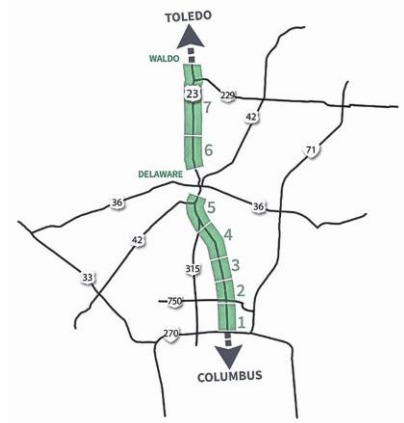


ODOT responds to US 23 questions

By Gary Budzak - April 11, 2024



As the next steps in the Route 23 Connect Study, the Ohio Department of Transportation has provided answers to 99 questions that were brought up by the public in November 2023.

In a 25-page document issued this month, ODOT has summarized its responses for the questions and comments brought up at four in-person and two virtual public meetings.

ODOT, as well as the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission and the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments, are conducting the study to improve traffic flow from Toledo to Columbus, a major transportation route for trucks. With Columbus being a logistics hub, attention is being drawn to U.S. 23, which is said to currently have 30% more traffic than it was designed for.

You may recall that initially in 2022, the study looked at “free-flow connections between Waldo and Interstate-270,” ODOT said. This included potential bypasses around the city of Delaware, which received pushback from the public.

“The cost, complexity, and environmental impact of the concepts presented in earlier were too high to pursue further so the study is shifting its focus toward identifying smaller-scale improvements ... along the U.S. 23 corridor between I-270 and Waldo,” ODOT concluded.

This 23-mile corridor in Marion, Delaware, and Franklin counties has now been divided into seven segments where improvements can be made, and alternatives have been listed. “Tolling is not being considered in this study,” was the answer to question No. 45.

Questions for the segments are listed south to north, and among the highlights:

- It was noted that an additional lane is being built at the I-71 northbound exit of the I-71/I-270 interchange in a separate project. In addition, a bridge is being considered at Lazelle Road.

- The second segment has one concept where southbound traffic would use Orange Road, Highfield Drive and state Route 750 to get to Polaris. Comments included avoiding impacts to Highbanks Metro Park.
- With the Orange Township Fire Station 361 and Mount Carmel Lewis Center Emergency Room being in segment three, changes such as traversable medians may be included.
- The four concepts being considered for segment four, which includes Shanahan Road, each had public support. This was also true for the concepts in the other segments, as well. All segments had four or more different concepts.
- “The City of Delaware has been an active and valued community partner in our project,” ODOT said in segment five, which had five concepts. “The city has provided valuable feedback, and our collaboration remains ongoing. As we refine concepts, this coordination with community partners, including the city, will continue.”
- The city and Delaware County is exploring a future connection to Hills-Miller Road, which is independent of the Route 23 Connect study.
- The test pavement lanes in segment seven will remain local frontage roads. The last question was, are improvements needed here? “Like for any project, No-Build (no improvements) is an option,” was the answer. “While segment seven has the lowest traffic volumes, the build concepts would likely improve travel times and safety. Several serious injury/fatal crashes have occurred in this segment in recent years.”

The timeline is to have more public meetings, develop a feasibility study and a final action plan this year.

ODOT insists the public comments are not a formality.

“The feedback received during the public comment period genuinely matters,” was the response to question No. 24. “Comments and public feedback are important in our decision-making process ... Your input prompts discussions and often leads to real changes in the approach and recommendations.”

For more information, visit www.transportation.ohio.gov/23connect.