

Westside Corridor Questions and Answers

BACKGROUND

1. Why is this property being purchased now?

There are several reasons. Efforts have been underway by a group of partners to purchase the corridor since 2003. CSX has abandoned the property because it is not needed for their operations and has agreed to sell it. There has been a long period of negotiation and appraisal to get to this agreement. Funds are available now that are specifically allocated for the purchase. Preservation of the property for public use is a priority of the TMACOG long range transportation plan.

2. Who are the consortium members involved in this project?

- The Trust for Public Land
- Metroparks of the Toledo Area
- University of Toledo
- City of Toledo
- Wood County Park District
- Wood County Port Authority
- Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (TMACOG)

COST

3. What is the cost of the property?

\$6,494,000

4. When will the purchase be complete?

We expect the purchase of the right-of-way to be completed by July of this year.

5. How was the cost established?

An appraisal was completed by Continental Appraisal Company, an ODOT-qualified firm that established a fair market value for the property.

6. How can we justify spending money on a rail trail when our area has so many pressing financial problems?

A combination of federal and local transportation funds was originally dedicated in 2005 for this project. No additional local money will be needed to acquire the property. No other essential transportation projects in our region will be affected.

7. Since federal funds will be used, is there a local match?

Yes. ODOT will provide the local match to the federal dollars using toll revenue credit monies set aside for the project. No additional local matching funds will be required for the purchase.

WHAT WILL A TRAIL MEAN FOR PEOPLE LIVING NEARBY?

8. Will my property value be impacted by a bike trail?

Studies have shown that bike/pedestrian trails increase the value and desirability of nearby properties for resale. A community with trails and parks is a place where people typically want to live and work.

9. What about safety?

Research has shown that converting an abandoned rail corridor to a trail tends to reduce crime. A landscaped and well-designed path attracts people who use the trail for recreation and transportation and discourages others. The trail will be open during daylight hours and will close at dusk. Local law enforcement will have jurisdiction for patrolling the trail.

10. Who will have a say in how the corridor is developed?

As a part of the project development process, adjacent property owners will be encouraged to participate in discussions about property access, safety, environmental issues, ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance, engineering, parking, maintenance, and costs. As a public facility, it is vital that all members of the public be consulted and have input to final design and construction.

11. Has construction already started on the rail trail, especially along Douglas Road?

No. CSX has removed the rails and ties as a part of the rail abandonment process. With the recent rise in scrap metal prices, the rails have become valuable. Removal of the rails and ties that has occurred is not related to any rail-trail construction plans.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

12. How will the property be developed?

As future funds are secured, it is intended that the right-of-way will be developed over time as a multi-use trail forming a major north/south backbone connecting the University of Toledo, the University Parks Trail, the Ottawa Park trails, several City of Toledo parks and schools, and the W.W. Knight Nature Preserve in Wood County. The corridor will also allow future connectivity to a statewide system of trails being developed in our region including the North Coast Inland and Wabash Cannonball trails.

13. What is a “multi-use trail”?

A multi-purpose trail designed according to current standards has a minimum 10-foot of firm flat surface with two-foot shoulders on each side. The path can be shared by pedestrians, bicyclists, in-line skaters, and similar non-motorized users. Also, the public right-of-way may be used for installation of public utilities such as fiber-optic cables, gas, water, sewer and similar infrastructure. It is more cost-effective and less disruptive to install in a former rail corridor than in a congested street right-of-way.

14. What is meant by non-motorized transportation?

Anything powered by people alone is permitted. No motorcycles, ATVs, or other motorized vehicles are allowed, except wheelchairs and power driven mobility devices (per current ADA rules). However, the trail will be designed to accommodate maintenance, emergency response, and law enforcement vehicles.

15. What will the trail look like when finished?

The trail will be very similar to other paved trails developed in the region. When completed, the corridor right-of-way will look like the University Parks Trail in Lucas County, the Slippery Elm Trail in Wood County, or the North Coast Inland Trail in the urban areas of Sandusky County.

CONCERNS

16. What will happen to the occasional trains that I see along the corridor now?

Norfolk Southern has an easement that allows operation of their trains in the middle section of the corridor near the University of Toledo. These trains will continue into the foreseeable future so we expect the initial trail development will occur in the northerly and southerly reaches of the corridor.

17. What will happen to the existing railroad bridge over the Maumee River?

It will have to be replaced. Separate inspections by ODOT and the Lucas County Engineer’s staff have determined that the bridge structure is in critical condition and that it would be cost-prohibitive to rehabilitate. The rail bridge, originally constructed in 1902, has been inactive since a train derailed there in 1982. The intent is to remove the existing bridge and replace it with a new visually attractive structure suitable for pedestrian/bicycle use. Like the rest of the trail, the new bridge will have the capacity to carry maintenance, emergency, and law enforcement vehicles.

18. Since the property was formerly used as a rail corridor, are there any environmental concerns?

To check for environmental issues, an Environmental Site Assessment Screening of the entire corridor was completed by ARCADIS U.S. Inc. in April 2010. Based on the results of the Screening Report, surface soil sampling was performed based on a testing protocol jointly agreed upon between the ODOT, CSX Railroad, and the Trust for Public Land. The results of the sampling and environmental report were accepted by ODOT and the information is currently being reviewed by Metroparks of the Toledo Area, University of Toledo, City of Toledo, Wood County Park District, and the Wood County Port Authority.

COST

19. How much would designing and constructing a new trail in the corridor cost?

Trail construction costs could range widely depending on the need to replace existing bridges, choices for highway or rail crossing improvements, and other special situations. In 2008, the Lucas County Engineer's office prepared a conceptual cost estimate to construct a new trail along the entire corridor, including a new bridge over the Maumee River, of approximately \$15 million.

20. How would the full development of a future trail be paid for?

There are federal and state grants that the group of partners would look to for funds. Initial costs would be for engineering, other preliminary studies, any additional right-of-way acquisition, and final design. Construction costs would follow. Currently, federal grants for trails may be awarded from the TE (Transportation Enhancements) or the CMAQ (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality) programs of the federal transportation bill. If the trail is built using federal funding, then the design, bidding, and construction process must conform to state and federal standards. There are other sources for funds including the Ohio Clean Trail Fund which administered by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

IF I HAVE OTHER QUESTIONS, WHO DO I CONTACT?

Please send additional questions you may have via e-mail to TMACOG (public.info@tmacog.org) or call TMACOG at 419.241.9155.

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