



OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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JOHN R. KASICH, GOVERNOR • JERRY WRAY, DIRECTOR

January 20, 2016

Commissioner Todd B. Portune
Hamilton County Board of Commissioners
138 East Court Street, Room 603
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

**Re: HAM/CLE Oasis Rail Corridor
PID 86463**

Dear Commissioner Portune:

As a strong supporter of transportation in your region and more specifically as a representative on the Eastern Corridor Funding Partnership team, I wanted to take the opportunity to discuss the role of the Ohio Department of Transportation with respect to the next steps for the Oasis Rail project. In April of 2010, ODOT authorized HDR to begin planning and conceptual development on the Oasis Rail project as part of a comprehensive set of multi-modal transportation options for the Eastern Corridor. By the end of January 2016, ODOT expects to have in hand and distributed to our funding partners the Project's Conceptual Alternatives Study (CAS) and Economic Financial Analysis. These documents and other key deliverables include conceptual engineering, ridership forecasts, operating cost projections, and capital cost projections.

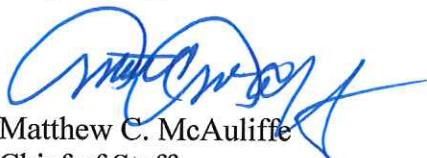
These documents will play a key role in allowing local and regional leaders to evaluate funding options and engage in more detailed planning efforts for the Oasis Rail project. The completed report will be placed on the Eastern Corridor project website for public viewing. In addition, ODOT will hold two public information sessions in February 2016 to present the results of the study to the public. These public information meetings will be followed by a two-week comment period. ODOT and HDR will then compile all public comments into a summary document. Comments received will be addressed in the next phases of project development. With the completion of this important step in the planning process, it is ODOT's intent to close the current planning contract with HDR. Taking into account developments in other components of the overall transportation corridor, and ODOT's limited authority over rail projects, ODOT believes that this is the appropriate point in the project development process for local and regional partners to assume a sponsorship role to carry the Oasis Rail project forward. ODOT will continue its involvement as an advisory partner throughout the remainder of the process, but the local and regional partners are best suited to sponsor and implement the remaining tasks.

While ODOT has taken an active role in the initial planning stages of the Oasis Rail project, it is not currently in the public's interest for ODOT to expend any additional funding for the next stages of this project. The capital cost of the Oasis Rail project is estimated to be between \$337.5 million and \$394.6 million. ODOT is committed to supporting and preserving our current transit operations throughout the State, and the agency does not receive sufficient eligible funding to continue to evaluate transit expansion proposals that require significant development or construction investment. In addition, based

on a recent completed assessment, the project would face challenges in its ability to meet the majority of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts Project Justification Ratings given its current sponsor construct. This assessment was based on current Oasis Rail project information. The lack of a designated sponsor at this time prevents any evaluation of its financial condition. However, the ratings for the project will likely improve as more refined plans are developed and a local sponsor identified that can complete the financial plan component of the FTA New Starts evaluation. ODOT intends to coordinate with our partners to determine the most beneficial deployment of the remaining Oasis project funds within the other components of the Eastern Corridor Program.

ODOT is committed to working with our local and regional partners to advance the remaining components of the Eastern Corridor transportation program. Over the next several weeks, our District staff will reach out to key stakeholders involved in the Eastern Corridor or other local projects to ensure they are given appropriate notice of our upcoming Oasis Rail public meetings. We expect this outreach to be conducted through normal communication channels. Any Eastern Corridor program-wide outreach will be completed as part of ODOT's Segment II/III contract.

Respectfully,



Matthew C. McAuliffe
Chief of Staff

MCM/lkh

- c: Tammy Campbell, District 8
- Stefan Spinosa, District 8
- James Barna
- Jennifer Townley
- Tim Hill