



NHX Stakeholder Meeting Notes, Meeting #4

October 4, 2022 | 5:30 p.m.

Butler County Engineers Office & Virtual through Zoom

The fourth North Hamilton Crossing (NHX) Stakeholder Committee Meeting was held as a hybrid meeting which allowed committee members to participate in person or virtually.

PARTICIPANTS

In-Person Participants

Jennifer Albinus
Michael Berding
Alicia Bowman
Andrew Bonham
Ashley Bonham
Bruce Bonham
David Bonham
Linda Bonham
Judi Boyko
Jean Eads
Shannon Hartkemeyer
Liz Hayden
Laurie Kile
Brian D. Lenihan
Josh Loewenstine
Ben Mann
Joe McAbee
Pat M(writing not clear)
Pat Moeller
Eric Pohlman
Edwin Porter
Keith Reiring
Brandon Saurber
Susan Vaughn
Jim Welch
Greg Wilkens
Pat Yingling

Representing

Dayton Lane Historic District
Fairfield Township Trustee
RENEW/North End
Bonham Farms
Bonham Farms
Bonham Farms
Bonham Farms
Bonham Farms
Butler County Administrator
North End/Fordson Heights
Fairfield Township Trustee
City of Hamilton, Planning
Ross Township
Dayton Lane/North End/RENEW
Extra Space Storage
Butler County Transportation Improvement District
Fairfield Township Trustee
Not specified
Mayor, City of Hamilton
City of Hamilton City Council
City of Hamilton, Department of Infrastructure
North End/Fordson Heights
City of Hamilton, Department of Neighborhoods
City of Hamilton, City Council
Welch Sand and Gravel
Butler County Engineer's Office
City of Hamilton

Virtual Participants

Brad Bowers	TriState Trails
Stacey Dietrich-Dudas	City of Hamilton
Ron Holt	Chem-Dyne Site Trust
Jeff Kilby	City of Hamilton School District
Alex Post	Crawford Hoying
Ellen Yordy	Ross Township
Tim Westly	Crawford Hoying

Project Team Participants

Dan Corey	Butler County TID
Rich Engle (Virtual)	City of Hamilton
Allen Messer	City of Hamilton
Keith Smith	Ohio Department of Transportation
Caroline Ammerman	Stantec
Scott Conner	Stantec
Matt Crim	Stantec
Raymond Gonzo (Virtual)	Stantec
Steve Shadix	Stantec
Lynn Corbitt	Rasor
Mimi Rasor	Rasor
Laura Whitman	Rasor

Additional Observers

(Note: Due to the nature of the Stakeholder Committee meetings as working sessions, members of the public are able to come and listen to the meeting discussions, but not participate. Meetings designed specifically to inform the public and gather public input will be held at key points throughout project development).

Lori R. Clark	Interested Resident
Daniel Hancock	Interested Resident
Tim Spoonster	Interested Resident/North End

MEETING SUMMARY

Upon entry to the meeting, attendees were given a packet of materials that included the following:

- *Map of conceptual alternatives A through E-1, shared at Meeting #3*
- *Map of conceptual alternatives AC, AD, AE, BC, BD and BE*
- *Map of conceptual alternatives ABE and EBE*
- *North Hamilton Crossing Conceptual Alternative Corridor Comparison Summary*
- *Rendering of a Typical Section of the Proposed Road*

Copies of these materials were posted on the project website following the conclusion of the meeting.

Dan Corey, Director of the Butler County Transportation Improvement District, opened the meeting, welcomed participants, reviewed the agenda, and initiated project team and meeting attendee introductions. He also reminded attendees that the role of committee members is to provide community input and perspective throughout the project development process and to:

- Represent their community/organization in discussions related to North Hamilton Crossing (NHX) studies, goals, and anticipated project outcomes;
- Share community/organization questions, concerns, and comments with the project team;
- Provide updates to their community/organization.

Mr. Corey briefly reviewed ODOT's five-stage project development process and noted that the NHX project is currently in Stage 1 (Planning) and Stage 2 (Preliminary Engineering). He also reviewed the Purpose & Need for the NHX project, which is to:

Improve east-west connectivity north of SR 129 in the City of Hamilton in order to reduce congestion and improve mobility in support of current and planned economic growth in the City of Hamilton and western Butler County, as identified in Plan Hamilton.

Primary Needs include:

- Improve east-west connectivity
- Address insufficient crossings of the Great Miami River
- Address lack of grade-separated railroad crossings
- Address mobility/congestion on local road network
- Improve safety

Secondary needs include:

- Support economic development
- Improve bike/pedestrian connectivity
- Improve multimodal linkage

Meeting Goal

Mr. Corey noted that the goal for this meeting is to present recommendations on which alternatives the project team recommends to advance for further study and to discuss these recommendations with the committee. If the committee agrees, the recommended alternatives will advance to the next phase of study, which will include a more detailed evaluation of the proposed alternatives. These alternatives will

also be shared (along with alternatives that were previously considered) with the community for review and input.

Once he concluded his remarks, Mr. Corey turned the meeting over to Allen Messer, Assistant Director of Engineering for the City of Hamilton, who provided an update on progress made since the last meeting; reviewed results of recently completed engineering and evaluations; and discussed the project team's recommendations.

Progress Update

Mr. Messer said that in May, the project team received additional information about new developments proposed in the NHX study area. To account for related traffic needs in its planning efforts, the project team expanded its traffic modeling area to include the west side of the river up to the Main Street and NW Washington intersection and reran the traffic modeling program.

- The traffic modeling program included Dynamic Traffic Assignment (DTA), which takes into account motorists who choose alternate routes in order to avoid congested areas. The team used the results of new modeling efforts to reevaluate the conceptual alternatives that had previously been proposed for NHX.
- The team also evaluated the impact of closing certain at-grade rail crossings. Based on results received, the team recommends removing the crossing at Butler Street due to its poor safety record.

Typical Road Section

Mr. Messer shared a rendering of a typical section of the proposed NHX roadway. He noted that there is a local misconception that the proposed road will be a highway, which it is not.

- At most, the road will be a five-lane road with two travel lanes in each direction and a turn lane in the middle. However, it's not expected that the new NHX road needs to be that wide in the near term. The team is going to evaluate whether three lanes can be constructed initially, with room to expand as needed in the future, possibly as far out as 20 years from now. This will help with concerns about speeds along the roadway and help bring down project costs.
- Mr. Messer also noted that the current design for the roadway includes a 12-foot-wide shared-use path on one side of the road (this is wide enough to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian travel in both directions) and a five-foot-wide sidewalk on the other side of the road. A five-foot-wide tree lawn will be between the shared-use path or sidewalk and the edge of the roadway.

Conceptual Alternative Comparison

Mr. Messer reviewed the progression of alternatives that have been developed by the project team, much of which was discussed at previous Stakeholder Committee meetings. He noted that the project team is recommending No Further Study for Alternatives A, B, C, D, E, and E1 as well as for hybrid alternatives AC, AD, AE, BC, BD, and BE. The Conceptual Alternative Corridor Comparison Summary passed out to meeting participants at the meeting (and sent to committee members prior to the meeting) lists the primary positives and negatives for each of these alternatives. Mr. Messer's comments shared during the meeting included:

- There had initially been an Alternative F and G, but both were eliminated early on due to the impact they would have on the German Village Historic District and Dayton-Campbell Historic District, which are protected areas under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966.

- Many of these alternatives were eliminated because they were ineffective at pulling traffic away from High Street during peak travel times and/or the associated impacts to neighborhoods, parks, Greenwood Cemetery, and/or underserved populations were too significant. Alternatives that do not support the City of Hamilton’s planned economic development are also not recommended for further study.
- The City of Hamilton is looking for alternatives that will reduce congestion and improve traffic flow and support economic development; they are not looking for the cheapest alternative. In fact, some of the alternatives not recommended for further study were the least expensive.
- Alternatives E and E1 would have been considered preferred alternatives under other circumstances as they meet a number of the primary needs, most notably traffic reduction. However, they cut through an area proposed for new development along the east side of the riverfront and would jeopardize a desired ability for pedestrians to walk between developments located on either side of the river.
- Alternative B and related hybrid options that use the western-most portion of Alternative B are not ideal because they connect with Lagonda Avenue, and Lagonda cannot be extended further west.
- Following the last meeting, two additional hybrid options were created, ABE and EBE. These two alternatives are recommended for further study.

Alternative ABE

Alternative ABE begins with a proposed roundabout connecting NW Washington Boulevard and North B Street, crosses Combs Park, and then crosses a new bridge over the Great Miami River. The alignment would connect with US 127 using a traditional intersection and turn south on 127. Just north of the hydraulic dam, it would turn east and bridge over the railroad and go through the southwest corner of the Bonham Farm, then travel across the hydraulic canal just east of the power plant. From there, it would turn south through LJ Smith Park (the specific alignment has yet to be determined) and follow either North 9th Street or Miami Street to Heaton Street. ABE would continue east to an intersection with SR 4 in the vicinity of the firehouse, then cross through the parking lot of the Butler County Educational Service Center building, connect to Gilmore Avenue, and continue across North Fair Avenue. The alignment would run east between the Fairgrounds and the Butler County Children Services Board, Juvenile Justice Center and Butler County Board of Developmental Services buildings, turn southeast going behind the Humane Society, and then turn south to cross Princeton, west of the existing Hampshire intersection. It would then tie into Hampshire Drive and SR 129.

- ABE has a river crossing similar to Alternative A; the difference is that ABE would turn south on US 127 instead of continuing east over the railroad into the Bonham Farm. Not having to go over the railroad immediately allows a traditional intersection to be constructed rather than the J-hook/jug-handle connection proposed in Alternative A.
- US 127 will need to be raised two to four feet just north of the hydraulic canal in order to create a traditional intersection with US 127 and still be able to bridge over the railroad as the new roadway heads east. If the road attempted to cross over the railroad further north, US 127 would need to be elevated 25-30 feet to still have a traditional intersection. This is due to the distance between US 127 and the railroad. Raising US 127 that much would be more difficult and costly to accomplish.
- We are not sure of the route through LJ Smith Park yet; it is likely that the route would impact the ballfields. There are several options under consideration, and specifics will be determined in the next phase of study. Our goal is to minimize impacts on the park and any impacted features

would be replaced. We plan to work with the neighborhood to evaluate which is the best option to do that.

- Going east, there are two possible options for the connection of the road to SR 4 using North 9th Street or Miami Street. Again the project team hopes to work with the neighborhood to help determine the best alignment for this portion of the road.
- Improvements at the new road's intersection with Princeton would take place in Phase 3.
- The City's priorities right now are Phases 1 and 2. The timing of construction will be dependent on funding; there are multiple grant funds available that the City and Butler County will pursue to help pay for the project.

Alternative EBE

Alternative EBE begins at Gordon Avenue, crosses the Great Miami River and hydraulic dam at angle, and connects with US 127 just north of the hydraulic dam. From there, it follows the same alignment as ABE, as it continues east.

Comparison of ABE and EBE

Mr. Messer briefly compared and contrasted the two alternatives.

- Both meet the project's primary purpose and need
- ABE connects directly into NW Washington, whereas EBE connects into Gordon Avenue, which is a smaller, more residential road.
- Both alternatives reduce travel time on the High & Main Street corridor (SR 129).
- Negatives for each alternative include the impact on farmland and both require business and residential relocations.
- ABE is the second most expensive of all the alternatives studied; EBE is the most expensive.

Questions and Discussion Points

A variety of questions and comments addressing multiple topics were shared during the meeting. These included:

- Improvements to B Street could be included as part of the NHX project or considered as part of the City's alternative transportation projects. The City has an active transportation plan that identifies places like B Street that need improvements. The City wants first to determine what the NHX project will look like; plans for improving B Street can be developed once that is known.
- A committee member suggested using the borrow area created from Alternative ABE's crossing of the floodplain/southwest corner of Bonham Farm into a lake or park space. The Bonham family said they weren't interested in anything that affects their farm.
- The existing Cohen recycling plant property on the east side of the river, directly across from Spooky Nook, has been identified as the location for a new major development within the City of Hamilton. It was noted that both alternatives ABE and EBE avoid this area, and both are recommended for further study. However, alternatives that do affect this area are no longer recommended for further study.
 - A Fairfield Township representative said that the City's desire to support economic development in this area places a direct burden on the Township and Bonham family for a project that does not benefit them. Another Stakeholder Committee member felt that

because the NHX project will reduce congestion and improve traffic flow throughout the area, everyone will benefit, city and township residents alike.

- It was noted that the proposed development project will likely advance more quickly than the NHX project.
- It was also noted that the City expects that the economic value of the proposed new development will offset the higher construction costs of Alternatives ABE and EBE.
- A City representative said that the City would not support any road alignment that would prevent the Cohen property from being developed as proposed.
- The Fairfield Township representative said the Township's primary concern are the impacts to the Bonham Farm.
- The NHX project would end with a new intersection at Princeton Road and Hampshire Drive before connecting with SR 129. Princeton is narrow in this area and adding traffic on it is a concern. The project team has done an initial review of this intersection, but more detailed study will take place in the next phase of development. The team will look at what improvements would be needed to ease traffic flow in this area. Different intersection types will also be studied.
- A representative of North End asked how many houses would be impacted in the North End neighborhood by Alternatives ABE and EBE. Project team representatives said 45 to 65 properties would be affected along the whole alignment; they would have to get specific numbers for North End.
 - Mr. Messer shared that one concept for construction would be to buy houses on just one side of the road and build the road in that space, rather than affecting homes on both sides of the road.
 - It was noted that affordable housing is an issue. When you take 40 to 50 homes out of the local housing stock, it will have a significant impact on affordable housing in the City. Mr. Messer agreed that this is a concern that must be considered. He also said that when South Hamilton Crossing was built, a similar number of homes were impacted and the City worked with residents to ease the relocation process. This included paying more at times when comparable housing costs were not available.
- A committee member asked if there's been any consideration of taking the road north of the LJ Smith Park and along Joe Nuxhall Boulevard rather than impacting the park?
 - The project team did look at this option and noted that Greenwood Cemetery is a problem. Portions of the cemetery are listed as historic which generally means it cannot be disturbed.
 - Conceptual alternatives initially considered that traveled down the east side of the cemetery (Alternatives A, B, C, and D) would have impacted the northeast corner of the cemetery. This area of the cemetery is not historic but these alignments would have impacted graves, which presents other challenges. Avoiding impacts to the cemetery would have pushed the road closer to homes on Neal.
 - If the park is affected, the project team will have to look at mitigating impacts not just to the ballfields but also the refreshment stand, bathrooms, and splash pad.
- A concern was raised regarding the safety of children walking to local schools if the road is built in the Gilmore Avenue and the Butler County Children Services/Juvenile Court areas. Mr. Messer

said that part of project planning will include looking for ways to allow children to safely cross the roads in the area.

- A Tri-State Trails representative said that from a cyclist’s standpoint, Alternative EBE looks like it would better connect to the local trail system, including the Hamilton Loop Trail. Related comments included:
 - ABE will also be able to tie into the Beltline Trail through Combs Park.
 - The proposed bike path that will be constructed along one side of the new road will be a shared-use path.
- Mr. Messer said that in addition to considering closing the at-grade railroad crossing at Butler, the City is looking at designating the area between Butler Street and Heaton Street as a quiet zone, which would remove the requirement that trains sound their horns when approaching the at-grade crossings in this zone.
 - As part of this discussion, a committee member noted that there is also an issue with drivers blocking the Heaton & North 5th Street intersection near the at-grade railroad crossing. Mr. Messer said that the City will look into addressing this issue.
- A committee member asked the project team to explain the difference between “reduces SR 129 traffic volume” and “significantly reduces SR 129 traffic volume,” as noted in the descriptions for Alternatives ABE and EBE. Matt Crim, Traffic Engineer with Stantec, said that when traffic volumes are reduced by 5-10%, this was categorized as “reduces traffic volume.” Any reductions over 10% were categorized as “significantly reduce traffic volumes.” EBE has an anticipated traffic reduction of 11% to 12%; ABE has an anticipated traffic reduction of 6% to 8%.
- A committee member observed that several proposed routes appear to go through the powerplant and asked how it would be affected. In some locations, it would require tearing down portions of the plant and relocating any necessary electric grid items. This contributes to overall project cost.
- Mr. Messer noted that much of the discussion tonight has focused on the negatives of the proposed route alternatives. However, there are also a lot of positives in terms of safety improvements, congestion reduction, and travel time improvements. These should be kept in mind when considering the options.

Next Steps

Before concluding the meeting, Mr. Messer reviewed upcoming steps in the project development process:

- Complete and submit the draft Feasibility Study to ODOT before the end of the year.
- Meet with the North End neighborhood in November; the North End is the neighborhood most impacted by the alternatives that have been recommended for further study.
- Host public review and input opportunities in early 2023 (likely January). This will include both virtual and in-person sessions.
- Begin a deeper analysis of Alternatives ABE and EBE. This will include environmental field studies and development of the Alternatives Evaluation Report (AER). Another public review and input opportunity will be held once the draft AER is completed.
- Select a preferred route and begin detail design for Phases 1 and 2.
- Identify possible funding sources for construction.

Questions & Comments

Any questions or comments that come up after this meeting can be shared with Allen Messer and Dan Corey.

Allen Messer
Asst. Director of Engineering
City of Hamilton
(513) 785-7286
Allen.Messer@hamilton-oh.gov

Dan Corey
Director
Butler County Transportation Improvement District
(513) 431-1229
danc@bctid.org

The meeting adjourned at 6:51 pm.