

Meeting Notes

Date: June 16, 2005
Time: 8:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Location: Quincy Place
8111 Quincy Avenue, Suite 100
Cleveland, Ohio 44104
Attendees: CUY-Opportunity Corridor Committee
Re: **CUY-Opportunity Corridor PID 77333**
Workshop #1

The Power Point Presentation given at this workshop can be found on the project website accessed through www.innerbelt.org. The meeting minutes reflect the discussions generated as a result of the presentation.

1) Introduction

- James Ireland III, co-chair of the Opportunity Corridor Committee and president of the Musical Arts Association opened the meeting at 8 a.m. with a brief statement about the workshop's purpose and importance.
- Terri Hamilton Brown, the other co-chair of the Committee, asked participants to introduce themselves. Terri Hamilton Brown is president of University Circle Incorporated (UCI). Terri Hamilton Brown also encouraged participants to voice their concerns and the reason for their involvement.
 - She said that two years ago UCI partnered with relevant Community Development Corporations to begin analyzing the importance and feasibility of a boulevard from I-490 to University Circle.
 - As a result of the Innerbelt Study, the conceptual alternatives have been defined in more detail and four corridors have been identified for further study.
 - HNTB is working with the committee and ODOT to narrow the detailed focus down to one of the corridors by this fall, and then down to one preferred alternative by the fall of 2006.
 - Terri Hamilton Brown noted that HNTB is also creating a database of information that will be put into an evaluation matrix and used to help make decisions.

2) Project Overview

- Mary Cierbiej reviewed the objectives established for this study
- Michael Armstrong, urban programs engineer in the Columbus office of the Federal Highway Administration's office of engineering and operations, suggested a modification to one of the objectives under the goal of accessibility to say "connect to the interstate system to the west."

3) Review of Preliminary Citywide Land Use Plan

- Freddy Collier of the City of Cleveland Planning Commission emphasized that an important goal of Opportunity Corridor is to strengthen the neighborhoods/communities in the area. He provided an overview of the existing and future land use in the study area specifically calling out Beaver Avenue area, the Forgotten Triangle, as well as the Quincy and Fairfax areas.

- Claire Posius from the City Planning Commission spoke about the Beaver area and Forgotten Triangle showing maps detailing land usage. Boundaries of the Beaver area are Kinsman Avenue, East 55th Street, Woodland Avenue and East 69th Street. Boundaries of the Forgotten Triangle area are Kinsman, Woodland, and Woodhill.
- Claire Posius showed the how the city views the potential land use in the future. Much is zoned for light industry and residential, and currently Mt. Sinai has plans to redevelop the area between Woodland and the railroad tracks at E. 75th St. Mary Cierebiej noted that William Riley, head of development for Mt. Sinai Ministries, the large church at 7510 Woodland Avenue, was present at today's workshop.
- Terri Hamilton Brown asked representatives of the Planning Commission whether they had considered using the land for purposes other than residential, since it is so sparsely populated. Claire Posius said yes they have. Freddy Collier added that the Planning Commission is working to integrate the Corridor into plans for the area and at this time these are only draft recommendations. The City will continue to work with the CDCs and this committee to develop recommendations for future land use in the study area.
- Ron Eckner, a division director of the Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency (NOACA), which sets the priorities locally for federal transportation funds, asked if the first thing you want to see when entering an area light industry (referring to the area at E. 55th St. and I-490). Freddy Collier replied that the quality and appearance of the buildings are more important than what they are being used for.
- Marka Fields from the City Planning Commission then spoke about the nearby Forgotten Triangle area. She showed a map that depicted a large amount of vacant land and commented on some of the unofficial uses of the properties in the area. She said that City Planning has been working with the Burten, Bell, Carr Development Corporation regarding development. Presently, the area is zoned for light industry, retail, and housing. They see a more uniform zoning of the area in the future rather than scattered housing with light industrial.
- Freddy Collier noted that they are rezoning several areas as residential, because the ultimate goal is to repopulate the city. The area along Woddhill is the highest point of the city, so they seen this area as a good location for town houses and multi-family units.
- Jacek Ghosh, economic development director of the Fairfax Renaissance Development Corporation, discussed the Fairfax Master Plan, including the county's plans for building the Youth Intervention Center at E. 93rd St. and Quincy. An alignment that would go through the middle of the site just southeast of this site would open up more area for development. He also mentioned that the old Board of Education administration building is nearby and considered historic as something to be aware of as we look at impacts.
- Jacek Ghosh also said that nearby in proposed new economy neighborhood, there are some 50 acres of mixed-use-zoned land for development. He said that it could be developed for housing, particularly for the growing number of medical students and doctors at the Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals, who are looking for places near these facilities to rent. As housing is developed amenities become part of the development plans as well. It would also be a good location for the three-story type buildings used for research facilities. Jacek said there are only about 50 houses left in the area and about half of them are ready to be torn down.
- Terri Hamilton Brown said that UCI and the other CDCs in the study area had sent a letter to the City of Cleveland requesting that the City put a hold on the sale of any property it has "land-banked." She said she wants this property to be held by the City so it can become part of the planned redevelopment of the area, and that any development that does occur in the study area be in line with the City's recommended future land use. She stressed that UCI and the City have had a good working relationship in the past, so she hopes this can be agreed upon.

- Timothy Tramble, Executive Director of Burten, Bell, Carr, said his organization has been awarded the funding to develop a master plan for his service area on the city's East Side. Terri Hamilton Brown asked Tramble about the timeframe for his master plan. He said he hopes to have it finished by March of 2006.
- Bob Brown, Director of the Cleveland City Planning Commission, said that the City has contributed \$20,000 to the completion of the Burten, Bell, Carr master plan. This is the only CDC in the study area that does not currently have a master plan. The city will be working with BBC to develop recommendations.
- Mahmoud Al-Lozi of NOACA asked how the Corridor plan might be integrated with plans to better utilize the rail system for local industry. Ron Eckner of NOACA said there are 50 trains a day that go through the area on various rail lines. He suggested that ODOT consider road to access the rail lines and think about intermodal connections.
- Freddy Collier replied that they had not looked into it, but said they could consider it.
- Terri Hamilton Brown agreed. She said it was something to look into as we go forward.
- Mike Schipper of the GCRTA said there needs to be a higher density development and business destinations, not single family homes, within a quarter mile of the rapid stations. You need to create more activity around the nearby stations on East 79th Street to increase ridership.

4) Examination of Conceptual Alternatives

- Matt Wahl Project Manager of HNTB reviewed the four conceptual alternative routes proposed for the Opportunity Corridor. He explained some potential challenges, benefits, and shortcomings of each. The final alternative, Alternative Four, had the most vocal support from participants.

Conceptual Alternative 1:

- Currently E. 55th Street is one of the most congested nodes in the region. Terri Hamilton Brown asked if Alternative One could be taken off the table given that is already at capacity without introducing new traffic. She also noted that Alternative One does not do much for community development, so why consider it? Craig Hebebrand replied that Alternative One would be the lowest cost. Mary Cierebiej commented that Alternative One is basically the closest thing we have to a "no-build" option. Mike Armstrong of FHWA said that it needed to be kept on the table for NEPA and for cash flow analysis purposes.
- Jamie Ireland asked if the traffic numbers are workable. Mike Armstrong said he is not sure. Detailed traffic analysis has not been completed for any of the alternatives yet. Bob Brown said given the current volumes of traffic on E. 55th and Woodland it doesn't seem like it would work. This alternative has to be looked at as an option. We will know whether or not it works when NOACA runs the model.
- Terri Hamilton Brown asked if they consider Alternative One, shouldn't they look at improving north/south roadway connections? Mike Armstrong said yes and commented that one positive sign is that the community is behind this project. Bob Brown said that if it doesn't promote economic development, it may not be the preferred alternative.
- Millie Caraballo of the Cleveland Industrial Retention Initiative (CIRI) asked if all the alternatives must be studied equally. She said she thought Alternative One was a waste of time. Mike Armstrong said yes, all alternatives have to be looked at equally and added that the benefits have to outweigh the takings/impacts. Funding may be an issue, and if this is all you can do wouldn't you rather have this than nothing at all? Bob Brown said another reason to study this alternative is to determine if a different alternative works better.

- Jacek Ghosh of Fairfax inquired about East 105th Street being the eastern end of the proposed Boulevard and the possibility of another connection to University Circle through future “New Economy Neighborhood” as it was shown as an option in the Innerbelt Study. Terri Hamilton Brown of UCI said the team will look at it. Jacek said the spur through the proposed New Economy Neighborhood is shown in the Fairfax Master Plan.
- Ron Eckner of NOACA asked about anticipated average daily traffic on the proposed Corridor. Craig Hebebrand said that the Innerbelt estimated 34,000 – 37,000 vehicles in the area. The numbers generated as part of the Innerbelt Study that can be found in the study notebook. The Innerbelt Study estimated that six lanes would be required.
- Millie Caraballo asked if the six lanes are four driving lanes and two parking lanes. Craig Hebebrand said that all six would be driving lanes.
- Jamie Ireland asked how far into the future NOACA simulates traffic counts. Craig Hebebrand said that the population in that area is estimated to grow only 2.5% over the next 20 years. Future traffic is estimated for the year 2030 and for the purpose of this study opening day traffic is estimated for 2010.
- Andy Cross from City of Cleveland Division of Traffic Engineering commented that the timing of the signals on E. 55th are maxed out and traffic is still a problem, so he doesn't see how you could get all that traffic through the existing intersection, as Alternative One proposes. Matt Wahl explained that with Alternative One an option would be to relocate the Kinsman leg of the 5-legged intersection to E. 55th south of the existing intersection, but it may still be a problem. The model will tell us if it is a viable option.

Conceptual Alternative 2:

- John Hopkins of Buckeye Area Development Coporation asked Matt to explain the Woodland Avenue intersection in this conceptual alternative. Matt Wahl said Woodland would no longer be a continuous street due to geometric constraints.
- John Hopkins then requested that they keep the route of East 55th Street to Woodland up to Shaker Square in mind while considering the alternatives, not just I-490 to University Circle. He is concerned about the jog on Woodland and making the connection to Larchmere and Shaker Square.
- Terri Hamilton Brown said that a large degree of the traffic headed for Shaker Square takes Buckeye Road, but the team can look at options of making a direct connection with Woodland.
- Ron Eckner asked about the rapid stations at E. 79th St and E. 105th St. He proposed that they might consider moving the corridor more than ¼ mile away from the stations. This would allow for the necessary development that Mike Schipper had mentioned.
- Craig Hebebrand noted that this alternative had been modified from the one originally developed as part of the Innerbelt Study which was developed to minimize impacts.
- Millie Caraballo thought this would be the most expensive alternative because of all the bridges over the railroad tracks.
- Craig Hebebrand said that the structures do increase the cost of this alternative.
- Matt Wahl then explained why an intersection at E. 79th St. may not be feasible. E. 79th St. crosses over NS and GCRTA and then CSX crosses the same tracks just east of E. 79th St. at a higher elevation, so it will be very difficult to create an intersection.
- Someone asked if the number of takes associated with each of the alternatives had been estimated yet. Mike Armstrong said that when looking at the number of property takes, it is not always as bad as it seems. You need to look at the nature of the take. He explained that even if the take is one square foot of someone's lawn, it is still counted as a “take.” Details of the degree of takes associated with each alternative will come later in the process.

Conceptual Alternative 3:

- Matt Wahl explained Alternative Three. He commented that this too had some difficult intersections because of the geometry.
- Mike Armstrong noted that this alternative would have to relocate part of a cemetery and that is very expensive and legally and logistically complex to do. Each grave site that is impacted would be counted as a relocation. Mary Cierebiej added that some of the headstones are very close to the railroad property so there is not much room within the rail right of way.
- Terri Hamilton Brown asked about the impact of this alternative on the Mt. Sinai Church. William Riley answered that it would impact their complex. They anticipate new construction beginning next year. HNTB has the Mt. Sinai complex plans and noted that Mt. Sinai shows a boulevard behind the complex in their plans.
- Jacek Ghosh asked how far this alternative should be carried forward if it goes through the planned Youth Intervention site. It was explained that as the analysis of the various alternatives is conducted that this planned development needs to be considered and may become a red flag.
- Terri Hamilton Brown said this alternative is not opening up the area for economic development to the south. She suggested they research/study ways to do connect the north and the south. She inquired about any other negative impacts with this alternative. These north-south connections would be looked at as part of the refining of the alternatives.
- John Hopkins restated that a non-continuous Woodland Avenue is a problem with this alternative as well.
- Mike Armstrong asked about residential driveways along the Corridor. He said if driveways come directly out onto the corridor, ODOT must consider that as a factor that may impede traffic movement. Terri Hamilton Brown said that is a good point and that they need to study that. It was discussed that at this point any houses that would front the corridor would likely be considered as “takes”, even if the road does not impact them directly it may not be the best type of development to front the corridor.
- Bob Brown asked if there will be driveways permitted along the Corridor; he wants to see businesses along that road. Matt Wahl explained that the number of access points along the boulevard would be looked at as the study progresses.

Conceptual Alternative 4:

- Matt then explained Alternative Four, the one option that creates a boulevard south of the east-west railroad tracks.
- Ben Campbell, representing the Slavic Village CDC, inquired about the possible impacts to the new RTA rapid transit station at East 55th Street. He said pedestrians currently have to cross E. 55th to get to the station. The new station will be on the side of the neighborhood and is concerned that pedestrians will have to cross the boulevard to get to the station. HNTB and ODOT will meet with Slavic Village to work out the best solution for access to the station, and how it can successfully be integrated into the master plan for that area.
- Bob Brown said there will be a signalized intersection across the new boulevard. He said it will be safe, although it will be a lengthy crossing.
- Campbell said he feels it may still be dangerous for local residents and workers from connecting businesses using the station.
- Tim Tramble from Burten, Bell, Carr agreed that it may be dangerous. He said there are a lot of children walking along E. 55th St. to go to schools in the area who must cross the existing busy streets and now we are talking about adding another one into the area.

- Mike Schipper said that is really not the case. Cleveland school children are given free bus passes but they do not regularly use them, they prefer to walk. He said crossing the new boulevard will be the same as crossing over Chester Avenue, he said. Mike Schipper said the RTA is endorsing Alternative Four but supports all alternatives and assures that the new boulevard can work well with the new RTA station at E. 55th St.
- Jamie Ireland asked for an explanation of the Woodland Avenue intersection in this alternative. Matt Wahl said the intersection or access to Woodland is still non-continuous, but HNTB will look at other options of trying to make a direct connection and keeping Woodland continuous.
- Terri Hamilton Brown asked about vacant industry surrounding this alternative, especially in the area near E. 79th and Grand. There are a lot of vacant buildings in the study area in general, or buildings that may be being used for storage rather than any type of production. Field surveys are currently being conducted to verify what is out there.
- Millie Caraballo said the businesses in that area will not protest relocation. They have issues with their water pressure at their current locations.
- Mike Schipper said this is a good opportunity to install the right utility infrastructure in addition to the transportation systems so businesses can thrive.
- Terri Hamilton Brown asked Bob Brown to ask City administrators about possible financial contribution to improving some of the utilities in this area.
- Ben Limmer of UCI asked about the condition of the north/south connections and nearby bridges with this alternative.
 - Matt Wahl replied that some of the bridges desperately need replacing.
 - The railroad bridges are an issue; they need to look into the status.
- Ron Eckner of NOACA asked if Woodland would cross the railroad tracks where it does now in Alternative Four. Matt Wahl said that piece of Woodland would be eliminated in this alternative.
- Mike Schipper asked if that bridge needs to be replaced if we will no longer be using it if this boulevard is constructed. Craig Hebebrand said yes that it can no longer be maintained, it needs to be replaced and will be out for bid this summer.
- Terri Hamilton Brown asked if they could rank the alternatives in terms of cost.
- Craig Hebebrand and Matt Wahl said that Alternatives Two and Three look like the most expensive because of the number of structures required, but property, right of way and environmental clean-ups, can also be very expensive, so at this point it is too early to give cost estimates. Cost is a factor, especially when funding is limited, but it is not the only method of comparison between the alternatives.
- Brian Drobnick of Fairfax Renaissance asked about the possibility of a roundabout at the Woodland/Buckeye juncture similar to one at Warrensville Center Rd. and Fairmount. Matt Wahl said they have not looked at that, but is concerned about the through traffic volumes.
- Ben Campbell of the Slavic Village CDC said the Committee should think about the Bessemer Connector (Slavic Village) and the Uptown Transportation Plan (Shaker Square Development Corporation) is putting together, even though it is not inside the study area they do have some correlation.

5) Confirmation of Sensitive Sites (Red Flags)

- Mary Cierebiej reviewed sensitive historical and environmental areas in the study area on a map as well as recent and planned improvements. She asked for everyone's input, if they knew of any other areas that would be considered sensitive.

- Mary Cierebiej asked that the committee members update her as they find out about possible other sensitive locations or planned improvements. It is an ongoing process; she emphasized so we will be adding to these maps as the study progresses, and then proceeded to show maps of areas of concern: religious parcels, cemeteries, and parks/green space.

6) Evaluation Criteria

- Brian Drobnick of Fairfax Renaissance pointed out that there are far more churches in the study area than what is shown on the map. Some are small storefront churches. These churches come and go. Mary Cierebiej proceeded to show maps of vacant land owned privately and by the City, and also a map of underutilized land.
- Mary Cierebiej distributed a draft evaluation matrix listing criteria and units of measures that each alternative will be evaluated against. It details what issues the project must address and considering how each of the benefits and impacts will be measured.
- Mike Armstrong of the FHWA had two suggested revisions to the draft Conceptual Alternatives Matrix:
 - First, he reiterated the importance of looking more closely at the number and type of potential structure takes.
 - Second, he suggested that the Opportunity Corridor team further break down the number of potential impacts to say whether the residential structures are vacant or occupied. HNTB and ODOT will work with the City of Cleveland to classify these properties.
- Jacek Ghosh of Fairfax Renaissance commented that no property taxes are being generated from much of the vacant land in the area since the city currently owns the land.
- Terri Hamilton Brown pointed out that the City incurs the cost of maintaining the land bank properties, such as mowing the lawn.
- Bob Jackimowicz asked about incorporating “green” or “sustained” technology into evaluating the various alternatives.
- Bob Brown brought up other environmental concerns. Will the Corridor eliminate illegal dumping? If so, he said, it should be listed as a benefit on the check list. It was mentioned that it is actually more of an enforcement issue and what the property is zoned for rather than any of the alternatives being better able to prevent illegal dumping.
- Terri Hamilton Brown said that even though ODOT is going to make these improvements, businesses must still decide to build or relocate there. This could be a way of replacing illegal dumping sites. She asked if there is a way to demonstrate the full potential of land to business owners. She said that the type of zoning is important to prospective businesses.
- Mike Schipper of GCRTA requested that socio-economic factors are included in the list of potential impacts, such as hospitals, schools, and churches.
- Brian Drobnick of Fairfax Renaissance asked about aesthetics of the Corridor and whether that could be a criteria for evaluating the various alternatives. He is concerned that if there is a shortage of funds, aesthetics may be the first thing to go and that is a concern of the neighborhoods.
- Mike Armstrong said that aesthetics are not really important at this point in evaluating the alternatives against each other however, it will be considered later.
- Co-chair Jamie Ireland said aesthetics are a very important part overall. He urged the committee to seriously look into that aspect.
- Millie Caraballo asked that if the property currently in the city-owned land bank will stay in the land bank until the project starts.

- Co-chair Terri Hamilton Brown said the City needs to be aware of the boundaries of the study area and the letter sent to the City requesting that the land bank properties in the study area not be sold is attempt to hold the land bank properties until the recommendations of this study are available. She said that UCI and the CDCs will send a similar letter to the County regarding land and properties going through foreclosure in the study area.
- Bob Brown asked about the possibility of a county representative being invited to these meetings. Suggested names were Tracey Nichols and Paul Alsenas. The study team will contact them about getting involved.
- Terri Hamilton Brown said they are going to measure each of the four corridors against all of the evaluation criteria in order to have an equal comparison for the decision-making process.
- Mike Armstrong asked about when the Committee was going to look at funding. He pointed out that each of the four alternatives had different funding potential. Terri Hamilton Brown stated that the reason they established the policy committee was to begin identifying sources of funding and begin strategizing the next steps.
- Bob Brown asked how different alternatives can affect the funding sources.
- Mike Armstrong began explaining the federal funding methods, with the federal government contributing up to 80 percent of the project cost if federal funding is available. He added, however, that you cannot know specifically how much money will be allocated to the project until it gets farther along. Then he deferred to John Motl of ODOT who deals with the funding concerns of these roadway projects.
- John Motl said the boulevard will most likely be considered a part of the federal aide system and more than likely be a state route, therefore it would be eligible for gas tax funding. He further explained that parts of the road will be eligible for certain funding while other parts, such as utilities, are not eligible.
- Terri Hamilton Brown commented that the potential funding sources be a part of the evaluation criteria.
- Mike Armstrong made the point that one alternative may cost more than another, but it may be eligible for more state or federal funding, costing less locally.
- Mary Cierebiej will look at TRAC and the criteria for funding.
- Craig Hebebrand said they are going to examine the various funding sources in the next six months. Potential funding sources should come after that.

7) Next Steps

- Mary Cierebiej announced the dates of the next meetings:
 - Workshop, August 18th, 8 a.m. at Quincy Place.
 - September (date TBA) Committee meeting #2
 - Public Meeting (date TBA) in late September/early October.
- Mary Cierebiej also said they will make the revisions to the conceptual alternatives and draft matrices based on the comments made at this workshop and will send them out to the Committee along with the meeting notes prior to the August workshop.
- Terri Hamilton Brown asked if the committee could pull together documents that will demonstrate the magnitude and importance of this investment to business and to the public.

Meeting Attendees

CUY-Opportunity Corridor Workshop #1 – June 16, 2005

Name	Organization
Mahmoud Al-lozi	NOACA
Michael Armstrong	Federal Highway Administration
Debbie Berry	City of Cleveland Planning
Bob Bertsch	City of Cleveland Economic Development
Kelly Brooker	ODOT-Central Office
Bob Brown	City of Cleveland Planning
Ben Campbell	Slavic Village Development Corporation
Millie Caraballo	CIRI
Mary Cierebiej	HNTB Ohio, Inc.
Freddy Collier	City of Cleveland Planning
Andrew Cross	City of Cleveland Traffic Engineering
Brian Drobnick	Fairfax Renaissance Development Corporation
Ron Eckner	NOACA
Marka Fields	Cleveland City Planning
Jacek Ghosh	Fairfax Renaissance Development Corporation
Terri Hamilton Brown	University Circle Incorporated
Craig Hebebrand	ODOT District 12
John Hopkins	Buckeye Area Development Corporation
Lora Hummer	ODOT District 12
Jamie Ireland	Early Stage Partners
Robert Jackimowicz	(for Councilman Frank Jackson of Ward 5)
Ben Limmer	University Circle Incorporated
Howard Maier	NOACA
Richard McNitt	(for County Commissioner Peter Lawson Jones)
John Motl	ODOT District 12
Clair Posius	Cleveland City Planning
Bob Reeves	University Circle Incorporated
William Riley	Mt. Sinai Baptist Church/Mt. Sinai Ministries
Mike Schipper	GCRTA
Aubrey Sippola	Whelan Communications
Tim Tramble	BBC Development Corporation
Matt Wahl	HNTB Ohio, Inc.
John Wheeler	CWRU
Ned Whelan	Whelan Communications