

September 28, 2006

Mr. Howard Wood
ODOT Deputy Director of Planning
1980 W. Broad Street
Columbus, Ohio 43223

Re: Cleveland Central Viaduct Bridge bike/ped path

Dear Deputy Director Wood:

We have appreciated being included in the design process for the Innerbelt Project and, in particular, the Central Viaduct Bridge by ODOT District 12 and the design team of Michael Baker.

We would like to take this opportunity to restate EcoCity Cleveland's position that this major regional investment will be enhanced in a number of ways by the inclusion of a bicycle/pedestrian path as part of the resurfacing of the existing bridge. Below, we state the reasons for supporting this improvement and offer a response to the opinion expressed in your July 6, 2006, memo on the subject.

First, we affirm the design principle of the Innerbelt Bridge Subcommittee, which states that "the design should consider bicycle and pedestrian access." In addition, bike/ped access on the bridge is needed for the following reasons:

1.) We must build it.

As you know, Federal regulations pertaining to highway bridge deck replacement require state DOTs and MPOs to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian travel as part of such replacement or rehabilitation at reasonable cost. Further, Ohio Revised Code Section 4511.051 "*allows bicycle paths to be constructed within freeway right-of-way on a facility that is separated from the roadway and shoulders of the freeway and is designed and appropriately marked for bicycle use.*"

These federal regulations have been followed to design and build bike/ped paths on Interstate highways throughout the United States (for a list of examples, see <http://mobikefed.org/2006/05/bicycle-paths-on-interstate-freeway.php>). The comment in your memo suggests that a 'narrow reading' of these regulations is required. We disagree: the regulations clearly state the imprimatur for designing a bike/pedestrian facility on the Innerbelt Bridge.

2.) It would be great to build it.

A bike/ped path on the Innerbelt Bridge will be a major tourist draw for Cleveland, just as the bike/ped paths on the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and the new Cooper River Bridge in Charleston, SC, have become huge attractions. It will serve millions of tourists biking and walking up the Towpath Trail with a direct link to downtown Cleveland.

A bike/ped path on the bridge will avoid the dangerously steep grade changes and less hospitable conditions of the W. 3rd Street route from Tremont cited in your memo. The new path will offer visitors unprecedented views of the new Innerbelt Bridge, the Cuyahoga Valley, and downtown Cleveland. And it will offer cyclists and pedestrians a more accommodating route than the Lorain-Carnegie Bridge, which is a half-mile further from the west and terminates in a high-volume intersection at Ontario Street. (The memo states that the Lorain-Carnegie Bridge is one-quarter mile from the western end of the bridge, however, GIS tracking confirms the half-mile distance). For a nice summary of reasons why we should put a bike/ped path on the Innerbelt Bridge access this web page: <http://www.gcbl.org/transportation/bikes/bike-lane-on-innerbelt-bridge>

3.) It would be easy to do.

The infrastructure already exists to add and access a new bike/ped path on the bridge. The existing bridge currently accommodates eight lanes, and the current plan is to reduce the service to five travel lanes. The difference can be used to design a welcoming, at-grade, fully separated bike/ped path.

Also, the existing exit ramp at W. 14th/Abbey Road at the western end of the bridge and the entrance ramp at E. 9th Street at the eastern end could be reused as the access ramps from the city roadways. This adaptive reuse will save ODOT demolition funds and alleviate some of the cost of building the bike/ped path. The entrance ramp at E. 9th St. currently has some adjacent green space, and a connection to the street grid could be worked into the planning to enhance the pedestrian environment on E. 9th St. as Rock and Roll Boulevard (the pedestrian mall leading to Northcoast Harbor).

In conclusion, building a bike/pedestrian amenity on the Innerbelt Bridge is required by law, but, more than that, it's a great way to leverage this once-in-a-generation opportunity to cross the river for the benefit all modes of transportation and as a major regional draw.

Sincerely,

David Beach
Executive Director
EcoCity Cleveland

cc: Gordon Proctor, Craig Hebebrand, David Bowen, Robert Brown, Joe Cimperman, Anthony Coyne, Lillian Kuri, Lawrence Lumpkin, Gloria Jean Pinkney, Rev. Sam Small, Steven Litt