



Chapter 1: Introduction

OVERVIEW

In March 2003, the Kenton County Transportation Plan was adopted by the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments' (OKI) Board. In this plan, Dixie Highway was identified as the highest transportation priority in all of Kenton County. With the priority assigned to it, the Dixie Highway Corridor Transportation and Traffic Optimization Study (Dixie Highway Corridor Study) was conducted to determine how to improve mobility and safety. Completed in June 2005, the operational study's recommendations focused on short-term solutions such as traffic signal systems, intersection improvements, signal pre-emption for emergency vehicles, and interconnections with ARTIMIS for managing traffic overflows from I-71/I-75. The operational study's final plan also recommended that local governments participate in the development and implementation of a long-range plan for access management along the Dixie Highway Corridor. This recommendation formed a foundation upon which to begin the Dixie Highway Corridor Access Management Redevelopment Plan or, what is more commonly referred to as The Dixie Fix (Envisioning the Future of Dixie Highway).

Implementation of access management improvements in an urban area that is already developed is a long-term process. The Dixie Fix facilitates access management by providing information and design scenarios for improving access at 168 individual locations in the corridor. This recommended access management plan, which was developed through the coordinated efforts of OKI and Northern Kentucky Area Planning Commission (NKAPC), provides the basis for a sustained and systematic effort to improve access along Dixie Highway. Each recommended change alone will have only minimal effect in reducing crash rates or improving travel time along the

corridor. When grouped together or taken as a whole, however, it is anticipated that improvements will be more measurable.

The Dixie Fix enables access management coordination between 10 local communities, 2 counties, the two local planning commissions serving the corridor, the State, and local transit authority. Coordination includes a vision for future design and a regulatory process to reach the vision. In addition to access management, the project is addressing other visual, planning, and functional design elements. Design elements include the number of lanes, improvements to intersections (such as addition of turn lanes or conversion to roundabouts), streetscaping, and provisions for transit and pedestrian usage. Improvements are being recommended that will not only make Dixie Highway a more attractive corridor, but more importantly, safer for all modes of travel. The Dixie Fix is intended to provide a vision to Dixie Highway stakeholders and the tools with which to set that vision in motion. It is hoped that success achieved along Dixie Highway will promote further improvements within the corridor and replication throughout the Greater Cincinnati Region.

STUDY AREA

The Dixie Fix's study area covers an 8-mile stretch through 10 local communities. The communities included along the corridor are Florence on the southernmost end, Erlanger, Elsmere, Edgewood, Crestview Hills, Lakeside Park, Fort Mitchell, Fort Wright, Park Hills, and Covington on the northernmost end.

Dixie Highway runs parallel to the Interstate 71/75 corridor. Unlike other long-established state highways, the introduction of I-71/75 in the 1960s did not cause a mass exodus of businesses and traffic from Dixie Highway. Rather, over the past sixty years, Dixie has developed into and remained a quite stable mixture of commercial, public, and residential uses for Northern Kentucky. Due to its location, Dixie is often used as a primary "Plan B" option to drivers during times of high congestion or emergency incidents on the Interstate.

MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT

OKI and NKAPC Memorandum of Understanding

The Dixie Fix study was overseen by the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) acting as the project Manager. The Northern Kentucky Area Planning Commission (NKAPC) provided in-kind services towards the completion of the study.

Oversight Team

To oversee the project, an Oversight Team was established. Members met a majority of the following criteria to serve on the Oversight Team:

1. Serve as a regulatory agency
2. Be located in or impacting The Dixie Fix study area
3. Represent significant sections of The Dixie Fix community
4. Possess specific technical skills that pertain to the study's scope of work

The Oversight Team was Chaired by Bill Goetz, Northern Kentucky Area Planning Commission's Board President, and Larry Klein, City Administer for Fort Wright, served as Vice Chair. The Oversight Team met monthly from September 2005 to June 2006 with the exception of November and December 2005 when resources were focused on the Local Visioning Public Sessions.

The Oversight Team was comprised of major stakeholders including the State and District 6 offices of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC), the Northern Kentucky Area Planning Commission (NKAPC), Boone County Planning Commission, Kenton County Fiscal Court, Boone County Fiscal Court, Covington Diocese, Northern Kentucky Area Chamber of Commerce, the Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky (TANK), and the ten communities in the corridor study area (Covington, Park Hills, Fort Wright, Fort Mitchell, Lakeside Park, Crestview Hills, Edgewood, Erlanger, Elsmere and Florence). This was a "hands-on" group, providing input and review regarding all recommendations.

It is important to note the involvement of the Diocese of Covington based on the presence of six Catholic parishes and eight Catholic schools all within this 8-mile stretch of Dixie Highway. Also, the private partners engaged through the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce were critical in making recommendations that were supported. With the inclusion of access management solutions to private property, the involvement of Dixie business owners was vital. TANK's partnership was also pivotal to The Dixie Fix with Route 1 being the most heavily used public bus route in the entire system. TANK provided key data on transit ridership to the project. The Oversight Team members and alternates are listed on page 7.

PURPOSE AND GOALS

The purpose of The Dixie Fix was to address traffic flow and safety problems through a comprehensive access management plan. A multi-jurisdictional and multi-modal process was developed to meet the study's purpose. First, a vision for the future of the Dixie Highway Corridor was defined. Second, this vision was translated through the development of both specific recommendations and general standards for implementation. The intended outcome is that as the vision is gradually implemented through application of recommendations and redevelopment along the corridor, Dixie Highway will experience less congestion and fewer crashes. Ultimately with these successes, the corridor will attract new development that will enhance commercial and neighborhood vitality.

The goals of the Plan are to:

- Improve safety
- Improve mobility
- Maintain reasonable and adequate access to Dixie Highway properties
- Foster economic development
- Increase environmental stewardship through development of multi-modal options and site design standards
- Improve aesthetics

OKI was sub-allocated \$121,000 in Planning funds for fiscal year 2006 from the Federal Highway Administration to complete The Dixie Fix. These Planning funds are to be used strictly for planning purposes.

COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

To develop a vision for Dixie Highway, as well as gather input on draft recommendations, an extensive public involvement effort was undertaken. Working with such a short timeline and limited resources, The Dixie Fix depended greatly on the active participation of its Oversight Team in regards to public involvement. The Oversight Team members assisted immensely in publicizing the public sessions that are detailed below. Flyers, announcements at council meetings, postings on community websites, congregational programs and events, all helped in spreading the word.

Website

To provide an easily-accessible forum for the public, a website was created (www.dixiefix.org) where people could learn about the study, view access management recommendations, and complete a Visual Preference Survey. In addition to the website, the public could provide input by calling a dedicated phone line or emailing messages and questions.

Visioning Sessions



What is Visioning?

“Visioning is a process by which a community envisions the future it wants, and plans how to achieve it. It brings people together to develop a shared image of what they want their community to become. Once a community has envisioned where it wants to go, it can begin to consciously work toward that goal.” (Steve Ames, American Planning Association)

Seven Local Visioning Sessions (dates and locations follow) were held so that elected officials, city staff, property owners, and the public from each community could meet one-on-one with The Dixie Fix staff to discuss their needs, concerns, and visions for the corridor. These sessions were not only for public input, but equally important for educating the public on access management, transportation and land use issues and potential solutions.

Visioning Sessions:

October 5, 2005	Fort Wright
November 2, 2005	Crestview Hills/Edgewood/Lakeside Park
November 3, 2005	Fort Wright Business Association
November 10, 2005	Park Hills
November 14, 2005	Fort Mitchell
November 16, 2005	Florence/Erlanger/Elsmere
December 5, 2005	Lakeside Park
December 14, 2005	Covington

Follow-Up Meetings:

October 27, 2005	Fort Wright
December 8, 2005	Crestview Hills
December 12, 2005	Erlanger
December 12, 2005	Florence
December 12, 2005	Park Hills
December 14, 2005	KYTC District 6
December 21, 2005	Elsmere
December 21, 2005	Edgewood
February 19, 2006	Lakeside Park

Other Meetings:

October 27, 2005	NKY Chamber Transportation/Infrastructure Committee
March 23, 2006	NKY Chamber Transportation/Infrastructure Committee

Shout-Out!

The first activity at each of the Visioning Sessions was a group exercise where participants were asked to “Shout-Out!” negative and positive adjectives to describe Dixie Highway. A summary of all the adjectives “Shouted-Out!” are included as [Appendix 1-2](#). All agreed at each session that there were problems that required planning and

strategizing to improve Dixie Highway. This activity helped to get participants actively involved in the session.

Visual Preference Survey

A second activity of each Visioning Session was a Visual Preference Survey. Appendix 1-3 includes a blank survey form and each session's public responses' summary. This survey consisted of a PowerPoint presentation of 100 images that depicted a variety of streetscape and development options. Participants were asked to rate the desirability of each image. This survey was also available on the study website to reach an even broader audience where 140 people submitted their preferences. Responses regarding land use preferences seemed to embrace existing development patterns within the communities along the corridor. For example, a predominantly residential Dixie community, preferred to remain residential. In their residential preferences, they did not favor large apartment complexes over 3-stories. In the same vein, more commercial Dixie communities favored commercial uses that did not include traditional fast food restaurants or "big box" retailers with large parking lots. In general, respondents preferred building design of a more traditional nature and conducive to pedestrians. They were also favorable to bus pull-outs and bike lanes.

Initial Access Management Recommendations

At the Visioning Sessions, site specific access management recommendations included in the Dixie Highway Corridor Study (June 2005) were used as the basis for public review. In this way this study built upon ideas already presented in previous evaluations of Dixie Highway. Appendix 1-4 includes public responses to these recommendations.

At the seven Visioning Sessions, a total of 65 people attended and completed a comment sheet. A summary of the comments received at the conclusion of each Visioning Session is included as Appendix 1-5.

Follow-up Meetings

After concluding the Visioning Sessions, ten follow-up meetings were held between OKI, NKAPC staff, and local community representatives. Public input on the conceptual access management and intersection design recommendations was recorded and transferred to 2004 aerials. This information was shared with each of the 10 local communities in graphic form for their review and approval.

Top 5 Local Priorities

After meeting with each of the communities, the Oversight Team approved evaluation criteria and then each community was asked to submit their top five priority improvements.

Public Open House

A Public Open House was held on May 8, 2006 at the Immanuel United Methodist Church on Dixie Highway, so that the public could view the site-specific access management recommendations for each community. Participants were asked to indicate their number one access management priority. They also reviewed and gave input regarding cross-sections for the communities throughout the corridor. A total of 62 people signed in at the meeting. Leading up to the event, OKI conducted an aggressive community involvement effort to inform the Dixie Fix communities of the upcoming meeting. Later, after the public open house the oversight team ranked all the top five priorities from the communities into a single prioritized list.

Public meeting flyers were distributed through a variety of channels including:

- Study Database
- Oversight Team Meeting
- OKI ICC Meeting Mailing
- OKI Executive Committee Meeting Mailing

A legal notice of the public meeting appeared in the following newspapers:

- *Cincinnati Enquirer's* May 7 edition
- *Spanish Journal's* May 5 edition
- *Cincinnati Herald's* May 6 edition

In addition, a ¼ page ad was placed in the May 3 edition of the Community Recorder. In addition to paid advertising, news articles ran in various community newsletters including the Park Hills Press and in the March 24 edition of the Enquirer and April 6 edition of the Florence Recorder.

All public comments were shared with the Oversight Team at their May meeting.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Throughout the study process, 14 articles appeared in a various newspapers and community newsletters (see Appendix 1-6 for copies of news articles):

“Dixie Traffic Plan Inches Along”
Cincinnati Enquirer – August 12, 2005

“OKI Seeks Dixie Highway Feedback”
Community Recorder – October 13, 2005

“Dixie Fix” Gets Drivers’ Input
Cincinnati Enquirer – November 14, 2005

“Plans to Make Dixie Highway Safer and Less Congested”
WVXU News – December 16, 2005

“Park Hills Part of Dixie Highway Study”
Park Hills Press – Winter 2005-2006

“The ‘Dixie Highway Fix’ Comes to Fort Wright”
Top of the Hill News – December 2005

“Dixie Hwy Congestion Prompts In-Depth Review of Land Usage, Recommendations”
NKAPC Newsletter – March 2006

“Committee to Present Dixie Fixes”
Enquirer – March 24, 2006

“Suggested Fixes to Dixie Highway to be Addressed”
Enquirer – March 24, 2006

“Florence Approves ‘Dixie Fix’ Priorities”
The Florence Recorder – April 6, 2006

“Dixie Fix Public Open House”
Park Hills Press – Spring 2006

“Dixie Fix Panel Seeks Opinions On Traffic Plans”
The Cincinnati Enquirer – May 5, 2006

“Dixie Highway Fixes Detailed”
The Cincinnati Enquirer – May 9, 2006

“Public Speaks Out On Dixie Fix”
The Cincinnati Post – May 9, 2006