32 will not be limited to travel by cars and trucks. This multi-modal project will support expanded bus service and accommodate the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians. It also is being developed in coordination with the proposed Oasis Rail Transit project which will provide a rail-based travel alternative along central portions of the SR-32 project corridor (See Oasis Rail Transit).

Tier 2 goals for the SR-32 Relocation project include:

- Identify a preferred design alternative

### Current Project Status

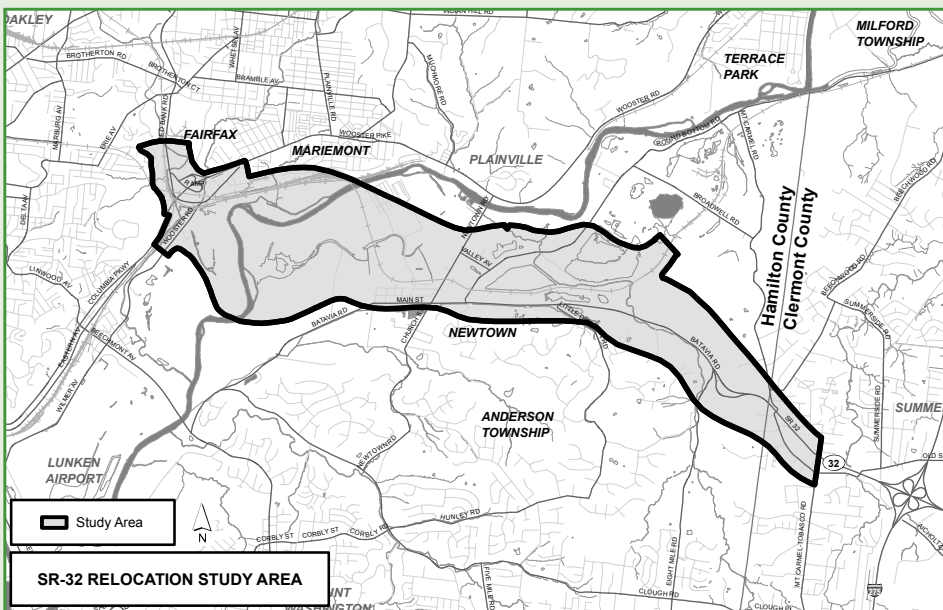
The Tier 2 study for the SR-32 Relocation project is expected to take approximately 26 months to complete. The process is just now getting started and will be well-underway in the next few months. Updates about the project's progress will be shared in public meetings and posted on [www.EasternCorridor.org](http://www.EasternCorridor.org).

- Further develop/refine design plans
- Perform the necessary environmental studies

Efforts will initially be focused on examining in detail the conceptual alternatives presented in the Tier 1 FEIS. Then, work will shift toward refining and narrowing them down to two or three feasible options for further study. This process will take into consideration impacts to the natural and man-made environment; the regional land use, economic development, and environmental stewardship visions; and public opinion (see Public Input article, on back page). The results of the study will be presented in a Tier 2 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Approval of the Tier 2 EIS by FHWA will conclude the Tier 2 study as well as the preliminary engineering and environmental phase of the project.

### Did You Know?

Information about upcoming public meetings and involvement opportunities will be posted under the Public Participation link on the Eastern Corridor website, [www.EasternCorridor.org](http://www.EasternCorridor.org). You can also share comments and questions by clicking on Submit Feedback.



The SR-32 Relocation project will extend between US-50 in Fairfax to SR-32 and Bells Lane, just west of the I-275 interchange in Clermont County.

# SR-32 IMPROVEMENTS, EASTGATE AREA

## SR-32 Projects in Eastgate Area Will Ease Congestion, Improve Local Travel

In the Eastgate area, SR-32 is a key connector between businesses, shopping and residential neighborhoods. However, like many other roads within the Eastern Corridor, travel on this section of SR-32 is hampered by high levels of congestion and frequent accidents.

The SR-32 Improvements, Eastgate Area project focuses on the length of SR-32 that extends between Eastgate Boulevard and Olive Branch-Stonelick Road. Project goals are to better serve current and projected travel demand, reduce travel delays and improve safety in a manner consistent with local transportation and economic development goals.

Proposed improvements include expanding the roadway's capacity and consolidating entrance and exit points. Access to SR-32 would be eliminated at Glen Este-Withamsville Road but other connections to the roadway would be added.

Five conceptual alternatives have been developed based on the results of comprehensive technical studies, needs assessments and public input. The project team is currently studying these alternatives in detail and working to refine and narrow them down to a single preferred alternative. The alternatives include:

- **Alternative 1** – Widen the existing SR-32 by including five through lanes and added turn lanes at intersections.
- **Alternative 2** – Construct an interchange on SR-32 between Glen Este-Withamsville Road and the existing Elick Lane/Bach Buxton Road.
- **Alternative 3** – Construct an interchange on SR-32 at the existing Elick Lane/Bach Buxton Road intersection.
- **Alternative 4** – Construct an interchange on SR-32 between the existing Elick Lane/Bach Buxton Road and Old SR-74.
- **Alternative 5** – Do not build.

These alternatives were presented to the community at a public involvement meeting held in late September.\* One of the primary concerns raised was about potential impacts on the new Union Township Library. Project representatives assured participants that while the parking lot may lose some spaces, the library itself will not be affected. All comments received from the public have been recorded as official record and will be considered as the project team moves forward with the alternative evaluation and refinement process.

### Current Project Status

Over the next year, the conceptual alternatives will be refined and narrowed down. The project team will complete preliminary engineering and environmental analyses related to the remaining alternatives, and begin the documentation process. Another community meeting will be held in 2012 to share the results of these efforts and



gather public opinion on a preferred alternative.

Once a preferred alternative has been identified, the team will prepare a preliminary design plan and submit for environmental approval. Once funding is obtained, the project team will begin securing right-of-way and developing detailed construction plans.

*\* Renderings of each alternative are included with the September 2011 Open House materials posted in the SR-32 Eastgate, Public Involvement section of the Eastern Corridor website, [www.EasternCorridor.org](http://www.EasternCorridor.org).*

### Changes Planned for I-275/SR-32 Interchange Area

The I-275/SR-32 Interchange project is the Eastern Corridor Program's first improvement action to get underway. The project will address problems associated with the existing I-275/SR-32 and Eastgate Boulevard interchanges and adjacent segments of SR-32 from approximately Bells Lane to just east of Eastgate Square Drive. These problems include high accident rates, increasing traffic and congestion and inappropriately spaced roadway access points that require motorists to merge quickly and weave in between moving traffic. Planned improvements include:

- Widening portions of SR-32 to expand capacity
- Improving spacing between intersections and interchange ramps and reconfiguring access ramps to provide easier, more efficient access
- Adjusting spacing between signalized intersections to improve flow of traffic

The project will be constructed in phases over the next four years, with a completion date planned for 2016. Pending funding, construction will begin in some areas as early as fall 2012.



# Public Input Helps Shape Eastern Corridor Program

Public involvement has played a critical role in the planning and development of the Eastern Corridor Program. Public input will continue to be instrumental as the preliminary alternatives undergo further evaluation and preferred alignments are identified. Over the course of the Tier 2 study, the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners will work closely with stakeholders to further develop the Eastern Corridor Program and its projects.\* The Program team will keep you informed and engaged through the following:

- **Community meetings** – Meeting dates will be announced through email, local media, social media and on the Eastern Corridor website
- **Project-focused Community Workshops** – Meeting dates will be announced through the above channels
- **Social Media Networking** – Become a Facebook fan and follow us on Twitter
- **Community Presentations** – Contact us if you would like to schedule a presentation for your organization
- **Eastern Corridor Program Website** – [www.EasternCorridor.org](http://www.EasternCorridor.org)
- **Email Notifications** – Sign up for email notifications on the Program website under Public Participation, Submit Feedback

Questions and comments can be submitted on the Eastern Corridor website or by calling the Eastern Corridor telephone line at (513) 888-7625.

**Get involved. Stay connected. We look forward to hearing from you.**

*\*Efforts will keep consistent with the stated objectives and purposes identified in the Tier 1 FEIS and the Federal Highway Administration's 2006 Tier 1 Record of Decision.*

## Contact Us

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## About Us

*The development of the Eastern Corridor Program is guided by a team of local, regional and state governmental and transportation agencies. This group of **Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners** includes:*

- Hamilton County Transportation Improvement District
- Clermont County Transportation Improvement District
- City of Cincinnati
- Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments
- Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority
- Ohio Department of Transportation

*The Eastern Corridor Program is administered by the Ohio Department of Transportation in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Eastern Corridor Implementation Partners.*

