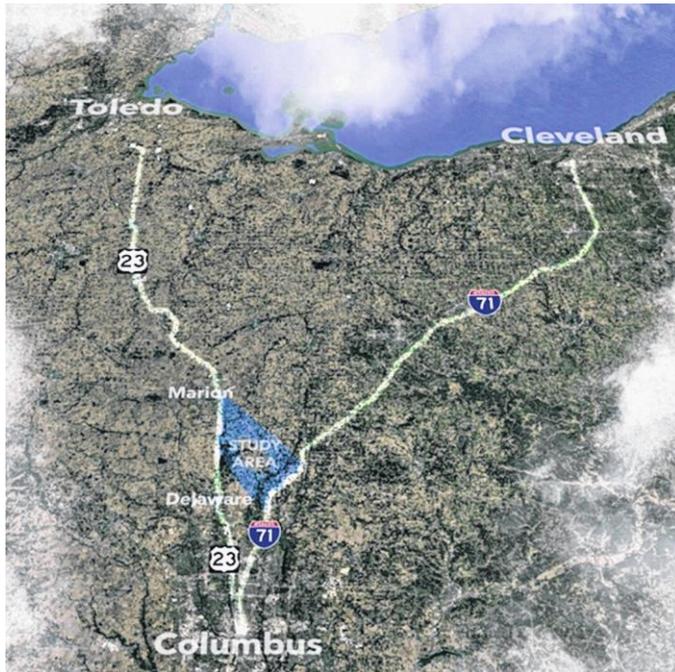


## US 23/I-71 connector study ongoing

By Gary Budzak – March 2, 2026



ASHLEY — In advance of public meetings this week and next, the Ohio Department of Transportation District 6 released its “Draft Conceptual Alternatives Study” for the U.S. Route 23/Interstate 71 Connector Feasibility Study on Feb. 26.

The study looked at 16 potential routes to connect U.S. 23 to I-71, three south of the village of Ashley and 13 north of Ashley. Five routes, all north of Ashley, “are identified for further consideration and public feedback,” the study’s executive summary said. “Public input will be used to confirm the dismissal of alignments, better understand community perspectives on the five alignments recommended for further study, and identify opportunities for refinement. Based on public input and further evaluation, a recommended preferred alignment will be identified and presented in the next phase for public feedback.”

That preferred alternative will be presented in July. Prior to that, response to public feedback is expected in April.

“Alignments north of the Village of Ashley best avoid parkland impacts generally result in fewer impacts to key environmental and community resources,” said the study’s conclusion. “Five alignments north of Ashley were identified for further consideration and public input. These alignments generally result in lower relative impacts — particularly to residential houses and structures — while providing a range of interchange configuration options. Public feedback will be used in conjunction with technical analysis to inform refinement of these alignments and support identification of an alignment(s) for additional study.”

The connector came about in the 2026-2027 Transportation Budget Act “to evaluate the feasibility and identification of a preferred route connecting U.S. 23 to I-71 by Oct. 1, 2026.” A previously issued interim report identified the study area.

“The connection would be a four-lane, limited-access freeway with interchanges currently studied at U.S. 23, U.S. 42, and I-71,” the summary said. “If an alignment is found to be viable, it will advance to a subsequent phase of study to evaluate toll revenue potential and operational feasibility. Tolling considerations were not analyzed as part of this (study) and will be assessed in greater detail as alignments are refined. The U.S. 23/I-71 Connector Feasibility Study does not change ODOT’s commitment to implementing improvements along U.S. 23 identified in the ODOT Route 23 Connect project.”

For more info on the study, visit <https://publicinput.com/23-71study>.

## **Meeting schedule**

The Ohio Department of Transportation will hold a series of public meetings regarding the U.S. Route 23/Interstate-71 Connector Feasibility Study in March.

The meetings will be held at three different counties and locations:

- March 5, noon-2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m., Delaware County Fairgrounds, 236 Pennsylvania Ave., Delaware.
- March 10, noon-2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m., Heartland Retreat Center, 3201 County Road 255, Marengo.
- March 12, noon-2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m., Marion County Fairgrounds, 220 E. Fairground St., Marion.

Each of these sessions will have the same information available, so individuals only need to attend one meeting. There will be no formal presentation. The format is open-house style, meaning the public can drop in whenever, review the information, and provide feedback to ODOT and other study staff. Public comments submitted by April 14 will go into the study documentation, ODOT said.