

**Brent Spence Bridge Replacement/Rehabilitation Project**  
**Advisory Committee #6**  
**April 20, 2009**  
**Meeting Summary**

**Materials Distributed**

- Meeting Agenda
- Executive Summary
- Alternative Line Diagrams
- Summary Comparison of Alternatives Matrix

**Introduction**

The Advisory Committee Meeting #6 began with project team introductions. The Ohio Kentucky Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) Board President, Judge Steve Pendery provided opening statements. The meeting was held at OKI. The senators and representatives present at the meeting were noted and provided statements.

Senator George Voinovich provided statements. He stated that we need to review how we look at timing and come to a consensus on the Brent Spence Bridge project. He noted the work of the Bridge Builders group that is sponsored by OKI. He noted the importance to move forward on this project. The Brent Spence Bridge project could qualify for a significant amount of money. There are approximately 100 highway projects now in Ohio. That number would need to be reduced to get money. Senator Voinovich noted that Senator Jim Bunning was able to earmark money for this project.

Congressman Steve Driehaus provided statements. He noted the representative from Senator Sherrod Brown's office in attendance. He has discussed the Brent Spence Bridge project with Congressman Oberstar. Congressman Oberstar has questioned if this project can be used as a model for ways to use stimulus money.

Congressman Geoff Davis provided statements. He commented that this project is not limited to just Ohio and Kentucky. Commerce along this corridor is directly affected by many groups. He pointed out that this area is a major national node. Currently, \$46 million has been secured for the Brent Spence Bridge project.

**Project Status and Progress Update**

The project team provided an update of the project and summarized project activities since the last Advisory Committee meeting held in February 2008. This summarization included an overview of the results presented in the Conceptual Alternatives Study (CAS) report. The CAS report will also be posted on the project web site for public review. The results presented cover approximately a year's worth of work in evaluating the conceptual alternatives.

Project activities have been a combination of two steps of the Ohio Department of Transportation's Project Development Process (PDP). The CAS was completed in Step 5 of the PDP. Some tasks from Step 6 were also completed during Step 5 tasks. Items reviewed included costs, vertical and horizontal alignments, geotechnical, and environmental impacts.

The project is being driven by the Purpose and Need statement. The purpose of this project is to: Improve traffic flow and level of service; improve safety; correct geometric deficiencies; and maintain connections to key regional and national transportation corridors.

The list of evaluations that are being used for this project was reviewed. The conceptual alternatives were evaluated using categories to determine if the project purpose and need was met. The evaluation categories are purpose and need elements; engineering elements; impacts to natural environmental resources; impacts to cultural resources; impacts to community resources; impacts to Section 4(f) and 6(f) resources; property acquisition; land use; noise; hazardous materials; traffic capacity; signage; utility impacts; cost; maintenance of traffic; and internal/external constructability reviews. The alternatives were evaluated with these categories to identify the best components of all conceptual alternatives and also to develop a hybrid alternative.

The work on the Brent Spence Bridge project completed since the February 2008 Advisory Committee meeting was reviewed. The work included:

- Collection of certified traffic data
- Traffic analysis reports
- Design development
- Utility reviews
- Phase I and Phase II Historic Resource Surveys
- Section 4(f) Preliminary Evaluations
- Constructability review
- Residential and business displacement surveys
- Noise Screening Analysis
- Conceptual Alternatives Study

It was noted that the southern limits of the study area in Kentucky were extended to accommodate the travel lanes narrowing back to the number of existing lanes south of Dixie Highway. Additional work will be completed in this extended portion of the study area.

Duke Energy has been in contact with the project team to identify where detailed utility work would occur. Utility coordination will continue throughout project design.

While a constructability review is normally done in later steps, it is an important piece to start looking at in the current step of the project development process. Since November 2008, the project team has been collaborating with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to come to an agreement on constructability. Input also has been received from the cities of Cincinnati and Covington.

### **Results Summary**

The conceptual alternatives that were eliminated at the beginning of Step 5, Alternatives A, F, and H, were reviewed. Alternative A, which required a new bridge through Queensgate, had the most impacts and the highest cost of any alternative. Alternative F has the same concept as Alternative G with an additional direct access ramp to US 50 from I-75 southbound. However, traffic demand for the additional ramp did not justify

moving Alternative F forward. Alternative H required two new double deck bridges to be constructed east and west of existing bridge. The complex geometry was not feasible and Alternative H had the most impacts of the existing alignment alternatives.

The five alternatives evaluated in the CAS were Alternatives B, C, D, E, and G. Alternative B is the Queensgate alignment. All of the other alternatives are a variation in the existing alignment of the project corridor.

The Step 5 conceptual alternatives were developed from Step 4 alternatives, which were mainline conceptual alternatives with sub-alternatives. They were combined to create alternatives that were feasible. Alternative B involves construction of a new facility and bridge through Queensgate. Alternative B has the highest cost of the alternatives studied in Step 5. Alternatives C and D are based on Alternative 3 in Step 4. A combination of these two alternatives would result in an alternative with a better geometric design. Alternative C has the lowest cost of the conceptual alternatives. Alternative D provides a connection to KY 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Alternative E is similar to Alternatives C and D. Alternative E provides more access for Covington and Cincinnati; has the best flow of traffic; adds a third lane on the I-75 bridge; is in the middle of the costs among the five alternatives; and provides a connection to KY 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Alternative G is based on Alternative 4 in Step 4 and has the second highest costs among alternatives.

The cost estimates of the conceptual alternatives were summarized by the project team. The costs range from \$2.27 – \$2.86 billion among the alternatives. Inflation has occurred due to steel and concrete prices. The costs are carried forward to the mid-point of construction, and show inflation, right of way, construction, contingencies, and utilities. Currently, prices are declining. The costs are for the whole corridor, not just the bridge. A question was asked regarding the breakdown of the costs by segments. The bridge can not be replaced without pavement replacement and addressing the capacity issues along the corridor. The Brent Spence Bridge project is one-third of the I-75 corridor projects in Ohio within I-275. Mitigation of impacts will have to be addressed. Funds could be saved by identifying the mitigation options now.

The traffic analysis work was reviewed. Traffic counts were taken in January 2008, April 2008, and November 2008. Volumes are expected to be 230,000 vehicles per day by 2035. The goal is to handle more traffic with a better level of service (LOS) with the conceptual Build Alternatives. The No Build Alternative has a LOS E or F in the AM hours from Kyles Lane to Ezzard Charles Drive. The No Build Alternative PM hours and Alternative B are the only alternatives without a LOS better than E. In the southbound direction for the PM peak, all alternatives are LOS E or F south of KY 12<sup>th</sup> Street. This is due to having to weave traffic back to the existing four-lane configuration south of Dixie Highway. In the next phase of the project, the segments of the alternatives which provide the best level of service will be combined into the feasible alternatives.

The environmental analysis work that was completed over the past year was reviewed.

The methodology used in determining potential displacements was discussed which involved the source web sites of the Hamilton County Auditor and the Kenton County Property Value Administrator. Additionally, ODOT conducted a survey of businesses that have the potential to be displaced by this project. The majority of businesses

indicated that they would not be affected. Both the cities of Covington and Cincinnati submitted results from studies that were independently completed. The City of Covington looked at property values and direct and indirect impacts by alternative. The City of Cincinnati completed a report that focused on impacts to the Queensgate area.

A Noise Screening was completed. Current noise levels in the study area are high and close to exceeding federal and state noise abatement. Projected noise levels would increase in all conceptual alternatives. The next phase will examine the noise impacts of the feasible alternatives.

Historic resource surveys investigated the eligibility of resources for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. In the next phase of study, the impacts of the feasible alternatives will be determined.

The Section 4(f) resources in the study area were identified. Impacts to each of the five resources were discussed. The resources and preliminary impacts include:

- Lewisburg Historic District: Impacts would occur to the district boundary and residences in the historic district. Some of the residences are contributing elements to the historic district.
- Goebel Park: All alternatives would have sliver takes.
- 632 Western Avenue: Impacts are preliminary at this point.
- Longworth Hall: Alternative B is within 40 feet of the western end of the building. Alternatives C, D, E, and G all go through the building on the eastern end.
- Queensgate ball fields: Impact includes sliver takes that are less than half-acre.

The environmental studies in next phases of the project are the following:

- Noise Analysis
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessments for Properties with Hazardous Materials
- Air Quality Analysis
- Visual Quality Analysis
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts Analysis
- Phase I and Phase II Historic Resources Surveys
- Determinations of Effect for Historic Resources
- Section 4(f) Resource Evaluations
- Wetland and Stream Field Review with the US Army Corps of Engineers for Jurisdictional Determinations
- Coordinate Results of Studies with Resource Agencies in Kentucky and Ohio

These environmental studies are expected to be completed this summer and fall. The recommended alternatives are within the existing I-71 and I-75 alignment. By staying within mostly existing right of way, some of the environmental complexities are reduced that would otherwise occur on new alignments. The project team can proceed with the next steps of design work and detailed environmental impacts after coordination with agencies has been completed for the current Step 5.

Constructability of the alternatives was discussed with the Advisory Committee. Constructability is how a project gets built while maintaining traffic. The consultant, National Constructor's Group, was brought in to review constructability of the conceptual alternatives. Two alternatives were evaluated because the existing alignment alternatives would have a similar construction. Alternatives B and E were used as representatives of a Queensgate alignment and existing alignment, respectively. The constraints and goals of the constructability review were listed for the advisory committee. The detailed construction sequence was briefly reviewed. Utility relocations have to be completed first. Climbing lanes would be built on southbound I-71/I-75 to address truck backup. Existing access points in Covington and Cincinnati central business districts would be closed to allow for more space for work crews. Collector-distributor roads would then be constructed. At least two lanes would be maintained along the I-71/I-75 mainline. It was originally believed that it would be easier to build Alternative B, but the relocation of Duke Energy utilities creates significant issues. Alternative B would have a longer duration of disruption to communities in the area. The project will likely use a construction sequence between Alternative B and Alternative C. The question was asked if work is done prior to estimated construction dates or to start at 2013/2014. Either scenario (prior to construction or start of construction) can be done but it is best is to start and move through completion. It was noted that the construction can not begin until the environmental document is approved.

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### **Feasible Alternatives Recommendations**

The two feasible alternatives that are recommended for further study are:

- Alternative E
- Alternatives C and D as a hybrid

Beneficial design elements of Alternative G will be incorporated into both of the two recommended feasible alternatives. Three lanes in each direction across the bridge will be provided for both alternatives.

### **Comments from Advisory Committee**

Members of the Advisory Committee provided the following comments and questions.

Q: How can the project development process be sped up?

A: The project team explained that the schedule could be expedited by the type of environmental document that is completed. Currently, the schedule is shows an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Initial discussions have considered doing an Environmental Assessment (EA). Currently, discussions are ongoing to identify any issues of doing an EA. An EA could reduce the timeline approximately nine months over an EIS. It was noted that eliminating the Queensgate alternatives has helped in reducing the project timeline.

Q: Has the CAS has been approved yet?

A: The FHWA will approve the CAS after the May public meetings. The final report will be sent to resource agencies to provide comments. The report will be final after all comments have been reported.

Q: What is the best case schedule for construction?

A: Currently the schedule shows a Record of Decision in spring 2011. Following completion of the environmental process, detailed design would begin and construction would begin in 2015. ODOT stated that some of the timeline could be shortened. Improvements on I-471 would have to be completed to use it as part of the maintenance of traffic plan. Time has been reduced from what was anticipated a year ago. Stakeholders have mostly come to a consensus on the alternative recommendations.

### **Public Official Comments**

The following comments were made by the public officials in attendance.

- Organizations/participants have come together to get the issues associate with this project addressed.
- The project still needs funding for construction. Until then there is not a real start date.
- The project needs to remain on schedule with planning so that available funding can be obtained.
- Congressman Driehaus noted there is a unified effort in Washington D.C. to get funding for the project.

### **Next Steps**

The next steps in the project were reviewed. Public meetings are scheduled to be held on May 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. One meeting will be held in Kentucky and the other meeting will be held in Ohio. An e-newsletter will be sent to notify interested parties of these meetings. Post cards will be mailed to notify citizens of the public meetings. The project team will continue community presentations as needed and requested.

The feasible alternatives will be assessed in the next step of the project. The environmental document needs to be completed and approved before any construction occurs.

### **Public Comments**

One public comment was provided. The citizen thanked the project team for putting the information into terms that the public could understand. There is hope that the project can minimize disruption to the existing environment.

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