



**LAK-VROOMAN ROAD
Vrooman Road Bridge Replacement Project
PID 5669
Part 1- Step 3**

**DRAFT MEETING MINUTES
Individual Stakeholder Meeting
Ohio Department of Natural Resources
&
Grand River Advisory Council
Monday, March 30, 2009**

LOCATION: Main Conference Room
Lake County Planning Commission
125 East Erie Street
Painesville, Ohio 44077

ATTENDEES: Steve Roloson (SR)	ODNR Scenic Rivers NE Manager
Bob Gable (BG)	ODNR Scenic Rivers Group Manager
Tony Debevc (TD)	Grand River Advisory Council (GRAC)
Dan Donaldson (DD)	GRAC
Jim Bissell (JB)	GRAC
Darrell Webster (DW)	GRAC
Tom Fellenstein (TF)	GRAC
Robert Sylak (RS)	GRAC
James R. Gills, P.E., P.S. (<i>JRG</i>)	Lake County Engineer (LCEO)
Bruce R. Landeg, P.E., P.S. (<i>BRL</i>)	Chief Assistant, LCEO
Thomas K. Sorge (<i>TKS</i>)	ODOT District 12
Lawrence P. Ciborek, P.E. (<i>LPC</i>)	Michael Baker Jr. (Baker)
Christopher B. Owen, MSHP (<i>CBO</i>)	Baker

AGENDA ITEMS:

This meeting was held as an agenda item of the regularly scheduled Grand River Advisory Council (GRAC) meeting. The meeting agenda was prepared by Steve Roloson of ODNR. An informational presentation was given by Lawrence P. Ciborek, Baker's Project Manager, on behalf of the Lake County Engineer's Office (LCEO). Informational documents were provided to each of the attendees, and large scale displays were provided to supplement the presentation. The presentation was followed by an open question and answer session. Copies of the Agenda, Meeting Sign in Sheet and informational documents are attached to this document for reference. Details of specific issues are presented below.



MEETING GOALS:

This meeting was held to update ODNR and GRAC personnel on the current status of the ongoing project development effort; discuss remaining prudent and feasible replacement alternatives; to answer ODNR and GRAC questions regarding project development to date; and to solicit ODNR and GRAC input on what they perceive to be key issues related to the proposed improvement. A desired outcome of this meeting is a tangible acknowledgement by ODNR and GRAC that Planning Study Alternative C is no longer a viable replacement alternative; and approval of Preliminary Engineering Study Alternatives A and B as the only remaining prudent and feasible replacement alternatives.

PRESENTATION:

Efforts were focused on clearly describing the history of project development to date; providing explicit and valid reasons for eliminating Planning Study Alternative C from further consideration as a prudent and feasible alternative; detailing how remaining Preliminary Engineering Study Alternatives A and B were refined to address previously noted ODNR and GRAC concerns with the proposed improvement; discussing the issue of noise impacts; and comparing relative merits and impacts of Alternatives A, B and C by means of an Alternatives Comparison Matrix. A less formal presentation / question / discussion approach was adopted in order to honor meeting time constraints. Key elements of the presentation are listed below:

- Traffic modeling was discussed and the differences between ODOT and NOACA models were identified. The matter of truck traffic relocating from SR-528 to Vrooman Road was addressed. The total combined volume of truck traffic on SR-528 and Vrooman Road should remain constant. An increase in truck traffic on Vrooman Road should be accompanied by a corresponding decrease in truck traffic on SR-528.
- The overriding element limiting truck traffic on the existing Vrooman Road facility is the physical inability of these vehicles to pass through the existing bridge. Historical evidence indicates that posted load and traffic restrictions; grades and curves have not deterred trucks from attempting to cross this bridge. Any proposed alternative providing a sufficiently wide structure would likely invite truck traffic regardless of proposed geometrics, i.e., constructing Planning Study Alternative C would not effectively reduce the number of trucks using the facility.
- Posted speed for the facility is likely to remain at 40 mph between IR-90 and SR-84.
- The scope and magnitude of impacts related to Planning Study Alternative C were not fully identified and expressed during the 2004 Planning Study Effort.
- Planning Study Alternative C was evaluated by maintaining the proposed horizontal alignment, but by reducing the proposed grades to the maximum allowable per design criteria.
- Planning Study Alternative C does not satisfy primary elements of the Project Purpose



and Need. Specifically, horizontal alignment does not satisfy design criteria; and the proposed grades, satisfy design criteria but do not satisfy the clearly stated and documented Stakeholder goal of eliminating the steep grades in and out of the valley.

- The proposed profile of Planning Study Alternative C would create a low spot in the roadway within the valley. Storm water would need to be collected, stored, treated and discharged utilizing appropriate post-construction BMP's in the valley. This effort would be made more difficult since the entire collection system would be located on the bridge, creating a maintenance concern. Profiles for Preliminary Engineering Study Alternatives A and B have been refined to collect the storm water off the bridge.
- Planning Study Alternative C would require extensive volumes of cut and fill within the valley. Eliminating cut and fill for this alternative on this alignment would require construction of an extremely complex structure with substandard geometry.
- Planning Study Alternative C effectively eliminates access to Mason's Landing Park from the north side of the river. The grade difference between proposed Vrooman Road and the park for this alternative is approximately 40'. An additional structure or earthen embankment causeway would be necessary to maintain access. Either option would effectively eliminate the park.
- Planning Study Alternative C would require the relocation of Seeley Road as a result of grade differences. This construction would result in additional, permanent clear cutting of trees and embankment construction within the valley.
- The FHWA will not approve expenditures on a new facility with substandard features when prudent and feasible alternatives exist that satisfy design criteria.
- Planning Study Alternative C could be revised to satisfy design criteria; however, the end result would essentially mimic Preliminary Engineering Study Alternative A.
- The preliminary geometrics (alignments and profiles) and structure arrangement of Planning Study Alternatives A and B were refined to address specific concerns identified by ODNR in previous meetings. Specifically, alignments were modified to minimize impacts on the Grand River and Borden Ditch; no piers were located within the river or creek; piers were located as far as practical from the river; and structure limits were adjusted to minimize cut and fill within the valley.
- Noise evaluations completed as part of the Preliminary Engineering Study indicated that raising Vrooman Road's profile through the Valley will reduce the noise impacts at the park level.
- Anticipated noise levels from Planning Study Alternative C would as a minimum match those for the "Southern Reach", and would likely be higher as a result braking and accelerating associated with navigating the proposed curves and grades.
- Photographs of the recently reconstructed SR-11 bridges over the Ashtabula River in Ashtabula County were shown. The construction access roads for this facility also pass through park land. Details of their construction and subsequent removal and restoration were tailored to minimize impact and to restore the effected park land to original condition, including re-forestation. The access roads were actually converted to multi-purpose trails by the park system. This is an effective mitigation strategy which could be employed on this project, regardless of the chosen replacement alternative.



- Photographs of the recently reconstructed State Road Bridge over the Ashtabula River in Ashtabula County were also shown. These photographs demonstrated the potential for negative impacts related to extensive embankment construction similar to that proposed by Planning Study Alternative C.
- A revised version of the Planning Study Comparison Matrix (Table 13 – Summary of Alternatives and Costs) was presented to show complete and accurate information related to Alternatives A, B and C. Content of the matrix reflects current efforts of the Preliminary Engineering study as defined by the current Scope of Work.



OPEN DISCUSSION ITEMS:

The following input (comments, questions, concerns, etc.) was provided by the Stakeholders during the course of the presentation and in the question and answer session. Comments and questions are noted in black, followed by italicized Baker and / or LCEO responses in blue, as noted:

RS (paraphrasing) – “Why did Purpose and Need Statement change? What happened to Homeland security?”

LPC – The Purpose and Need Statement was revised to reflect the clearly identified primary elements of the project purpose. Specifically to eliminate the frequent flooding and resulting closure of Vrooman Road in the Grand River Valley; to replace the structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridge over the Grand River; and to improve approach roadway (horizontal alignment and vertical profile) and intersection geometry to improve public safety.

CBO – Purpose and Need statements are dynamic documents subject to revision and enhancement. It is perfectly acceptable to enact revisions to these documents as part of the NEPA process.

JRG – Homeland Security concerns are still valid, however, they are not vital elements of the Project Purpose and Need. Vrooman Road may become a key evacuation route for the Lake County Emergency Management Agency (LCEMA) once the proposed improvements are in place.

RS (paraphrasing) – “I have heard this project described as a Bridge to Nowhere.”

LPC – The proposed improvement has clearly defined independent utility; providing improved connectivity on a local scale between IR-90 and SR-84, and on a more global scale between IR-90 and USR-20. The Vrooman Road Interchange was constructed on IR-90 with the specific goal of providing access to the east side of Painesville. Short term funding issues prevented construction in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. Concerns with negative impacts to sensitive cultural resources prevented construction in the 1990’s. So the need for this project has been apparent from the time of IR-90’s construction. The majority of the comments received from the January 27, 2009 Public Involvement Meeting express a strong desire to construct the proposed facility.

BG – I have heard the SR-44 and SR-528 interchanges discussed. Where exactly is Vrooman Road in relation to these two routes?

LPC – SR-44 and SR-528 are about 16 (actually 12) miles apart. Vrooman Road is essentially in



the middle of these two interchanges.

TD –The SR-44 interchange is at mile marker 200, the Vrooman Road interchange is at mile marker 205 and the SR-528 interchange is at mile marker 212. So there is about 12 miles between SR-44 and SR-528, 5 miles between SR-44 and Vrooman Road, and 7 miles between Vrooman Road and SR-528.

BG – What are the sensitive cultural resources that delayed the project in 1995, and why are they no longer considered an issue?

CBO – The sensitive resource is Native American burial grounds on the north side of SR-84. They are still an issue; however, alternatives have been revised to eliminate or minimize impact. A discussion of how the resource would have been impacted by the 1990's proposal and how we have mitigated ensued.

RS (Please confirm question source.) – What were the Planning Study Alternatives presented to the General Public?

LPC – The five (5) alternatives presented were Alternative A-High level bridge to Madison Avenue; Alternative B-High level bridge to Lane Road; Alternative C-Low level bridge to Madison Avenue; Alternative D-Replacement structure only; and Alternative E-No build. These alternatives were identified in the handouts and this evening's presentation. At this point the history of Transystems Stakeholder Meetings and alternative advancement was discussed.

RS– There is no mention of a vote for the Preferred Alternative in the February, 2005 Meeting Minutes included in the Planning Study, and there is no meeting roster. It seems that the entire process to date is somewhat shady.

LPC – My understanding (I was not in attendance, not being involved in the project at the time) of advancement of Alternative B as the Preferred Alternative is as follows. A Stakeholder Committee meeting was held on July 28, 2004 with the stated objective of identifying the Preferred Alternative. Key stakeholders were not in attendance, notably ODNR and GRAC, so the decision was postponed in order to have better stakeholder representation. Both ODNR and GRAC were in attendance at the February 16, 2005 Stakeholder Committee Meeting. A formal presentation comparing and contrasting alternatives was given at this meeting and additional information related to each alternative was provided. Reasons for eliminating Alternatives C and D were given. Alternatives A and B were identified as essentially equal, but Alternative B was the locally preferred alternative, and it was therefore, recommended as the Preferred Alternate. No formal vote was taken, but a question was posed asking if there were any serious disagreement with the recommendation to advance Alternative B. No serious opposition to this decision was noted at the meeting, so this recommendation was advanced in the Planning Study.



While this sequence of events is not documented in the Minutes, it is documented on page 46 of the Planning Study and page 70 of the Updated Planning Study. Copies of the February 16, 2005 sign in sheet, page 70 of the Updated Planning Study, the February 16, 2005 Meeting Minutes and the presentation given at this meeting were included in information provided to ODNR by Baker prior to today's meeting.

JRG – Was in attendance at the meetings in question and concurred with LPC's description of the events.

TS – Tom is ODOT District 12 representative for this project. ODOT administers federal funds used in the NEPA process for LPA jobs, essentially monitoring the project to ensure that applicable guidelines are followed. The project development efforts to date are in accordance with NEPA policy.

SR – Why don't the versions of Alternatives A and B shown on your display boards match those in the Planning Study?

LPC – Alignment, profile and structure arrangement for Alternatives A and B have been refined to address concerns expressed by ODNR, GRAC and other stakeholders in earlier meetings. Reasonable attempts were made to avoid or minimize negative impacts to the project site.

SR – The Transystems Planning Study indicated that Alternative C would not affect access to Mason's Landing Park, but your revised Summary of Alternatives and Costs indicates otherwise. How is this possible?

LPC – A thorough investigation of the various profiles developed by Transystems reveals that construction of Alternative C would result in an elevation difference of approximately 20' between proposed and existing grades at the Mason's Landing Park access drive (approximately Sta. 104+50) if the current substandard 12% grade was used to develop the new profile. The elevation difference would be approximately 40' if the maximum allowable grade of 7% is used. Either profile would necessitate the construction of additional fill or structure to access the park, resulting in effective elimination of the park on the north side of the Grand River.

TF – I don't agree with the assessment of the noise study. The IR-90 Bridge over the Grand River is extremely noisy at the river level. Noise from the bridge carries down the valley 2 or 3 bends. The low level ??????? road bridge seems much quieter.

CBO – The software used to model the noise projections is approved for use by ODOT and the FHWA. Ambient noise levels were measured in the Southern Reach and at Mason's Landing Park. This information combined with traffic projections was used to develop anticipated noise levels.



Direct comparison of the noise levels adjacent to the IR-90 Bridges to that projected for the Vrooman Road Bridge is comparing apples to oranges. IR-90 is a divided interstate highway with traffic volumes many times in excess of that anticipated for Vrooman Road.

An extensive discussion of relative noise level and possible mitigation efforts ensued.

JB - The revised Summary of Alternatives and Costs indicates no potential impact to threatened or endangered species. What about previously identified threatened mussel species in the Grand River?

CBO – No viable mussel colonies were found in the Project Study Area during our field investigations although evidence of several species was present in the form of empty shells. Review of available research literature indicates that active colonies exist well outside of the Project Study Area.

LPC – Even though no colonies were found during our investigations, specific construction constraints can be included in the plans to minimize disturbing them in the event they are later discovered. Mussel relocation is possible if necessary, similar to the efforts at the recently replaced twin I-90 bridges over the Grand River.

TF – What about the resident Bald Eagle?

DW – The eagle nest is far enough away from the project site so that none of the alternatives should disturb it.

SR – Why are there inconsistencies in the potential ecological area of impact between Alternatives A, B and C? The numbers have changed for A and B, but not for C.

CBO – The tabulated areas for Alternatives A and B reflect a refined study area limited to a narrower corridor. We will not refute nor confirm the areas tabulated for Alternative C since they were not calculated by us. But it would be accurate to assume that the ecological impact will be approximately equal for all alternatives.

LPC – A better measure of impact may be the tabulated Temporary and Permanent Public ROW acquisition areas. These are representative of the areas needed to construct and maintain the facility. A 100' wide longitudinal swath along the length of the corridor, and 50' lateral swaths (where necessary) were used to estimate these areas. Both of these estimated widths are subject to later refinement.

TD – Does the tabulated “Valley Crossing” Additional Roadway Length for Alternative B



include the estimated length of the River Road Bypass?

LPC – Yes. Tabulated side road lengths consider all additional paved areas necessary to complete the Alternative in question.

TD – Is the cost of the River Road Bypass included in the construction cost estimate for Alternative B?

LPC – Yes it is. Tabulated costs include constructing side roads necessary to complete the Alternative in question. The cost estimates do not include Right of Way acquisition or additional construction inspection. Right of Way acquisition costs would be significant for Alternative C. A minimum of six (6) condominiums at \$200,000 to \$250,000 each would be affected.

CBO – Displaced owners would also be eligible for relocation assistance funds as part of project cost.

BRL – Made several statements relative to the project history to date.

He noted that several agreements between ODNR, ODOT and Lake County were made about this project in the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's. Further, he acknowledged that such agreements may be subject to degradation with age, but may still have some relevance. Noting that he serves on several boards similar to the GRAC, his experience suggests that past agreements do maintain validity as legacy items.

He introduced minutes from the November 20, 1973 Lake County Planning Commission meeting in which the Commission adopted a resolution of support for ODNR's efforts to obtain "Wild and Scenic River" designations for the Grand River. He noted that Article 4 of this resolution required ODNR to give "the proposed Vrooman Road Bridge ... be given favorable consideration at the time of construction." A copy of this document was provided to Mr. Gable.

He introduced an ODNR IOC dated December 14, 1990 identifying what is essentially now Alternative B as their preferred alternative. A copy of this document was provided to Mr. Gable.



DISTRIBUTED ITEMS

ODNR provided the following items at the meeting for stakeholder use:

- Meeting Agenda
- Small scale combined profile view of Alternatives A, B and C showing pier placement in relation to the Grand River and mainline (Vrooman Road) cut and fill in the Grand River Valley (Copy of large scale drawing provided by Baker)

Baker provided the following items to ODNR prior to the meeting for stakeholder use:

- Disposition of ODNR comments made during the March 12, 2009 meeting of ODOT and ODNR.
- Large scale combined profile view of Alternatives A, B and C showing pier placement in relation to the Grand River and mainline (Vrooman Road) cut and fill in the Grand River Valley (Small scale copy provided by ODNR at the meeting)
- Estimated volumes of excavation and embankment (“cut and fill”) for Alternatives A, B and C.
- TranSystems Meeting Minutes from the February 16, 2005 Project Stakeholder Meeting (appended to include pertinent support documentation)

Baker provided the following items at the meeting for stakeholder use:

- Information handout from the January 27, 2009 Public Involvement Meeting
- Presentation handout (copy of the power point presentation given at the meeting)
- Individual elevation views of Preliminary Engineering Study Alternatives A and B
- Summary of Alternatives and Costs (Updated version of similar table from the Approved Planning Study)
- Meeting comment form

DISPLAYS

Baker displayed the following items to aid in the presentation and discussion:

- Large scale roll plot of the combined profile view of Alternatives A, B and C showing pier placement in relation to the Grand River and mainline (Vrooman Road) cut and fill for each alternative
- Display boards from the January 27, 2009 Public Meeting
 - Graphic representation of ODOT Minor Project PDP
 - Revised Project Purpose and Need Statement
 - Graphic representation of previous contract public involvement
 - Preliminary Engineering Study – Revised Alternative A
 - Preliminary Engineering Study – Revised Alternative B
 - Planning Study - Alternative C Areas of Concern
 - Planning Study - Alternative C Profile Areas of Concern



The above meeting minutes have been prepared by Baker, and represent our recollection and interpretation of the meeting. Changes, corrections, revisions or additions to the minutes may be submitted to lciborek@mbakercorp.com for incorporation in the final meeting minutes before the close of business on Tuesday, April 7, 2009.

April 3, 2009