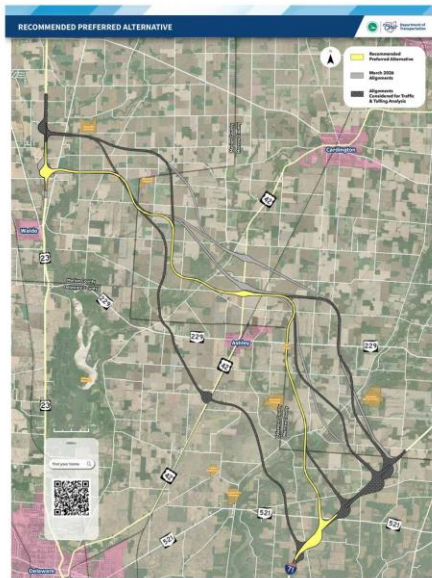


ODOT reveals preferred route for US 23 / I-71 connector

By Gary Budzak – August 2, 2026



The latest meetings regarding the U.S. Route 23/Interstate 71 Connector Study are taking place this week.

The meetings will be noon to 2 p.m. and 4-6 p.m. at:

- Mount Gilead High School Gymnasium, 333 Park Ave., Mount Gilead (Tuesday, Aug. 4).
- Cornerstone Alliance Church, 2010 Marion-Marysville Road, Marion (Wednesday, Aug. 5).
- Delaware County Fairgrounds Ag Building, 236 Pennsylvania Avenue, Delaware (Thursday, Aug. 6).

Based on the recommended preferred alternative, the connector would start above Waldo, cross U.S. 42 in Marion County, turn south to the east of Ashley skirting Morrow County, crossing state Route 521 in Delaware County before it meets I-71.

There are five potential alignments still under consideration, while 10 others are “not recommended for further consideration.” According to a video issued by the Ohio Department of Transportation, one of those alignments not being considered would have had the most environmental impact to Delaware County. There were three alignments that would have gone below Ashley that are no longer being considered. Only two remaining alternatives would have the connector going through Delaware County to reach I-71.

The brief video can be viewed at publicinput.com/23-71study.

"There will be no formal presentation at the in-person meetings," said the meeting announcement. "Instead, ODOT's study team will be available throughout each event to answer questions, so you may arrive at any time during the scheduled meeting hours. All sessions will provide the same information."

Comments will be collected through Sept. 1 via the website, email at publicinput.com/23-71study, comment card at the public meetings, or mailing at: ATTN: US 23/I-71 Connector Feasibility Study, Ohio Department of Transportation – District 6, 400 E. William St., Delaware, OH 43015.

"The public comment period will remain open through September 1, 2026," the announcement said. "ODOT will review and document all comments received, which will be included in the final feasibility study submitted to the Ohio General Assembly by October 1, 2026."

To repeat the purpose/origins of the connector, the ODOT project website said, "In the recent transportation bill, the Ohio Legislature included a provision for the ODOT to conduct a feasibility study on the potential location of a new freeway connection between U.S. 23 and I-71 in Delaware, Marion, and Morrow Counties, as outlined in Section 755.60 of House Bill 54 and further amended by House Bill 96 under Ohio's FY 2026–2027 Transportation Budget Act. The Legislature tasked the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Ohio Turnpike & Infrastructure Commission (OTIC) with jointly evaluating the feasibility of this connection through multiple options, including upgrading existing state routes, constructing a new freeway, or developing a tolled facility."

Since the project was announced, property owners and municipalities in the three counties have voiced their opposition to the proposed connector.