

**FAIRFIELD COUNTY TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT**

**MINUTES OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

**January 10, 2023**

**FAIRFIELD COUNTY ENGINEER'S OFFICE**

**3026 WEST FAIR AVENUE; LANCASTER, OHIO 43130**

Jeremiah Upp, TID Chair & Secretary/Treasurer, called the meeting to order just after 1:00 p.m. on January 10, 2023 at the Fairfield County Engineer's Office. The following persons were present: Jeremiah Upp (TID Board Chair & Secretary/Treasurer; Rick Szabrak (TID Board Member); Curt Shonk (TID Board Member); Sonya Simpson (TID Board Member); Bill Lozier (TransCon Ohio/TID Consultant); Jeff Fix (Fairfield County Commissioner); Dave Levacy (Fairfield County Commissioner); Aunie Cordle (Fairfield County Administrator); Mitch Noland (Fairfield County Engineer's Office); Ron Thomas (Thomas Property); Paul Denny (Woolpert); Terry Dunlap (Violet Twp); Mike Little (Violet Twp Fire Dept); Jennifer Shuey (DLZ); Greg Willenhempt (DLZ); Ralph Hedrick (Amanda Twp); Anthony Iachini (Fairfield County Economic Development); Jason Grubb (Fairfield County Engineer's Office)

1. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Rick Szabrak made a motion to approve the December 15, 2022 Meeting Minutes. Rick Szabrak motion, Curt Shonk seconded the motion. Motion carried.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Commissioner Jeff Fix comment on the importance of advocating for all the projects within the TID. He reported that he spent some time with State Representatives Jeff LaRe and Kevin Miller to discuss projects. Has a meeting with Representative Miller at Fairfield County Workforce Center, Friday January 13, 2023. Meeting with Congressmen Balderson on Thursday January 19, 2023. Meeting with MORPC February 8, 2023. Working on getting in touch with Senator Tim Schaffer.

3. REPORT FROM COMMITTEES:

a. Financial Report

Jeremiah reviewed the financial report. The financial report for December 8, 2022, through January 6, 2023. On December 8, 2022, there was a beginning balance of \$342,204.76. On January 6, 2023, there was an ending balance of \$342,204.76. There were no expenditures or revenue for the reporting period.

Sonya Simpson made a motion to approve the financial report. Rick Szabrak seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Commissioner Jeff Fix asked what committees are part of the TID? Other than the finance committee are there any other committees? Does it make sense to have an advocacy committee? Jeremiah Upp agreed an advocacy committee would be a good idea moving forward.

4. NEW BUSINESS:

a. Election of Officers for 2023

1. Chairman - Nomination of Sonja Simpson by Rick Szabrak, second by Jeremiah Upp. Motion carries. Sonja Simpson is the 2023 Chairman
2. Vice Chairman - Nomination of Rick Szabrak by Curt Shonk, second by Jeremiah Upp. Motion carries. Rick Szabrak is the 2023 Vice Chairman.
3. Secretary/Treasurer - Nomination of Jeremiah Upp by Sonja Simpson, second by Rick Szabrak. Motion carries. Jeremiah Upp is the 2023 Secretary/Treasurer.

b. Relocation to the Fairfield County Records Center

Motion by Rick Szabrak to move all future meetings to the Fairfield County Records Center with alternative location to be determined if Records Center is unavailable, providing by-laws permit this change. Motion accepted by Jeremiah Upp. Second by Sonja Simpson. Motion carried.

In the future, we will meet at the Records Center to better accommodate attendees. Next meeting is scheduled for February 14, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. at Fairfield County Records Center.

5. OLD BUSINESS

a. Consultant Project Update Report

**Far East Freeway:** Structurepoint is under contract with GPD as the subconsultant. Consulting team is sending their fee proposal into ODOT. GPD is performing the local road traffic study. As reported last meeting, ODOT was looking at options for a tunnel under I-70 vs a bridge over I-70. They have decided on a bridge over I-70 at Taylor Rd. Bill will continue to monitor the interchange project as it progresses. Some concerns about the fact that this interchange, after completed, may not be fully compatible with the local road network.

**Refugee Road Corridor:** Review of last meeting. The Agreement with Woolpert has been executed. Woolpert has preliminary findings and will present them to Jeremiah after this meeting. If everything fits together, we will apply for ODOT's systemic safety funds for pathways. The restudy Woolpert is doing reviews the study previously done by TEC. Based on their current traffic count (pre-COVID vs after-COVID), there were

no major changes. They looked at the growth rate and reran the models. They noticed the turn lanes are helping the congestion. The only disruption to progression on this road is at the intersections. The focus will be on the intersections. Woolpert to do a presentation near the conclusion of the meeting. The study basically shows the improvement at the intersections are validated.

Bill noted that if the board agrees that we should move forward with a grant application for the ODOT safety program, to add a 10' pathway, he has already started the application with the help of Paul Denny. Paul needs to do a construction cost estimate. Bill noted we are capped at 2 million. We are looking at completing the sidewalk on the south side. The current project will have pedestrian crossings and push buttons at Pickerington Rd., Milnor Rd., and Harmon Rd. May need a crosswalk at Education Drive. Paul mentioned we may need more crosswalks to meet standards. Bill mentioned "Safe Routes to School" as a possible resource for additional funding for crosswalks.

**US33/I70 Connector:** This project is in the ODOT 30–40-minute travel ring. Bill reviewed a map/drawing showing traffic counts around Johnstown. The point of this drawing is to show the large increase in traffic as Intel is built and homes/traffic increase around that area. We took priorities from the 10-minute travel time group and evaluated them with the 20-minute travel time group. We will present these areas to ODOT and request that anywhere those travel time rings intersect, those areas will become a priority. Bill stressed that priority planning will be critical moving forward. Our goal is to stay as involved as we can with this connector project.

**East Side Industrial Connector:** Nothing new to report. No changes from last meeting. Here are the notes from the previous meeting: Structurepoint has submitted a feasibility study. MORPC assisted the City with a street light study. Commercial traffic is using Lancaster as a cut-through as they come 37 across Coonpath. Coonpath does not align with the grant the City has, as it would help the west side not the east side. The goals for this project are to deviate trucks downtown, improve access to the east side, and improve access/travel time to/from the hospital. Curt's committee is to meet and finalize the feasibility study before moving to public involvement. March 8<sup>th</sup> was the deadline for submittal.

**US33 Corridor Lane Widening CAP Project:** This project was presented to TRAC by ODOT District 6 for the whole corridor. 14-million-dollar request for the design of interchanges and widening. At the same time, we had a grant request for the community projects program. Senator Brown contacted Commissioner Jeff Fix to announce that the 3-million-dollar request as part of the Omnibus Appropriations Bill had been approved. Funding and updates will be forthcoming. Bill pointed out the complexities behind our funding, and how the funds could be used in conjunction with the ODOT 33 corridor project. On January 25<sup>th</sup> the TRAC is going to release the list of approved projects. The US33 corridor project may or may not be on that list. If TRAC is not going to fund the entire 33 corridor project, we may have some issues. We will know more after the January 25<sup>th</sup> TRAC presentation.

**Basil-Western Road Realignment:** Bill presented an example of a SIB loan from Etna Township and City of Pataskala. They used this funding model to finance and build 2 roundabouts and constructed a 3-lane road that is 1.5 miles long. Total amount financed was 9.3 million. They were able to get 1/3 of the project paid for through grants and developer contributions. It's an option. It's an example of some possible funding that could help with the design and construction. Rick stated that they are projecting 10-million-dollar cost for the Basil-Western Rd project. Rick is projecting approximately 4 million dollars of developer contributions to date. This does not include TIFs, JEDD and other funding mechanisms. Bill to setup a meeting with Rick to look at some funding options.

6. OTHER BUSINESS:

a. Woolpert Presentation

**Refugee Road Corridor Presentation:** Dave Holstein with Woolpert presented a list of improvements. He began by reviewing a couple key recommendations from the 2017 TEC study done for the Fairfield County TID. TEC recommended a series of staged capacity improvements for the corridor. TEC noted existing congestion, and crashes, were associated with the school operations. Specifically, the drop-off and pickup plans. Finally, they noted the pedestrian facilities throughout the corridor are extremely lacking. There are 6 schools within the corridor.

**Woolpert Recommendations:**

Alternate 1: Recommendations included some short-term, low-cost stuff: signage, striping, and adjustments in signal activity.

Alternate 2: Is being designed right now. It's a series of intersection improvements throughout the corridor. The highlights of those are:

- Harmon Road Intersection– Refugee Rd, west bound, with right turn lanes to go north on Harmon Rd.
- Education Lane Intersection– East bound at Education, right turn lane.
- Milnor Road Intersection – West bound, right turn lane.
- Pickerington Road Intersection – This is a much larger design than the other intersections. Pickerington Rd intersection is being designed to have 4 left-turn lanes, plus an additional right turn lane, south bound, to go west on Refugee Rd. This design represents a significant capacity improvement.

Alternate 3: Make the entire corridor 5-lanes.

Jeremiah Upp noted that alternate 2 is schedule to be constructed as early as fall 2023. The Fairfield County Engineer's Office is working on designing the signals and the signal timing to improve the entire corridor as it works together.

Dave noted the pre-inflation 2017 project costs for both alternates:

Alternate 2: \$3.7 million.

Alternate 3: \$17.2 million

Dave discussed the fact that traffic counts really haven't changed much since 2017. Generally, pre-covid, they would see traffic counts increase each year. Traffic counts decreased during covid. Since then, they have slowly returned and have reached almost the same level as pre-covid counts. Numbers are almost identical 2017 to 2022.

Dave presented a graph that shows the traffic growth rates from the MORPC model. Woolpert performed a sensitivity analysis to project the MORPC growth rate and noted, after that analysis, that the issues are not mainline problems, they are intersection problems. Dave presented a congestion scan image that outlines congestion during different times of the day. The image shows the main areas of congestion are around Pickerington North High School due to the school pick-up and drop-off traffic patterns. The measurements also show the Pickerington Road intersection is one of the main points of congestion within the corridor. It is also one of the main growth areas from the MORPC model. This intersection is also seeing the biggest intersection improvements as outlined in Alternate 2.

We looked at traffic/intersection simulations at Harmon Road and Pickerington Road intersections using 2045 volumes. This simulation includes all the intersection upgrades as outlined in Alternate 2. All studies show the improvements suggested by TEC will handle all traffic volumes through 2045. Obviously if 3 lanes will work, 5 lanes will work too. The question becomes, "*Do you want to spend the money for capacity that you don't really need?*" Previous studies show we really need to focus on the pedestrian upgrades.

Sonja had a question earlier "*What if the MORPC estimates are wrong? What if they are too low?*" To answer that question Woolpert took the 2045 design numbers for both, morning, and afternoon traffic, and artificially inflated those numbers by 20%, and 30% respectively. At 20% threshold all intersections still work effectively. The 30% threshold however showed the Milnor Road intersection decreased in effectiveness. The intersection improvements needed at Milnor Rd to meet the 30% increase would require a 5-lane section. At that point you probably look at constructing the complete 5-lane section through the corridor. It makes sense to continue with the Alternate 2 improvements now and start addressing the shared use paths and sidewalks to improve the pedestrian facilities within the corridor, with an emphasis on placing those pedestrian facilities in a location that IF you go to 5-lanes down the road, you haven't wasted any money. Planning therefore has accounted for 5-lanes and those pedestrian facilities are already in the correct place.

Discussion turned to the traffic patterns associated with Pickerington North High School (PNHS) and the fact that much of the congestion is associated with the pick-up and drop-off patterns at the school. A discussion/partnership with PNHS administration to create improvements to the overall flow of traffic around the school would significantly improve many of the issues seen within the study.

Chief Mike Little of Violet Twp requested an emergency signal for Station 590 as part of the corridor improvements. Bill confirmed this would warrant a signal. Jeremiah agreed it would be beneficial and could be included in the project scope. Bill questioned if this could be part of the safety application. Bill also noted he would review adding more crosswalks and mid-block crossings.

b. 2023 TID Applications

**TID Applications:** Bill noted that TID Grant Applications could be due in February. Do we have any projects? Rick mentioned the Basil-Western Road Improvements. Bill confirmed this project could be an ideal candidate. Bill thought the money could be available at the beginning of the State's fiscal year, July 1, 2023. Bill, Jeremiah, and Rick discussed setting a meeting to discuss this further.

7. ADJOURNMENT:

Rick Szabrak made a motion to adjourn. Sonja Simpson seconded. The meeting was adjourned.

Minutes approved by:

  
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Jeremiah D. Upp  
Chairperson & Secretary/Treasurer