

Comments from November 2009 Design Enhancement Meeting

Mr. Ahmed,

I am writing to voice my disdain for the plans to fix the I-70/I-71 split. I understand this is a dangerous interchange, as I have driven it before. However, the lack of caps over the highways is a decision that fails to take into account those of us living in the urban core of Columbus. I have sat by and watched highways bisect our city, so essentially it is an island surrounded by interstates. The caps over the highways, although expensive, are an opportunity to make our city great that should not be put on the back burner. So much of our transportation policy is auto-centric with a concern almost solely for getting automobiles from point A to point B as fast as possible. I ask that you reconsider the lack of caps on the split, and work with the city to set aside funds for making this happen.

On a similar note, I am also concerned that so-called "feeder" streets will merely be on-ramps for the highways. These streets are not conducive to fostering business development. Just look at 4th Street in Columbus--there is virtually no business development on this road because it is essentially a high-speed on-ramp through Columbus. Contrast this with Gay Street, which is thriving.

Thank you for all your hard work. I'm sure this is not an easy decision, but it is one that will have a tremendous impact on both myself and our city moving forward. I ask that you and ODOT consider these issues when making your decision on the split.

Regards,

Jeff Hanneken

Regarding the I-70/I-71 Design Enhancements :

- I would like to see attention given to "Greening up" the affected areas, to include especially trees along walkways throughout the project wherever is reasonable and aesthetically beneficial.
- Also, a bike lane along any new roadways would be of particular benefit to the affected community in encouraging exercise and a healthier mindset. It also would benefit commuters from local neighborhoods, as well as students of CCAD and Columbus State Universities. This I'm hoping would tie-in to The City of Columbus' future plans of making Columbus a bicycle-friendly city.

Respectfully Submitted,

Daniel C. Moss | President | HBCU Connect, LLC

Dear Mr. Ahmed,

It was with great disappointment that I viewed the plans for the Project Design Enhancements at the November 9 meeting at the Lincoln Theatre.

The Urban Avenues were a painful reminder of the damage that highways have already caused our great downtown. The Urban Avenues were not friendly towards pedestrians or bicyclists. The lack of trees, caps and design showed very little regard to the City of Columbus. It showed poor planning for a City that deserves so much better.

I chose to live in Columbus about a decade ago and have since set up shop downtown because I was excited about the revitalization of our great City. The Urban Avenues were a painful reminder of damage already done by highways toward the walkability and liveability of downtown Columbus.

Columbus deserves better.

Elizabeth Lessner

--

Elizabeth Lessner

CEO/President

Betty's Family of Restaurants

Ohio Department of Transportation

1980 W. Broad Street

Columbus, OH 43223

December 4, 2009

RE: I-70-71 Comments regarding November 9, 2009 Public Meeting

Dear Director Jolene Molitoris,

On behalf of the Olde Towne East Neighborhood Association (OTENA), we are writing to provide comments regarding the two recent public meetings conducted by ODOT on November 9 and December 2, 2009 regarding project funding for aesthetic and mitigation measures and development of 'prototypical' standards for development of the new Urban Avenues that flank our nationally and city recognized historic districts.

In summary, OTENA is distressed by plans and prototypes presented and their apparent change in direction in regards to the 'context sensitive' design principles for the abutting neighborhoods that ODOT has repeatedly insisted would be incorporated within the design of this project for the past three years. These new prototypical Urban Avenue sections as well as certain site specific solutions to problems, such as the Parsons/Urban Avenue intersection, and the lack of enhancements on the prototypical Core Bridge design to be utilized for ALL of the neighborhood's bridges to downtown, appear to neglect the needs and recommendations of our neighborhood.

Originally, it was promised that the interstate footprint would be reduced as a result of the utilization of walls versus slopes. However, review of the various schematic drawing from 2006 to the present, appears to show these trenches have not diminished in size and may have actually expanded in certain areas. The originally anticipated reduction of the trench width would have increased connectivity between the neighborhoods and provided the maximum area above to accommodate neighborhood friendly Urban Avenues and mitigating features to offset the impact of the interstate below. This expanded interstate footprint creates a domino effect as this decreases the amount of area remaining to accommodate the Urban Avenues and the mitigation features necessary to offset the interstate reconstruction.

Additionally, the Urban Avenues themselves do not appear to be the 'context sensitive' neighborhood streets described and recommended by ODOT, their consultants and neighborhood residents in countless meeting. The current schematics appear to only serve as extensions of the interstate ramps and high-speed throughways which other examples downtown illustrate their negative impact. (aka Third, Fourth, Spring and Long). Lane widths of 12 feet, comparable to freeway lanes, and signal coordination to create 'greenwaves' will be counterintuitive to the proposed 25 mph posted speed limits intended for these avenues. Numerous authorities, including Ohio native and nationally recognized authority, Dan Burden, and his firm Glatting, Jackson, Kercher and Anglin, have shown in countless communities that wide expansive pavement correlates directly with increased speeds by motorists. (See

attachments). Concurrently, these wider and faster roads create equal and opposite decreases in pedestrian use, neighboring property 'pride of ownership' and countless other intangibles that establish a sense of place. Studies have shown that urban design elements all improve the maintenance of slower speeds, increase property values and enhanced economic viability of adjoining property (Designing Road That Guide Drivers to Choose Safer Speeds; Ivan, Garrick, Hansen, November 9, 2009, University of Connecticut). With less land available and wider Urban Avenues, the ODOT response is that there is inadequate room to accommodate for visual screening of once private rear yards, potentially necessary noise mitigation measures, and provision for traffic calming devices such as trees, bumpouts, bike lanes, and sidewalks.

The current core build bridge designs recently presented to us indicates ODOT is no longer championing any additional signature bridges or caps beyond those at Spring and Long Streets. They do not adhere to the 2006 Enhancement Vision Plan previously presented to our organization. This is particularly disturbing given the historical significance of the Broad Street corridor to downtown, the neighborhood and the regional community within the area as well as the high volume of vehicles using it. The Main Street bridge, which serves as part of the only internal exit within the project and gateway to Olde Towne and the \$750,000,000 expansion to Nationwide Children's Hospital, is equally deserving of a signature bridge and enhancement fitting its importance with the context of the project.

These shortcomings in the revised prototypes disturbs us because ODOT previously has stated that as they develop Phases Two and Three of this project, they would show great care in addressing our concerns for the Hamilton Park Historic District and the Parsons Avenue Business District. In Hamilton Park, modifying an alleyway into a collector road constitutes an 'adverse affect' upon the neighboring uses. Currently these alleys of approximately 15 feet typically serve less than 100-vehicles a day for adjacent property owner access and are isolated and screened with garages and vehicle storage. The proposed Urban more than double the roadway width and increase traffic 100 fold and eliminate garage access. Once isolated rear yards now become the 'front yard' of these districts, presenting the often less than perfect visual perspective of rear yards and the total loss of privacy to property owners never intended in the original development of these streets and neighborhoods. Yet the prototypical solution provides no adequate visual or noise, safety or aesthetic transitions between the interstate bound traffic and the neighboring property owners.

Parsons Avenue Business District has similar challenges of noise, loss of access to rear yard parking areas, negative visual impact in addition to demolition of anchor historic business buildings and loss of business vitality because of awkward street configuration to existing Parsons Avenue resulting from the proposed Urban Avenue realignment. Further, though OTENA has made requests in meetings and in writing to develop a memorandum with ODOT to address our concerns, to date we have not been able to engage ODOT in executing these documents. Given that previous project goals and public commitments regarding this project may not be respected and implemented, not having a memorandum in place only increases our doubts that the care originally anticipated in working with us will come to fruition.

We've spent years working with ODOT staff to negotiate features on this project that make the project more acceptable to our community. Yet, little by little, we see these promises whittled down by a department that seems to care more about the safety of cars and the ease of access and exit for suburbanites than the people living in the shadow of this massive freeway. Furthermore, we can't believe that a Governor who championed urban issues and a department that espouses concern for all road users would allow this to happen.

We are asking that the department let common sense prevail by restoring these once promised features and, in the process, restore our faith in what we had considered a collaborative process that worked to accommodate the needs of both the neighborhoods and drivers; a model of ODOT's new commitment to 'context sensitive' design and Complete Streets initiatives.

Sincerely,

Michael Moore, President

Olde Towne East Neighborhood Association

cc: Ferzan Ahmed, Project Manager

Nancy Burton, Public Information Officer, District 6

Mayor Michael Coleman, City of Columbus

Council President, Michael Mentel

Chester Jourdan, MORPC

A THRIVING DIVERSE community urban

community
DIVERSE

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November 23, 2009

Production Dept.

Ferzan Ahmed, Project Manager
Ohio Department of Transportation
400 East William Street
Delaware OH 43015

In re: Stakeholder Comment Form
I-70/71 South Innerbelt Study
Project Design Enhancements
German Village Society

Dear Mr. Ahmed:

On behalf of the Stakeholder German Village Society, we submit the following comments regarding the I-70/71 South Innerbelt Study Project Design Enhancements. The Stakeholder Comment Form you provided does not permit the remarks, concerns, and questions we have regarding each area of enhancement, so we have used this extended communication as the means to express our views. And, although we have not been asked to express an opinion regarding several traffic flow assumptions (presented as part of the enhancement discussions), we have taken the liberty of using this letter to state additional concerns on this subject in the hope that it will open discussion regarding these issues before the project moves forward to design.

Main Line Highway:

The Main Line Highway concept, following the I-670 Retaining Wall Pattern design is acceptable in order to provide a uniform look to the "ditch" as it passes through Downtown Columbus. However, we continue to be concerned that the traffic noise/sound that will result from the flat vertical cement wall will create a din that may prove unacceptable. We encourage you to continue to look at how any variations to the surface or any tilt to the vertical surface might deflect or deaden the sound. Highway sound/noise is of great concern to us and studies need to be undertaken to assure that the retaining wall pattern proposed offers the best sound-deadening option and that all alternatives are considered to achieve the quietest result.

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Society

GERMAN VILLAGE

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Ferzan Ahmed, Project Manager
Ohio Department of Transportation

In re: Stakeholder Comment Form
German Village Society

The Arched Pier design would presumably only be used in the median under bridges (through the south leg of the I-70 interchange) and is an acceptable design; however, we have concern that highway noise/sound might be enhanced/amplified by enclosing the east and west traffic under the bridges next to our neighborhood. Having no understanding of the affect tunnel-like enclosure might have on this issue, we ask that you study the impact this may have on noise/sound coming above ground, especially in the Third Street-Fourth Street-Grant Street enclosure created by the wider bridges.

The decorative fencing to be used on top of the north and south Retaining Wall (parallel to Livingston and parallel to Fulton) is acceptable; however, we are concerned about clear responsibility for maintenance and repair of the fence after it is constructed and hope that agreements with the City of Columbus will make absolutely clear long-term responsibility. And, as was expressed by the Stakeholders at our meeting, we have a very strong desire for ample tree and/or plant coverage all along the north and south retaining wall fences with green space to help hide the freeway ditch from street level view and to help absorb/deflect street noise/sound. Again, we also hope that agreements with the City of Columbus will make clear maintenance responsibility and regular care of the area.

The Cobrahead Fixture and Low Mast Highway lighting are acceptable designs down in the ditch; however, we hope that they will not be so tall that they will contribute to a jarring street-level illumination. Street-level bridge lighting is appropriate, but illumination that is too bright from the ditch will only exaggerate the presence of the freeway below (particularly if the color of the retaining wall is bright-white).

Inasmuch as the Urban Avenues do not directly affect the area next to German Village, we will not impose our opinion regarding these designs on our neighbors.

However, under this topic you present Street Furniture and Lighting designs upon which we do have opinions.

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Ferzan Ahmed, Project Manager
Ohio Department of Transportation

In re: Stakeholder Comment Form
German Village Society

The Mastarm and Esplanade Street Light presented are acceptable for all of the above street-level lighting with underground wiring and connections. We hope that ODOT and the City of Columbus will not make these poles available to other communications and electrical companies to hang/drape any other wires and that none of these poles will be used in any other way for unsightly wiring. We are unfamiliar with any City and State regulations regarding the use of public owned telephone pole-like equipment, but want to make clear that we oppose any overhead wiring on any light and traffic fixtures. The gateways into German Village at Third Street, Fourth Street and Grant Street must be free of all overhead wiring.

The street furniture shown is acceptable, but of little practical use on any of the bridges next to German Village; there is no need for any street furniture in the cement concourses created on the bridges.

Informational signage as proposed may not be used within the boundaries of German Village without German Village Commission approval (and to date the Commission has not approved these signs) and any pedestrian informational signage must be on the north side of the ditch (Fulton Street).

As we will discuss in more detail, under the Bridge Crossings section, there is no practical location for any newspaper box, bench, or bike rack furniture on any of the bridges leading into German Village. The cement concourses that will be created over the freeway will never realistically be used by any pedestrian or bicyclist to sit in the middle of idling traffic in 6 x 6 traffic lanes.

Trash receptacles may be required on each end of a bridge and are an acceptable design; however, we continue to encourage ODOT and the City of Columbus to make clear who has responsibility for the maintenance and repair of this furniture and that a regular long-term trash collection schedule be required of the responsible party so that these fixtures do not become home to vermin and rodents.

Bridge Crossings

To say that we are abjectly disappointed in the Bridge Crossings design

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Ferzan Ahmed, Project Manager
Ohio Department of Transportation

In re: Stakeholder Comment Form
German Village Society

proposed and surprised by several revelations casually announced at the meeting is an understatement.

First, the announcement that two years of hope and desire conceptualization with supporting architectural "pretty pictures" showing Signature Bridge designs were gone and in their place cement car parks have been created, was indeed a shock. We understand the financial difficulties of our economy and those faced by our City, but these visually ugly, pedestrian unfriendly, green-space challenged concourses have killed any hope for signature gateways into any of our neighborhoods as well as any hope of reconnecting the freeway-ringed downtown to our neighborhoods in any creative and inspiring way.

Second, the announcement that despite years of City planning to return downtown streets to pedestrian-friendly traffic-calming two-way streets, the Third Street bridge is now designed to dump three lanes of south-bound traffic into one lane south bound Third Street at Livingston is unacceptable and we strongly oppose the design and proposal.

Both of these announcements, after all of our careful attention and support to the planning process, leaves us stunned and frustrated.

Over its fifty years, German Village has long hoped to reunite our neighborhood to the downtown of Columbus. Many of our residents work in the downtown. Many of the downtown businesses and residents patronize our restaurants and shops. What a wasted opportunity for downtown development and the neighborhoods that ring its center.

Third and Livingston

A German Village resident walking to work must cross a multi-lane (two-way/one-way?) Livingston Avenue, trek across a cement bridge overlooking a noisy ten-lane freeway (with 50 m.p.h. traffic) to a six-lane distributor road (freeway exit ramp), walk another block and cross another six-lane distributor road (freeway entrance ramp), to arrive at Third and Mound Streets. Ludicrously placed benches facing away from the

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Ferzan Ahmed, Project Manager
Ohio Department of Transportation

In re: Stakeholder Comment Form
German Village Society

freeway toward street-level traffic at the intersections are the only indication that pedestrians were ever considered in this design.

The pictures/designs presented show no accommodation for crosswalks, nor bicycles, nor pedestrian safety. No effort was made in the design at any visual stimulation or accommodation to unite German Village to the City, making in effect, a huge cement moat clearly dividing the neighborhood from its center. What happened to brick bridge retaining walls, brick cross walks, median strips down the middle of the bridge, planters or green space to hide the freeway below, or any devices to hide the freeway below?

Three lanes of traffic on Third Street - - driving south (one of only three southern routes out of downtown Columbus) - - is abruptly dumped into one-lane south into historic German Village's Third Street. Currently, it is impossible to cross Third Street anywhere in German Village from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. because of rush hour traffic. What can we expect when the new cement concourse forces commuters into our 25 m.p.h. historic streets? And the morning commute north into downtown Columbus is going to place idling traffic on Third Street north at Livingston for blocks waiting on light changes at Livingston and Third.

But the most egregious affront to our years of cooperation and planning is that the Gateway to German Village is not to be. No visual announcement that German Village is ahead can be contemplated with the confluence of automobiles and traffic lanes covering every available inch of streetscape. The stupefyingly dull intersection on both sides of the ditch tells the traveler that nothing special resides or works here.

Fourth and Livingston

The same challenges face Fourth Street pedestrians and bicyclists as are designed for Third Street.

Traffic to Fourth Street presents yet another lost opportunity as Livingston Avenue traffic will be forced into a new traffic stop to obtain access to downtown Columbus.

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Ferzan Ahmed, Project Manager
Ohio Department of Transportation

In re: Stakeholder Coment Form
German Village Society

As we have opined and worried before, when the new Innerbelt is completed, traffic coming from the south will seek to escape the collector-distributor road monstrosity and the bottlenecks created by the new above-ground stops at major intersections by exiting the freeway before the downtown and driving north on Front, High, and Third Streets to Livingston Avenue. Livingston Avenue will become that traffic's cross street access to downtown north streets. The flow of this traffic will back-up traffic into German Village and cause long-idling traffic to cut through our historic brick street community.

The visually numbing concrete concourse at the Fourth Street bridge also wastes any opportunity to reunited our historic community to our downtown.

Grant and Livingston

All of the same challenges facing Third and Fourth Street pedestrians and bicyclists are the same here, but greatly magnified in number and complexity with the Columbus Public Schools Africentric School and its athletic playing fields located on the north corners of Livingston.

The challenges for any enhancements and moving traffic on the bridge are enormous as the only direct downtown entrance to the freeway below is contemplated for Grant and Fulton.

The complexity of the problems faced by this bridge and access route are beyond our layman understanding; however, some obvious layman observations and concerns must be presented and addressed.

First, all downtown traffic (especially during evening rush hour) will converge on to Mound/Fulton/Livingston at Grant to obtain access to the only direct freeway entrance downtown.

Second, traffic exiting from the freeway below to the only downtown exit from the freeway at Parsons, makes the only re-entry to the freeway the half-circle from Parsons to Livingston (west), to Grant (north).

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Ferzan Ahmed, Project Manager
Ohio Department of Transportation

In re: Stakeholder Comment Form
German Village Society

Third, traffic that now uses and snarls Third Street traffic in downtown Columbus will simply be moved to Grant Street.

Fourth, idling traffic will be backed-up into German Village at Livingston and onto Grant Street and all of the other German Village streets that exit on to Livingston during high traffic flow times because of the clog of traffic entering the Grant/Fulton entrance that make a three-lane bridge impractical.

Fifth, there can be no pedestrian traffic at all on the east side of the Grant Street bridge because of pedestrian safety (crossing a freeway entrance ramp).

Sixth, school zone traffic limitations must be extended to Grant Street and its freeway bridge.

Seventh, any enhancements to this bridge must be second to all safety concerns; however, visually satisfying diversions to the volume and noise of traffic have to be addressed as they must be for the Third and Fourth Street bridges. Trees will not hide this bridge.

Conclusion and General Comments

Understanding that a limited budget (although it is hard to see one billion dollars as a limited budget) and a difficult economic environment beyond the control of any of us, places restrictions on possibility and reality, we are greatly disappointed that the project enhancement designs you seek endorsement for are so bland, bleak and boring.

Understanding that additional City and/or private funding could alleviate some of these limitations, we are greatly disappointed that no creativity or leadership has been demonstrated to see what might be or to give us options or something to work toward.

Understanding that the Ohio Department of Transportation and its consultants' only mission is to design a safe, efficient, and effective traffic flow system to resolve an unsafe and dangerous freeway through downtown Columbus, we are greatly disappointed that we have lost - - for the next fifty years - - an opportunity to re-knit and

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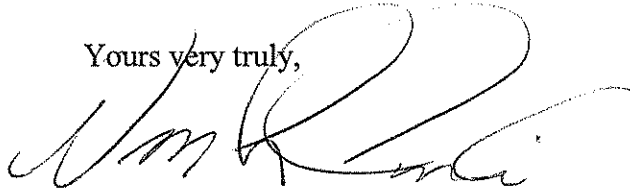
Ferzan Ahmed, Project Manager
Ohio Department of Transportation

In re: Stakeholder Comment Form
German Village Society

re-connect our downtown to its historic neighborhoods as a result of this cookie-cutter generic design to save money.

The mediocre low-bid enhancements are all "okay", if uninspiring, and give us no joy in accepting but in no way approving.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William L. Curlis', written in a cursive style.

William L. Curlis
German Village Society

bc

cc: The Honorable Michael B. Coleman, Mayor
City of Columbus

The Honorable Michael C. Mentel, President
Columbus City Council

The Honorable Hearcel F. Craig
Columbus City Council

The Honorable Andrew J. Ginther
Columbus City Council

The Honorable A. Troy Miller
Columbus City Council

The Honorable Eileen Y. Paley
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The Honorable Charleta B. Tavares
Columbus City Council

The Honorable Priscilla R. Tyson
Columbus City Council

The Honorable Paula Brooks, Commissioner
Franklin County Ohio

The Honorable Marilyn Brown, Commissioner
Franklin County Ohio

The Honorable John O'Grady, Commissioner
Franklin County Ohio

The Honorable Dean Ringle, Chair
Mid Ohio Regional Planning Commission

Mark Kelsey, Director
Department of Public Safety

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NOV 30 2009

Production Dept.

Ferzan Ahmed
Project Manager
ODOT District Six
400 E. William Street
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November 23, 2009

Re: I-70/I-71 South Innerbelt Study Comments

Dear Mr. Ahmed:

Nationwide Children's Hospital is pleased to submit our comments on the latest details of the South Innerbelt redesign. Our attendance at the public meeting Monday November 9th brought to light a few issues we wanted to bring directly to your attention. Nationwide Children's Hospital is pleased to see an investment being made in both the safety for drivers on the highway as well as the improvements to the urban avenues, bridges and other elements of the project. However, we believe that the plan, as it stands today, falls short in a few areas that should be remedied prior to construction. As a stakeholder and regular participant in this project, it does appear to NCH that prior commitments made by the Department related to enhancements for this project are not being met.

As you are already aware, the quality and appearance of the streets leading to our campus, and indeed through downtown, are of critical importance to us. Not including street trees along both sides of the length of these city streets, as indicated on the most recent plans, would be a significant lost opportunity for this project. The lack of street trees will reduce the resulting character of the urban avenues, allowing them to further divide the community — contrary to original promises of creating great, connective streets. Street trees, tree lawns, and sidewalks are essential components for any new or rebuilt city street in Columbus. We strongly encourage the officials at the Ohio Department of Transportation to work with the City of Columbus to establish standards that incorporate street trees into the design on all the improved urban avenues and streets downtown.

Additionally, Nationwide Children's Hospital supports the addition of landscaped medians along Parsons Avenue going north. The pedestrian safety and traffic calming benefits of these medians would greatly benefit the neighborhood residents as well as patients and their families at Nationwide Children's Hospital. The lack of medians currently on the plan should be remedied by including landscaped medians along Parsons Avenue through the Town Street intersection.



Finally, Nationwide Children's Hospital was disappointed to hear little to no discussion about caps on the bridges over the highway. There are a number of opportunities for caps and bridge enhancements that were previously presented that we believe would be immensely beneficial in reconnecting the neighborhoods to the downtown. Commitments were made to the community that the neighborhoods would have opportunities to influence bridge designs to reflect their local character. This is very important; and for NCH of particular interest are the Parsons Avenue and 18th Street bridge crossings, as they serve as gateways to our campus, with Main Street and Grant Avenue as secondary connections. Re-establishing these connections is one of the greatest benefits of the South Innerbelt project and not including them in the planning phases is an oversight that Nationwide Children's Hospital recommends be remedied prior to construction design.

We look forward to being involved in the design discussions regarding these bridges and caps in the near future.

We appreciate the opportunity to be a part of a project with such far reaching impacts on the City of Columbus, downtown, our urban neighborhoods, and our campus.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia J. McClimon
Senior Vice President, Planning and Facilities

Mr. Ferzan Ahmed
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December 8, 2009

Improving the pedestrian and bicycle connections may also be one element that will contribute to helping “bridge” the gap that the freeway creates between downtown and the neighborhoods on the other side of the freeway. The freeway pedestrian crossing at the Africentric School was not listed in the list of “south side bridge crossings” but is important as one of the links between the German Village area and the southeast quadrant of downtown.

Please let us know if you have any questions and/or if we can be of assistance in achieving complete streets goals on this project. Please feel free to contact my staff, Kerstin Carr, who is the manger for our active transportation and safety programs (kcarr@morpc.org/614.233.4163) and/or Ethan Ortman, who is a principal planner here at MORPC and also a German Village resident (eortman@morpc.org/614.233.4153).

Best regards,



Robert E. Lawler, P.E.
Director of Transportation

REL:bsn