# Brent Spence Bridge Aesthetics Committee Meeting #2
# August 29, 2006
# Meeting Minutes

Welcome

Michael Moore started the meeting with introductions and noted that some people had been added to the committee since the last meeting.

Meeting Purpose/Process/Charter

Moore reviewed that there are currently five mainline alternatives for the project. The purpose of the meeting is to work through the existing context of the corridor and create a set of goals and evaluation criteria. The draft set of goals provided in the meeting handouts are simply a starting point. Today's exercise is to look at the big picture and assess the entire corridor, not just specific pieces.

Moore stated to the committee that Ohio Department of Transportation's Project Development Process is being used for the project and reviewed the handout of the committee charter.

Project Alternatives

Fred Craig gave a brief review of the current conceptual alternatives. The result of Part 1 of the project was five alternatives and several sub-alternatives. Currently, the project is in Part 2 of the contract. This step will include further evaluation of safety, performance, environmental impacts, and cost. A fly-through of the alternatives was shown along with historic properties and affected parcels that could be impacted.

Context of Study Corridor within I-75

Miguel Rosales discussed the context of the corridor in a three zone analysis: 1) Kentucky zone, 2) River zone, and 3) Ohio zone. He went through each zone individually then combined for the corridor as a whole.

The bridge is a gateway connecting two states. There are already several bridges in this area. The Brent Spence Bridge is the first bridge to cross from the airport into Ohio. The bridge is a standard, traditional truss bridge type. The double deck style is unique to this area. There is a lack of detail to the mostly functional bridge. The bridge currently blends in with the other bridges in this area. The bridge is currently narrow with four lanes and small shoulders. This bridge, if it remains, will be larger for traffic by having two lanes in each direction with larger shoulders.

From the Kentucky approach, the double deck creates views of a series of structures. Currently, the driver has to focus on signs and not the available views of the area. The landscape of this approach is characterized by low areas and few high rises.

The Ohio approach involves a large interchange that creates a barrier between the west and downtown Cincinnati. The ramps in the area have a high elevation due to the double deck bridge. The area is more industrial and a larger scale compared to the Kentucky approach.

Rosales discussed differences between the five mainline conceptual alternatives aided by simulation. Alternative 1 has two separate structures crossing the river and will have a total of 14 lanes. The existing bridge would have to be adapted. The new bridge will be much wider since it is a single deck. The bridge will be five lanes plus two (for shoulders). The

profile for the single deck is 168 feet and 48 feet for the double deck; therefore the single deck has a wider profile and the double deck has a higher profile.

Alternative 2 is similar to Alternative 1 except I-71 is with I-75 on a separate bridge. Additional ramps to get to the separate bridge have a visual impact because the ramps need to be high to clear structures below. The profile for the new bridge would be 216 feet.

Alternative 3 includes two double deck bridges but not the same width. Since the two bridges would be next to each other, what *both* bridges look like needs to be taken into consideration. The bridges stay in pretty much the same location but there will be a need to re-work ramps, which makes this an opportunity to change how they look.

Alternative 4 is similar to Alternative 3 except that the existing bridge would be demolished. This creates a different environment to work in since there will not be two bridges. The ramps would need to be modified. There is less residential impact than with the alternatives with separate bridges. The profile of the bridge is a double deck that is wider at the top than the bottom.

Alternative 5 includes three bridges (two single decks and one double deck in the middle). Existing ramps would be modified to accommodate the single and double deck bridges. The profile for the bridges would be 84 feet for the single decks and 48 feet for the double deck.

An example of evaluation criteria was shown for each zone for reference. For the Kentucky zone, some possibilities of evaluation criteria include visual impacts, footprint, and ramp complexity. It was reminded that there are very different views looking from south to north versus north to south. The northbound movement from Kentucky has a suburban landscape while the southbound movement from Ohio has an urban landscape. Possible evaluation criteria for the River zone can include footprint, shadow coverage, visual impact, compatibility with the existing bridge, and visual complexity. The Ohio zone evaluation criteria possibilities can include footprint, visual impact, and complexity of ramps. A question to ask when evaluating the corridor should be how users experience the corridor day-to-day.

<u>Goals and Measures Development</u>

The discussion of goals for aesthetics started with views to and from the bridge and along the corridor. A comment was made that discussion of views could distract from the functionality of the bridge and corridor. Economic protection and development, existing plans, and connectivity are important to the aesthetics of this project. Still want to look at the broader issue of connectivity between districts and neighborhoods such as the West End and Queensgate to downtown Cincinnati, and the Crescent/Western Avenue area of Covington to its business district. A goal should be the redevelopment potential that is consistent with existing plans, and that the project strives to reconnect rather than divide districts and neighborhoods.

There was a question about how far the ramps on the Ohio approach are from the proposed Banks site on the riverfront. While this was thought as possibly helping the approach, it probably would not due to the actual distance of the Banks site to the bridge.

What exists currently on the Ohio approach are a complicated series of ramps. Part of the impact to evaluate is whether or not driving is easy and not confusing, which is not the case currently. Wayfinding can be a goal to address this issue. Currently, there is too much focus on what the driver is doing instead of experiencing the surroundings. This also impacts what is happening on the ground as drivers are not able to quickly see destinations and make

decisions to exit while driving across the bridge. For southbound traffic, there needs to be clarity of how to access Fort Washington Way, downtown Cincinnati, and Kentucky.
Sustainability as a goal was discussed. The aging of a bridge is important in terms of materials, exposure, paint, etc.

The bridge will be under the authority of Kentucky. It was noted that this is not just a bridge project so aesthetics need to also include all spans of the corridor. There was a request to see guidelines on what is allowed as a compatible use.

When comparing alternatives, a comment was made that the old bridge tends to take away from the new bridge because they will be part of an overall product. Simplicity was noted as a goal to address this issue.

There was discussion on whether all ramps on the Ohio approach are necessary. The different alternatives look at ramp configuration and will be looked at during operational analysis. At this time, the committee should not focus too much on specifics because safety, environmental impacts and others will come into play. However, the committee still needs to keep in mind the project's purpose and need and design standards.

There needs to be efficiency and balance of the ramps system. There will be a balance against between items such as safety and congestion with items like connectivity.

There was discussion on the concept of "decision points" meaning places where the driver has to make a decision about where they are traveling. Most decision points are on the Ohio side and alternatives try to move some of these points to the Kentucky side. Currently, complications do not encourage people to get off at the interchanges.

There is a need for gateways both from the southbound and northbound approaches.

In reference to Alternatives 1 and 2, there is a concern that the separate bridges will create more disconnected areas or islands. At the same time, it was noted that the new areas could create new development opportunities.

It was reiterated that decisions by drivers have to be made quickly that allow the primary and tertiary decisions. There is a hierarchy that needs to be evaluated that allows for an uncluttered view for the driver. Local decisions need to be separated from interstate decisions.

A question was asked if there could be an opportunity to provide ramp access to Central Parkway to help with local access beyond areas near the riverfront. This could be an option as the project will look at all access points. There are already some collector distributor system alternatives to reduce the number of ramps. The committee should be concerned with making sure the collector distributor system is in an urban context and should not be used as an expressway. The design should be commensurate with the use of the roadway. Landscaping is important for urban use of roadways.

There was further discussion about the issue of sustainability. The project still has to look at the cost of maintenance, but still have some landscaping ideas that are maintainable at a lower intensity or cost. The committee was reminded that landscaping is not only how the surroundings look but also items such as stormwater management. The goal is to get to how things will look in the form of something like a design manual that is in accordance with the aesthetic issue.

Remember the scale of the bridge as it becomes part of the urban fabric. This is a massive structure that will bring about a large aesthetic issue.

When differentiating between alternatives, there can be different goals applied to each alternative. The project team needs to collect and factor each of these goals: 1) how each alternative aesthetically addresses each goal and 2) how to put together the goals.

Measures for the goals that were discussed include, but not limited to:

- Architecture guidelines
- Zoning
- Compatible uses
- Simplification
- Intuitive use
- Clarity and safety
- Aging character
- Location of decision points
- Uncluttered view
- Make the corridor inviting
- Urban feel

Evaluation Criteria Development

The group started to discuss how to make the evaluation criteria to address goals. Some alternatives provide for more flexibility. Separating interstate and local traffic creates a different design standard for each. The project team would like to take feedback and produce results based on this discussion then let the committee know also if there are any changes to alternatives in terms of the profile. The committee requested graphic examples of sustainability and how goals were handled elsewhere, both successful and unsuccessful.

Since there are issues with barges hitting banks and bridges, the project team will check with the Army Corp of Engineers or the Coast Guard on river traffic. The team can get feedback from the barge companies.

Input/Meeting Schedule

At the next Aesthetic Committee meeting, we will start to finalize a goal document. The project team wants to get opinions from the Aesthetic Committee to show the public that needs are trying to be met. The committee will next meet again in January or February of next year. The project team will get a summary of today's meeting to the committee as soon as possible. The team would like to try to get a ranking system from the committee and try to get a consensus during the next meeting.

The committee requested a website that is interactive and separate from the main project website. A virtual forum or Project Solve type site can be set up for this committee and the project.

Notes from Flip Charts

| GOALS | MEASURES |
|---|---|
| Viewsheds<br>• of the corridor,<br>• from bridge,<br>• driving experience | Architecture guidelines<br>Zoning |
| Connectivity | |
| Economic protection and development | Compatible use |
| Redevelopment | |
| Wayfinding | Maximize opportunities<br>Simplification<br>Intuitive use<br>Clarity and safety<br>Decision points<br>Uncluttered view |
| Sustainability | Aging character |
| Promote urbanity | |
| Minimize footprint | |
| Improve connectivity<br>• Pedestrians, business vs. safety | |
| Improve experience<br>• Drivers<br>• Residents and businesses | Make it inviting |
| Promote “gateway” | |
| Efficiency of ramping | Minimize footprint |
| Minimize separation | |
| Decision making<br>• Local<br>• Interstate | |
| Encouraging use | |
| Hierarchy of roads and decisions | |
| Roadway | |
| Landscaping | |
| Urban design<br>• Commensurate with use | “Urban feel” |
| Sustainability/constructability | |
| Maintenance | |
| Stormwater management and the landscape | |
| Appropriate scale | |
| Simplicity | |
| Flexibility in local versus interstate<br>• ie. Alternative 2 with local traffic | |
| Reduce isolation | |
| Reduce lefthand exits and center islands | |

Additional remarks:

- Send alternatives and sub-alternatives
- Start with broad goals; End with design manual that is specific
- Provide examples of how our goals were done elsewhere
- Virtual forum – Project Solve, Access

Review of Next Steps

1. Compilation of discussion and flip chart comments into the initial aesthetic goals for the project. This will be distributed to the members for review and comment in advance of the next meeting.
2. Create a secure website for the Aesthetic Committee to exchange ideas and provide comments back and forth.
3. Send out the current alternatives being considered to the committee members.
4. Post on the Aesthetic Committee website the "Aesthetic Design Guideline: Interstate Highway 235 Des Moines, Iowa" document as an example of the type of final document that will be produced.