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United Way



NEW CONCEPTS UNDER STUDY FOR DOWNTOWN 'SPLIT'

The Ohio Department of Transportation is studying additional concepts that may reduce accidents and congestion in the Interstate 70/71 downtown "split." The new concepts are based on input gathered at recent community meetings.

"The concepts range from minimal to major changes, with some proposing to gut and rebuild the entire system and others advocating leaving ramps and other features unchanged," said Tim McDonald, project manager for the ODOT study. "We'll spend the next two months analyzing these public suggestions to see if they work, then share the results with the public in May."

Background

The I-70/71 downtown split is the most congested, high-crash freeway location in the state. It was built more than 40 years ago and carries about 175,000 vehicles a day — about 50,000 more than the highway was designed to handle. As a result, the highway experiences about three crashes each day.

Over the past two years, ODOT has held over 100 community meetings and gathered input from thousands of people regarding what should be done. Based on that input, ODOT narrowed the field of concepts under study and shared a draft concept in November that included rebuilding the highway to separate through and downtown traffic.

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“As with comments on any major project, the response was mixed,” said McDonald. “Some liked the concept and suggested changes, while others questioned how it worked or didn’t like it at all.”

To address community concerns and solicit suggestions for study, ODOT held public meetings over the past few months. The following is a general description of each of the eight concepts developed based on input gained at the community meetings:

1. **No Build** or leave the corridor entirely unchanged.
2. Add lanes to the freeway and build **One-way Pair, Collector-Distributor Roads**. These one-way CD roads would parallel both sides of the highway and collect traffic from existing downtown areas to distribute onto the highway. ODOT will analyze a variation of the preliminary CD road concept discussed at public meetings, but with additional ramps to increase connectivity downtown.
3. **Tunnel** I-70 and I-71 through traffic under the existing highway.
4. **Freeway Collector-Distributor Road**. This concept would place the CD road on the same level as the existing freeway with a ramp system similar to what exists today.
5. **Urbanized Freeway System**. This concept would

improve both the interchanges (at SR 315 and I-71), untangle and add lanes to the I-70/71 overlap, improve existing ramps, but leave the highway and ramp system largely unchanged. The most unsafe ramps could be consolidated or closed.

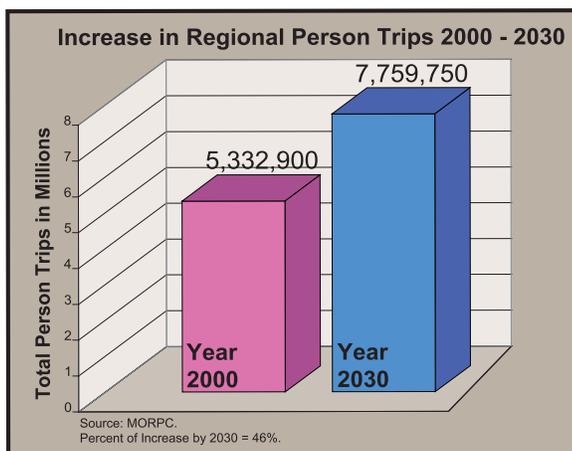
6. **Arterial Boulevard**. This concept would upgrade SR 104 and reroute I-70 through traffic out of downtown. Portions of existing I-70 in downtown Columbus would be replaced with a city boulevard.
7. **Two-way, Collector-Distributor Road Decked over the Freeway**. Add lanes to the freeway and provide CD roads over the highway away from the neighborhoods.
8. **Two-way, Collector-Distributor Road Using Local Street System**. This concept would add lanes to the freeway and create two-way CD roads downtown along Fulton and Lester.

ODOT also noted a number of good suggestions made at the community meetings to improve and enhance both the transportation system and surrounding environment. These suggestions included improved signing, caps, landscaping, decorative lighting and fencing, which will be discussed during the next phase of the project development process, and can be incorporated into any design.

Over the next two months, ODOT will conduct a preliminary analysis of these concepts to see if they fix identified problems in the split. By May, follow up public meetings will be scheduled so the public can review the results and weigh the pros and cons.

By June, ODOT wants to narrow the list of potential concepts to two or three for further analysis, before making final recommendations for the corridor by the end of the summer.

To view more detailed descriptions and comment on these new concepts, please visit the website: www.7071study.org and click on survey or contact ODOT at (614) 644-8309.



Fixing the downtown split will become increasingly important to the future of downtown Columbus. MORPC estimates that regional trips will increase by 46 percent by 2030.

