

News Release

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS - 1980 W. Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43223

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ODOT proposes New Timeline for Cleveland's I-90 Innerbelt Bridge

Two Expedited Preservation Projects totaling \$142 million

will ensure Reliability for Northeast Ohio motorists

CLEVELAND (December 20, 2007) – While the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) continues its multi-year planning to modernize I-90 and the Central Viaduct through Downtown Cleveland, the state's top bridge engineers are proposing a new timeline for the preservation of the current Innerbelt Bridge, including an expedited repair project and a major rehabilitation project of the bridge, totaling more than \$142 million.

“The Innerbelt Bridge is safe,” said ODOT Director James Beasley, P.E.,P.S. “Recent inspections – especially those done immediately after the Minneapolis bridge failure – have revealed that this nearly 50-year-old bridge is aging faster than predicted. To ensure full and reliable use of the Innerbelt Bridge into the foreseeable future, ODOT is changing the sequence of its Innerbelt Plan to target the needs of the existing bridge first.”

Under original planning, construction of a new bridge would have begun no sooner than 2011, with the current bridge remaining in service and without major repair until 2014. Changes in the schedule for the new bridge lead to the logical decision to advance the planned rehabilitation of the existing bridge. Otherwise, unplanned repair projects could result in traffic restrictions and closures, which mean delays and congestion for motorists.

In partnership with the City of Cleveland and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), ODOT has initiated plans for an immediate \$2 million repair project and an expedited \$140 million preservation project. The immediate project will include the reinforcement of several gusset plates along the bridge. Work on this project will begin in the next several weeks.

Following the repair project, planning will begin immediately on a \$140 million major rehabilitation project to address the bridge deck, a deficient drainage system and supporting members for the outside lanes.

Additional details of the two-year preservation project are still being determined. Construction is expected to begin in March 2010, with one side of the bridge being rehabbed in one construction season. The following year, the remaining half of the bridge would be rehabbed, completed by the end of the season in November.

“Projects of this size and scope normally take several years to plan and construct,” said Director Beasley. “Over the next two years, ODOT will be coordinating with the City of Cleveland and its transportation partners in Northeast Ohio to plan and prepare, so motorists know what to expect.”

Prior to construction, ODOT will work with the City to designate alternative routes and to encourage travelers to use the transit system as a way of reducing anticipated congestion. ODOT continues to work with its Innerbelt partners on building consensus for the overall \$1.1 billion Innerbelt Modernization Plan.

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Attention Broadcast Media: District 12 Deputy Director Bonnie Teeuwen will be available for media comment between 9am and 10am and again between 1pm and 3pm on Thursday, December 20. Contact the District 12 Communications Office at 216-584-2006

**For more information contact Scott Varner, Central Office Communications, at 614-644-8640
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