October 24, 2016

RE: COS-SR 541-19.18/19.30 (PID 93263) Public Comment Responses
City of Coshocton, Coshocton County, Ohio

Dear Resident/Property-Business Owner/Interested Citizen:

The Ohio Department of Transportation conducted an open house public involvement meeting on September 15, 2016 to present the alternative designs for the bridge replacement and interchange reconfiguration project at the State Route 16 and State Route 541 interchange location in the City of Coshocton. The meeting was held from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM at Montgomery Hall at the Central Ohio Technical College – Coshocton Campus.

The purpose of the project is to address the existing bridge conditions. The two bridges within the project area are along SR 541 and cross over SR 16 and the Muskingum River. Bridges are inspected on an annual basis and both of the bridges within the project area have received poor and/or deficient ratings for multiple elements of each of the structures. A goal of the project is to also address substandard geometric issues related to the merging and diverging lanes at the interchange, to improve traffic flow through the interchange area, and to support long-range local planning initiatives.

The purpose of the public involvement meeting was to provide information about the project and to solicit comments from the public and stakeholders regarding the alternatives considered and the preferred alternative (Tight Diamond Interchange). The comments received were focused on the following topics:

- Closure of South Whitewoman Street at State Route 16
- Closure of North Whitewoman Street at State Route 16
- Purpose of the Interchange Reconfiguration
- Selection of the Preferred Alternative
- Speed Humps/Speed Limit Signs on Whitewoman Street
- Contractor Residency and Materials Requirements

A summary of the responses to the topics listed above is attached to this letter. A copy of this letter and responses are posted at the project website; please see link below. If you have any further questions regarding the project, please contact our office at (740) 323-4400.

http://www.dot.state.oh.us/districts/D05/MajorProjects/Pages/Coshocton-SR-16-and-SR-541-Interchange.aspx

Respectfully,

Jason Sturgeon, P.E.
Planning and Engineering Administrator
ODOT District 5

cc: File
Closure of South Whitewoman Street at State Route 16

The closure of this access point is necessary due to the reconfiguration of the proposed on-ramp from State Route (SR) 541 to State Route 16. The on-ramp will carry traffic from SR 541 to SR 16 allowing the ramp traffic to merge onto SR 16. This merging activity is expected to occur while vehicles are traveling at or in excess of 50 miles per hour. The point at which the ramp traffic from SR 541 and the traffic on SR 16 merge is located at or near the existing intersection of South Whitewoman Street and SR 16. Allowing the intersection of South Whitewoman Street at SR 16 to remain open would create an unsafe condition with vehicles traveling at high rates of speed along SR 16 and/or the southbound on-ramp opposing vehicles at a stop condition.

The existing intersection of South Whitewoman Street/State Route 16/Spitler Drive will remain open after completion of the project. The South Whitewoman Street/State Route 16/Spitler Drive intersection is immediately adjacent to the proposed intersection to be closed and allows for full movements to and from both South Whitewoman Street and SR 16. South Whitewoman Street will remain open through this area providing access to travelers on SR 16 to the businesses along South Whitewoman Street without the use of the SR 541/SR 16 interchange.
Closure of North Whitewoman Street at State Route 16

The closure of North Whitewoman Street at State Route 16 is intended to improve safety by eliminating an at-grade access point along State Route 16 and to support local planning initiatives for the roadway network and future development phases within Roscoe Village. The closure of access points along high speed highways such as SR 16 helps to improve safety by eliminating conflict points for potential crashes and improving driver expectancy along the highway.

Purpose of Interchange Reconfiguration

The current interchange configuration is substandard due to the lack of merging and diverging areas. The southbound on-ramp requires drivers to come to a stop and view on-coming traffic through the rear of the vehicle prior to merging onto State Route 16. The southbound off-ramp requires drivers to decelerate in the driving lane of SR 16 to exit onto the off-ramp and also weave across vehicles entering onto SR 16 from SR 541. The ramp areas on SR 541 are atypical with the current slip ramps and are safety concerns for both drivers and pedestrians traversing through this area.

The proposed improvements are intended to provide safe merging and diverging areas around the interchange area and to improve the continuity of the intersections along SR 541 through the interchange area. The proposed improvements are also intended to support future planning initiatives developed collaboratively by the City of Coshocton, Central Ohio Technical College, and Roscoe Village.

Preferred Alternative Selection

The analyses of traffic operations, right-of-way impacts, roadway impacts, and project costs were used to determine the ODOT preferred alternative. The traffic operations for both the Roundabout Alternative and the Tight Diamond Alternative were found to be similar in that the levels of service for the design year traffic volumes were acceptable (LOS D or better) during the design year. The Tight Diamond Alternative limited the amount of right-of-way impacts and environmental impacts and met the project goals in improving the geometrics of the interchange area, improving traffic flow, and supporting local planning initiatives.

The Tight Diamond Alternative was the least costly build alternative across the two major cost categories—right-of-way and construction (roadway plus structure costs). Due to the limited environmental, right-of-way, and geotechnical impacts and the cost savings as compared to the other feasible alternatives, the Tight Diamond Alternative was selected as the ODOT preferred alternative.

Speed Humps/Speed Limit Signs on Whitewoman Street

Improvements to Whitewoman Street will be limited to the areas around the intersections of State Route 16 and State Route 541. Further suggested improvements or questions regarding Whitewoman Street should be directed to the City of Coshocton.

Contractor Residency and Materials Requirements

ODOT is not permitted to employ specific residency requirements on federally funded projects, such as the proposed interchange project.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by ODOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 11, 2015, and executed by FHWA and ODOT.