



STAKEHOLDER MEETING SUMMARY

Project Name: I-71 Smart Lane: Between I-670 and I-270 North
Project ID #: 109164
Meeting Date: 5/11/2023 and 5/12/2023
Meeting Format: In-Person and Virtual
End of Comment Period: 6/30/2023

Stakeholder Meeting Attendees: Total-66 (Virtual-46, In-Person-20)
Total Comments: 25
Comment Forms Mailed: 0
Comment Forms Submitted at Public Meeting: 1

Comments Submitted via:

- During In-Person Stakeholder Meeting: 17
- During Virtual Stakeholder Meeting: 7
- Project Website: 0 (publicinput.com)
- Phone: 0
- Email: 0
- Social Media: 0

Opposed to Project: N/A
Supportive of Project: N/A
Uncommitted: N/A
Conditional: N/A

Major Concerns: The statements and questions received throughout this round of engagement revolve around concerns and suggestions regarding the addition of SmartLanes along the I-71 corridor in Columbus. Here are the key points raised:

- Concerns about construction impacts (ramp closures) for nearby residents and businesses.
- Some residents (especially those in Linden) may not have access to digital notifications about project construction updates.
- Concerns about whether ODOT seriously studied other improvements besides a SmartLane, such as HOV or express lanes; and whether HOV lanes would be precluded in the future.
- Concerns about traffic gridlock during construction with events such as the Ohio State Fair, football parking and Ohio Expo events.

Public Officials in Attendance: Public officials were not in attendance at the stakeholder meeting.

Media in Attendance: Media representatives were not in attendance at the stakeholder meeting.

Meeting Notifications: The following stakeholder meeting notification has been issued. Notification materials can be found in the meeting summary appendix.

Type of Notification	Publication Date	Publication Location
Email Invitation	April 18, 2023	N/A

Meeting Details

- **Meeting Format:** In-Person and Virtual
- **Meeting Location:**
 - In-Person, 3:00 PM to 4:0 PM, Ohio History Center - Cardinal Classroom, 800 E. 17th Ave. Columbus, OH 43211
 - Virtual, 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM, Zoom Meeting
 - Facility Layout/Flow and Exhibits: An appendix of meeting materials is attached with a copy of handouts and exhibits provided to stakeholders. The in-person meeting facility layout was not developed.
- **Meeting Purpose:** Identified stakeholders were invited to attend a stakeholder briefing to learn how the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) proposes to implement a SmartLane in each direction on I-71 between I-670 and I-270 North, and seek input on the maintenance of traffic plans and build and no-build options.
 - Agenda Overview:
 - In-Person:
 - Public sign-in/review exhibits/take seats
 - Facilitator convenes
 - Welcome
 - Agenda review and meeting logistics
 - Presentation/project update
 - Allow pauses for questions throughout
 - Next Steps
 - Q&A
 - Presentation Adjourn
 - Open house/one-on-one discussion
 - Virtual:
 - Presenter convenes
 - Welcome
 - Agenda review and virtual meeting logistics
 - Presentation/project update
 - Next Steps
 - Q&A
 - Presentation Adjourn

Meeting Summary

- **Brief chronology of the proposed project:** A public engagement plan was developed and gives a brief history of the project. The plan can be found in the meeting summary appendix.

- Feasibility Study - August 2021
- Public Engagement - May 2023
- Environmental Document - August 2023
- Stage 1 Plans - August 2023
- Stage 2 Plans - January 2014
- Stage 3 Plans - June 2024
- Right-of-Way Acquisition - September 2024
- Project Sale/Award - April 2025
- Begin Construction - April 2025
- End Construction - September 2026
- **Copies/description of materials provided:** The following meeting materials were provided at the stakeholder meetings.
 - Fact Sheet
 - NEPA Brochure
 - Comment Form
 - Feasibility Study (copy)
 - Meeting Presentation
 - Roadway Plan Set
- **Summary of comments received, and response provided:** A summary of comments and responses is listed in the table below.
- **Conclusion:** Participants at both stakeholder meetings (in-person and virtual) were able to provide comments at various points during the presentation. Following the meeting(s) stakeholders were invited to provide comments about the project through several options including: online (<https://publicinput.com/x2577>), email (danilo.puozzo@dot.ohio.gov), phone (740-833-8269), or by mail: (Danilo Puozzo, P.E., Project Manager, ODOT - District 6, 400 E. William Street, Delaware, OH 43015). Stakeholder and public comments were to be received within 30 days (June 30, 2022). A PDF version of the meeting presentation, video recording, exhibit, handouts and other meeting materials were made available to stakeholders and the public on the project webpage at <https://publicinput.com/x2577>.

Tracking Number	Nature of Comment	Date Received	Comment	Responder	Response	Date Responded	File Location
1	Comment Form	5/11/23	Concerned about ramp closures for residents and businesses; would like to see a "Welcome to Linden" illuminated sign(s) at exits; Would like more information about OHGO weekly notice to pass on and also for ODOT to consider other means of notifying public as not everyone has a smartphone or access to Wi-Fi; Concerned about panhandlers during construction.	ODOT	As part of the design process, ODOT develops a Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) plan. ODOT tries to minimize ramp and/or road closures where possible. Due to the work necessary, this project will still require some closures to complete the work. Detours will be posted in advance of any closures. "Welcome to Linden" signage would typically be placed along the local streets and would require coordination with the City. ODOT's Public Information Office sends out construction locations and closure information to media outlets prior to a project's construction. The OHGO app or the OHGO website (https://www.ohgo.com/) are the best and easiest way to get up-to-date traffic advisories. ODOT doesn't have any means of controlling panhandlers, this issue should be directed to local law enforcement.	8/25/23	N/A
2	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	Do you have a rough idea of when are you going to operate the smart lanes?	ODOT	At a minimum, we're looking at operating SmartLanes during the AM rush in the southbound direction and the PM rush northbound. There is a possibility that SmartLanes may be operated in both north and southbound directions in both the AM and PM rush hours.	5/11/23	N/A
3	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	What are peak AM and PM rush hours?	ODOT	7-9 AM and 4-6 PM.	5/11/23	N/A
4	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	Will the SmartLane be on both the north and south sides of I-71?	ODOT	Yes.	5/11/23	N/A

5	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	Has ODOT considered other options? Such as HOV lanes, or the number of axels in certain lanes? Motorists not following travel speeds is also a concern.	ODOT	On the I-670 SmartLane, ODOT considered whether to restrict trucks from the SmartLane, but the pavement was built up enough to cover those truck loads. Enforcement is always a challenge.	5/11/23	N/A
6	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	Will there also be consideration of events, like at the Ohio Expo Center, or Saturday's football parking?	ODOT	ODOT can adjust speed limits based on events or accidents.	5/11/23	N/A
7	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	Why not leave the SmartLanes open 24/7 instead of only during peak hours?	ODOT	When it feels that wide open, drivers are more likely to speed up overall.	5/11/23	N/A
8	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	What are ODOT's thoughts on HOV lanes in place of SmartLanes?	ODOT	ODOT did review HOV lanes early on in the study, but SmartLanes provide improved benefits for all types of vehicles; if an HOV lane was implemented only buses or some vehicles would get a benefit. SmartLanes provide benefits for all roadway users.	5/11/23	N/A
9	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	Did you consider express lanes?	ODOT	With all of the interchanges and ramps, an express lane would be difficult to develop. Additionally, most traffic in the corridor is local and entering/exiting between I-270 and I-670.	5/11/23	N/A
10	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	Does a work area stay within ODOT's right-of-way?	ODOT	Yes, all construction will be within ODOT's right-of-way, including construction materials. No property takes are needed for this project.	5/11/23	N/A
11	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	Would traffic be maintained on Hiawatha Park Drive?	ODOT	Yes, it would be. At that bridge, there is only minor repair work and traffic will be maintained.	5/11/23	N/A
12	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	What are ODOT's procedures when notifying the public of traffic changes?	ODOT	ODOT utilizes a smartphone app called OHGO with live up-to-date traffic information. ODOT also issues weekly traffic advisories on Thursdays at 2 PM for upcoming construction updates. ODOT is also willing to work with communities, such as Linden, in	5/11/23	N/A

					pushing out ODOT construction/traffic notifications to their channels as well.		
13	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	Will SmartLanes be built first? Or the bridges?	ODOT	SmartLanes and bridges will be built simultaneously. ODOT is trying to minimize traffic impacts and ramp disruptions and to do this construction of the project will take four construction seasons.	5/11/23	N/A
14	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	This is a beautiful plan. I'm excited about the traffic reductions. Are you considering the impact on residents and neighbors? (i.e., nearby Hudson Ave. updates are taking over three years of inconveniences to the community).	ODOT	ODOT strives to provide as little community disruption as possible, but disruption will occur. Recently ODOT's work along I-270 North and I-71/I-70 downtown, ODOT phased the most disruptive work first, nearest the outside lanes. Work on the inside lanes is less disruptive to overall communities and commuters. ODOT also works quickly during ramp closures so there aren't on and off again closures. Once the project is complete there will be reliable and consistent travel times.	5/11/23	N/A
15	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	Information is a great equalizer. Would like to know about updates ahead of time.	ODOT	Agree. Public engagement is a continuous process. ODOT is always in communication with the City of Columbus on their projects. ODOT tries its best to notify everyone as best they can. (ODOT offered to take the individual's contact information, so they are linked to existing ODOT notification channels).	5/11/23	N/A
16	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	Do you know if any other projects are going on that may affect communities along the I-71 corridor?	ODOT	First, check OHGO and the city's website. Yes, the City of Columbus is working on Cleveland and Hudson and along Hudson. ODOT is coordinating with the city so both entities are aware of these activities. For example, ODOT doesn't want to send motorists to a road closure, etc.	5/11/23	N/A

17	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	We work with ODOT all the time coordinating efforts. Currently here to learn more about the SmartLanes project for future coordination.	ODOT	Thank you for attending.	5/11/23	N/A
18	In-Person Meeting Comment	5/11/23	Construction brings panhandling and car theft.	ODOT	ODOT concurs and currently works with Columbus Police. If there is an influx of thefts, please reach out to ODOT and Columbus Police.	5/11/23	N/A
19	Virtual Meeting Comment	5/12/23	What is the name of the feasibility study that this analysis builds off of?	ODOT	I don't recall the exact naming convention, but it is the I-71 Feasibility Study, and it is available to share. We will share that with this group afterward. A second person responded that this feasibility study can be posted to publicinput.com.	5/12/23	N/A
20	Virtual Meeting Comment	5/12/23	Was there a stakeholder engagement process for that study?	ODOT	Yes, first responders and city personnel, but not a formal engagement process like we're doing here. That one was more of a traffic concept evaluation and now we're headed through the NEPA process for the actual project since the funding has been secured.	5/12/23	N/A
21	Virtual Meeting Comment	5/12/23	Was a high-occupancy vehicle lane considered instead of a SmartLane to encourage carpooling and encourage a reduction in single-occupancy vehicle trips?	ODOT	There was an initial conversation with COTA, yes, and we ultimately decided to open it up to all vehicles in the philosophy to provide benefits to all road users. Enforcement of high-occupancy vehicle lanes is also difficult so that was a factor.	5/12/23	N/A
22	Virtual Meeting Comment	5/12/23	For the bridge constructions, are there any opportunities to improve the pedestrian experience?	ODOT	Yes, we will be partnering with the City of Columbus to bring that into consideration upon completion of the full bridge deck. A potential single-span bridge option makes the most room and that's being considered. The Cleveland Ave. bridge work was reviewed and determined not feasible with this project. ODOT and the City will discuss repairing this bridge in the future. You are encouraged to contact the City at	5/12/23	N/A

					(614) 645-3111 or 311@columbus.gov with any local concerns.		
23	Virtual Meeting Comment	5/12/23	Thank you for the opportunity to learn about the upcoming project and for considering the issues and travel needs of the State Fair. It's appreciated.	ODOT	No answer was provided because this was a comment left in the chat.	5/12/23	N/A
24	Virtual Meeting Comment	5/12/23	In the active construction areas, it looks like we'll lose shoulders to accommodate having a work zone. How long will these construction zones be in operation?	ODOT	We expect that the contraflow will be in place through the entire construction season. It will be put back to "normal" during the winter, but during the construction season to meet the timeline, yes it will be in place. This is a helpful question as we dig deeper into determining our MOT. As we go through design details, conversations like this with emergency responders will come into play to flush out details.	5/12/23	N/A
25	Virtual Meeting Comment	5/12/23	Would the selection of this alternative (the SmartLane) preclude the potential for a future HOV lane in the future when traffic increases	ODOT	This option gives us options for the future like that. At some point, if HOV or other dedicated uses of those lanes come into play, the technology is already in place to communicate those changes accordingly. Right now, there is enough demand that this is the alternative selected, but that is something where this technology might give us that option in the future.	5/12/23	N/A