

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
For
I-75 MILL CREEK EXPRESSWAY
INTERSTATE ROUTE 75, PID #76257 (HAM-75-2.30)
CINCINNATI, ST. BERNARD, AND ELMWOOD PLACE, OHIO

Issued Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 4332 (2)(c), 23 U.S.C. 128(a), 23 U.S.C. 138, and 49 U.S.C. 303

(This action complies with Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands; the Farmland Protection Act of 1981; and the National Historic Preservation Act)

Proposed Project

The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) plans to reconstruct Interstate 75 and add one additional through lane in each direction from the Western Hills Viaduct to north of the Paddock Road interchange. The project length is approximately 8 miles. The project also includes improvements to the interchanges on I-75 at Hopple Street, I-74, Mitchell Avenue, Norwood Lateral (SR 562), and Paddock Road. The partial interchange at Towne Street and four ramps servicing local roads at the I-74/I-75 interchange will be removed by the project. The Colerain/ Beekman interchange on I-74, just west of the I-74/I-75 interchange, will be improved as a part of this action. The southern project terminus on I-75 is in the vicinity of the Western Hills Viaduct. The northern terminus on I-75 is just north of the Paddock Road interchange. Due to improvements to the I-74/I-75 interchange, the project also extends along I-74 to the first interchange at Colerain/Beekman. The project is located in Hamilton County, Ohio, within the municipalities of Cincinnati, St. Bernard, and Elmwood Place.

The purpose of the project is to improve traffic flow and enhance safety along I-75 from the Western Hills Viaduct interchange on the south to the Paddock Road Interchange on the north. Detailed studies identified poor existing physical conditions, substandard design features, high accident rates, and pervasive congestion within the project limits.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has determined this proposed action to reconstruct Interstate 75 will have no significant impact on the human or natural environment. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is based on the Environmental Assessment (EA) approved by FHWA on December 24, 2008, along with subsequent comments and responses on the EA and supporting technical studies. The Environmental Assessment was independently evaluated by the FHWA and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the need, environmental issues, and impacts of the proposed project and appropriate mitigation measures. It provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. The FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the EA and FONSI determination.

Alternatives Considered

The transportation issues along the I-75 corridor were initially examined as a part of the North-South Transportation Initiative (NSTI), a planning-level study initiated in 2000 by Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) and the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission (MVRPC). The NSTI was a regional multi-modal transportation plan and Major Investment Study that focused on how to improve the safety, efficiency and reliability of transportation networks within Southwest Ohio, Northern Kentucky and Southeast Indiana. One of the most important corridors established by the public and stakeholders was I-75.

In late 2004, the I-75 Mill Creek Expressway project began with the intent of building upon the recommendations in the NSTI within this portion of the I-75 corridor. In June 2005, a *Planning Study Report* detailed the development of several concepts to address the identified needs of the project. In March 2006, a *Conceptual Alternatives Study* was published that refined and analyzed transportation improvements selected for further study in the planning phase. Alternatives for the project were developed for the I-75 mainline and each interchange, including Hopple, I-74/I-75, Colerain/Beekman, Mitchell, SR 562 (Norwood Lateral), Towne, and Paddock. In May 2007, an *Assessment of Feasible Alternatives* was published that combined the environmental data with design information to evaluate each