



II. EXTENSIVE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT THROUGHOUT TO GUIDE STUDY

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Extensive public involvement has played an important role in determining a recommended plan in this study. The intent of the Northwest Butler Transportation Study (NBTS) was to provide a cooperative and collaborative process to determine a long range plan to address the transportation needs in Northwest Butler County. The study included a comprehensive evaluation of costs, benefits, and impacts of potential alternatives resulting in a recommended strategy of implementable projects to be incorporated into the OKI Long Range Regional Transportation Plan, a critical step toward realizing these improvements.

Stakeholder Guidance

The Northwest Butler Transportation Study was initiated in the summer of 2000 with the coordination and interviews of area stakeholders conducted by OKI and the Butler County Engineer's Office to define the area's transportation needs and goals. Residents, business owners, local leaders, civic groups and others actively participated and directed the study via an Advisory Committee of sixty individuals representing over thirty-five groups, agencies, organizations or jurisdictions (see page ii, Acknowledgements, for a listing of the stakeholder groups and representatives who participated in this study). This group met practically monthly (over 25 meetings) over the last two plus years to review and direct project studies and provide valuable local input.

The Advisory Committee meetings were conducted as open, work sessions with technical presentations by Balke American and OKI to explain aspects of the study



Advisory Committee work sessions guided study from goal setting to plan recommendation

processes, analysis techniques, evaluation methods, and study findings, combined with reports from the public involvement consultants, ME Companies and HUB Communications, and Committee members. In addition, the Committee worked through an array of exercises to encourage dialogue among the members to better understand and appreciate the different perspectives of their respective constituency and to reach consensus on the project needs, goals and ultimate recommendations. This active, very dedicated group has been critical to the success of this study in

building consensus on the project need and project goals and evaluating and determining project solutions. [Appendix A](#) includes a compilation of the Advisory Committee actions and decisions over the course of this study.

Community Outreach

In addition, an extensive, broad-based, interactive public involvement process was utilized to obtain input from the project area communities and public at large. Several public presentations on the project studies were conducted for local area civic groups, including the League of Women Voters, the Audubon Society, the Three Valley Conservation Trust, the Collinsville Livestock Protection Association, the Oxford Chamber of Commerce, the Oxford Rotary, Oxford Lions Club, Oxford Kiwanis and the Butler County Farm Bureau. Three open house public meetings / workshops were held at key points in the study process to obtain additional public perspective.

May 23, 2001 Open House Public Involvement Workshop

The initial open house public involvement workshop specifically focused on this study was held in May 2001. The purpose of the first workshop was to obtain input from the general public on the project goals established by the Advisory Committee and on the identification of transportation problems and issues that need to be addressed in the Northwest Butler Transportation Study.

Toward that end, the meeting was a success. Over eighty people attended the meeting representing all parts of the study area (including project team members and 19



Public reviews provided valuable assistance in establishing goals, identifying needs and developing potential solutions

Advisory Committee members, over 50 attendees from general public). Twenty-five written comments were received. In general, the public response indicated a recognition of US 27, SR 73 and Oxford transportation problems that need to be addressed, but also a concern that the rural residential nature of the area needs to be preserved. From the comments heard at the workshop and received in written responses, the project goals established by the Advisory Committee were determined to be well founded and consistent with the

general public's views. Project needs identified to date appeared to coincide well with what the workshop attendees perceived.

April 2, 2003 Open House Public Involvement Workshop

The second public workshop was held on April 2, 2003 focused on an update and to present preliminary alternatives being considered by the Advisory Committee. The open

house format was used to encourage participants to explore information on the project background, goals, and preliminary improvement options that the committee had been considering. At this stage, the improvement options were presented as potential components to include as parts of the long range plan, i.e., no comprehensive plans for the study area had yet been developed.

Interest in the project was growing, with this second public meeting attracting a much larger attendance than the first, with over 180 area residents attending along with many of Advisory Committee members. Over 80% of resident attendees live and/or work in Oxford and Milford Townships. The majority of attendees work in the City of Oxford. Many of the comments from this meeting indicated a recognition of the need for transportation improvements, but concern that improvements would result in too great of an impact on property, the environment and the existing character of the area. Several attendees had come to the meeting based on misinformation distributed by area residents indicating that a recommended plan had already been determined and that it included a bypass (with a defined roadway alignment) north of the City of Oxford.

July 15, 2003 Open House Public Involvement Workshop

The third open public workshop for the Northwest Butler County Transportation Study was held on July 15, 2003. The purpose of the last meeting was to update the public on work that had been ongoing with the Advisory Committee, including the consideration of the public comments from the second meeting and to present alternative plans that the committee had been studying and had voted on for further consideration. Again, the open house format was used to display over fifty large scale exhibits describing the study and the plans under consideration. Project Team representatives and Advisory Committee members served as information ambassadors to help attendees interpret the exhibits and to field questions regarding the study. In addition, a short presentation with slide show was given four times over the course of this meeting. A questions and answer session was included after each presentation.

This third public meeting drew the highest attendance with over 310 area residents attending. Approximately 80 percent of resident attendees live in City of Oxford and Oxford and Milford Townships. Input from this meeting helped the Advisory Committee work



Public review and comment on alternative plans delivered important insight to Advisory Committee in determining ultimate recommendation

toward a consensus recommended plan. Six Build plans and the Do Nothing / No Build alternative were displayed as well as information on the Advisory Committee's vote that resulted in Build Alternatives 1A and 3B receiving equal votes for advancement. In brief summary, the public comments from this meeting while mixed, overall indicated that the public was still concerned about the ability to make necessary, major transportation improvements without undue environmental and property impacts and without changing the area's existing rural character. In general, many favored upgrades to the existing roadway network, but there was considerable support for other major improvements, including new roadway facilities expressed by others noting an acknowledgment that the plan needs to address both short and long term area needs. Some suggestions were made on additional alternative solutions for the area, including: designating SR 177 as an alternative truck route, improving US 27 to three lanes between Millville and Oxford, exploring alternative transportation such as public transit, enacting limitation on student vehicles, and reroute US 27 on existing roads both inside and outside of Oxford.

Communication through Web Site, Newsletters, Mailings and More

In addition, project information and study updates were regularly posted to the Butler County Engineer's Office website (www.bceo.org). Information available on the website included project background summaries, study updates, maps and links to materials presented at recent meetings, links to project newsletters, technical terms, answers to frequently asked questions, meeting announcements, agenda and proceedings and project contacts. From goal setting to problem identification to the development, evaluation and recommendation of a strategic long range plan, this study focused on optimizing the input from the people who live in the area and use these roads every day.

Project information in the form of newsletters, mailings, newspaper releases, feature articles in the Hamilton News-Journal and local radio announcements were also used to communicate with the public throughout the study. Additionally, three project fact sheets were developed and issued during the course of the NBTS. These fact sheets provided to Advisory Committee members, as well as members of the general public who attended the public involvement meetings or otherwise requested to be included on the project mailing list. At the close of the study, the mailing list numbered over 600 persons. These fact sheets included summary information on recent project studies and decisions, as well as facts and background information (both general and technical) on a wide range of transportation and environmental issues important to the NBTS.

Extensive details on the public involvement activities and Advisory Committee meetings (minutes and proceedings) have been compiled for this study. In addition, ME Companies and HUB Communications have prepared a thorough, stand-alone, Public Involvement Summary report for OKI for this study.