

# The Proposed Ohio River Crossing, Bridge South of Wellsburg

State Project: S205-2/23-0.00 00 Federal Project: HPP-0223(003)D



## Informational Workshop Public Meeting

### Welcome

Welcome to today's Informational Workshop Public Meeting. The West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT), Division of Highways, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have completed the environmental studies for a new Ohio River Crossing. The two objectives of this public workshop are to present the approved Environmental Assessment and Draft Section 4(f) De Minimis Analysis and receive comments.

This workshop is from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm and **there will be no formal presentation**. The workshop is intended to be informal to maximize the interaction between the citizens and project team. We invite you to browse the displays and encourage discussions with the project team. A comment sheet is included in this package and additional sheets are available at the sign-in desk.

### Background

The idea of an additional Ohio River Crossing, south of Wellsburg, emerged when two major studies were completed by the BHJ-MPO to evaluate the transportation system in the Upper Ohio Valley Region. In June 2000, the BHJ-MPO completed the Upper Ohio Valley Bridge System Study Phase I Final Report. To determine the most appropriate location for this crossing, the BHJ-MPO then released the Regional Bridge System Study Phase II Final Report in September 2003. These reports identified the long-term bridge planning needs for the region and included a priority to construct a new Ohio River Bridge, south of Wellsburg.

As part of the current project, three Alternative Crossing locations were presented to the public in September 2009. Due to public and agency comments, two alternatives were eliminated and three new alternatives were developed. The four resulting alternatives are Alternatives 2, 2B, 8 and 8B. Tonight's meeting is to discuss these alternatives and their environmental impacts, with Alternative 8B the Preferred Alternative.

### What is an EA and Draft Section 4(f) De Minimis Analysis?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision processes by considering the environmental impacts of their proposed actions and reasonable alternatives to those actions. An Environmental Assessment (EA) is a document to determine whether or not a federal undertaking would significantly affect the environment. This EA evaluates the anticipated socioeconomic, cultural and natural environmental impacts of the proposed Ohio River Crossing.

Section 4(f) requires consideration of:

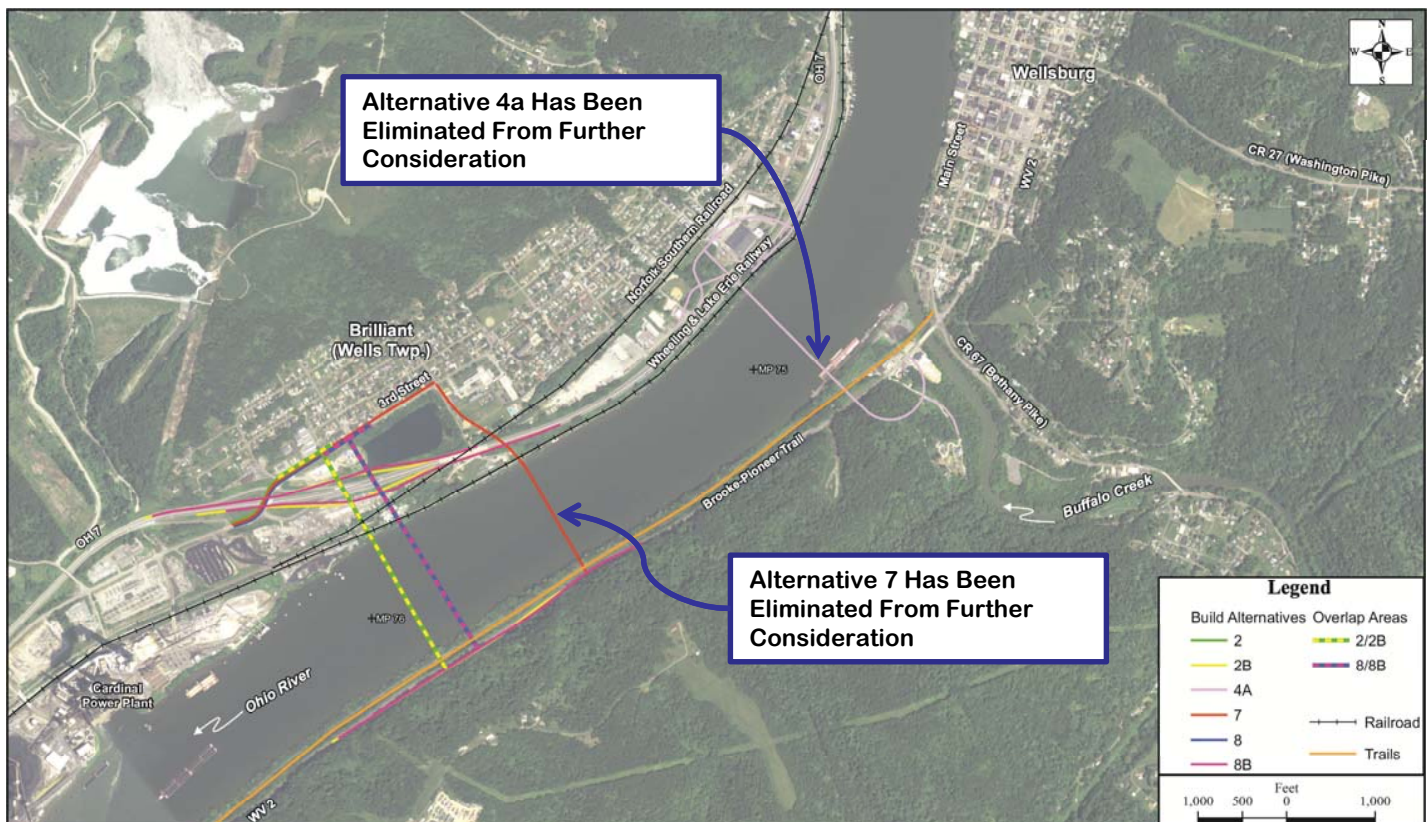
- Parks and recreational areas of national, state, or local significance that are both publicly owned and open to the public
- Publicly owned wildlife and waterfowl refuges of national, state, or local significance that are open to the public to the extent that public access does not interfere with the primary purpose of the refuge
- Historic sites of national, state, or local significance in public or private ownership regardless of whether they are open to the public

These properties must be looked at carefully and all efforts must be made to minimize impacts to them. While conducting studies for the EA, the Brooke-Pioneer Trail in West Virginia was classified as the only Section 4(f) property within the project limits. The Draft 4(f) De Minimis Analysis has been prepared to describe the property and how the project has made attempts to minimize impacts to the trail.

## Environmental and Design Studies

Early engineering and environmental studies identified three Ohio River Crossing locations within the project limits defined as Buffalo Creek to the north in Wellsburg, West Virginia and Cardinal Power Plant to the south in Brilliant, Ohio. A draft Design Study was submitted to WVDOT in June 2009 and Informational Workshop Public Meetings were held in September 2009 for Alternatives 2, 4a and 7. Prior to submitting the draft report, early coordination with agencies revealed a significantly shorter main bridge span would be required for Alternative 7 compared to Alternatives 2 and 4a resulting in significant cost savings for Alternative 7. However, comments received from the public indicated that Alternative 7 was least desirable due to the proximity to the school, park and residential properties in Brilliant.

As a result of comments received, additional engineering studies were performed to better define horizontal clearance requirements for the various alternatives. A new technology, being performed by Seamen's Church Institute, allowed computer simulation of barging activities along the river. As part of the simulation, barge industry river pilots were able to navigate through a 3D model of the Ohio River with different bridge crossing locations and various span lengths. These studies were coordinated with United States Coast Guard and resulted in major changes to the bridge span length. Span lengths for Alternatives 2, 2B, 7, 8 and 8B were determined to be similar. The span length for Alternative 4a remained significantly longer than the other alternatives. Locations of the alternatives are shown on the map below.



Based on the public comments and the bridge span length studies, Alternative 7 and 4a were eliminated from further consideration. The environmental impacts of the four remaining Alternatives (2, 2B, 8 and 8B) were identified and the EA was written to present the findings. Of these four alternatives, Alternative 8B is considered the Preferred Alternative. In May 2012, WVDOT and ODOT signed the EA and Draft 4(f) De Minimis Analysis. The FHWA approved the document on July 2012. The four alternatives being considered are described in more detail on the next page.



## Alternatives

### ***No-Build Alternative***

The *No-Build Alternative* will involve taking no action other than the routine maintenance activities normally associated with WV 2, Ohio SR 7, US 22 Veterans Memorial Bridge, and the Market Street Bridge.

### ***Alternative 2***

*Alternative 2* is located at the southern end of the study area and provides a direct connection between WV 2 and the township street system in the southern most section of Brilliant. The proposed bridge connects WV 2 approximately 1.25 miles south of Buffalo Creek. On the Ohio side, the proposed bridge connects to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street in Brilliant northwest of the existing Riddles Run interchange at Clark Way. *Alternative 2* uses a simple and straight horizontal alignment for the proposed bridge by forming a "T" intersection with WV 2. At the proposed bridge connection with 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, a standard four-leg intersection is formed with Clark Way. It is anticipated that minor modifications, such as turn lanes or signalization, may be required on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and at the Riddles Run ramp termini.

### ***Alternative 2B***

*Alternative 2B* is located at the same river crossing location as *Alternative 2*. The connection with WV 2 is the same as *Alternative 2*; however, on the Ohio side, a new diamond interchange with OH 7 will be constructed in addition to the connection to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street at Clark Way. As a result, the existing Riddles Run interchange ramps will be removed. It is anticipated that minor modifications, such as turn lanes or signalization, may be required on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. Since this alternative is essentially *Alternative 2* with a new interchange, it could be constructed in phases. As the first phase, the connections to WV 2 and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street could be constructed along with the main river bridge and independent bridge over OH 7. Traffic will utilize 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and the existing Riddles Run Interchange to access OH 7. The proposed ramps could be added at a later time when either funding is available or traffic increases.

### ***Alternative 8***

*Alternative 8* is located approximately 400 feet north of *Alternative 2* as shown in the exhibits. Similar to *Alternative 2*, it provides a direct connection between WV 2 and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street in Brilliant. The proposed bridge connects to WV 2 approximately 1.2 miles south of Buffalo Creek and connects to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street in Brilliant northwest of the existing Riddles Run Interchange at Cleaver Street. The West Virginia approach to the proposed bridge has a straight alignment which connects at a "T" Intersection with WV 2. The Ohio approach connects to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street at a standard four-leg intersection with Cleaver Street. It is anticipated that minor modifications, such as turn lanes or signalization, may be required on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and at the Riddles Run ramp termini.

### ***Alternative 8B (Preferred Alternative)***

*Alternative 8B* is located at the same river crossing location as *Alternative 8*. The connection with WV 2 is the same as *Alternative 8*; however, on the Ohio side, a new diamond interchange with OH 7 will be constructed in addition to the connection to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street at Cleaver Street. As a result, the existing Riddles Run Interchange ramps are removed. It is anticipated that minor modifications, such as turn lanes or signalization, may be required on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. Since this alternative is essentially *Alternative 8* with a new interchange, it could be constructed in phases. As the first phase, the connections to WV 2 and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street could be constructed along with the main river bridge and independent bridge over OH 7. Traffic will utilize 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and the existing Riddles Run Interchange to access OH 7. The proposed ramps could be added at a later time when either funding is available or traffic increases.





## Project Schedule

### May 2008

Notice to Proceed given to HDR Engineering, Inc. for preparation of an Environmental Assessment and Design Report Study.

### Fall 2008 through Winter 2009

Technical Studies performed by HDR (Determine feasible crossing locations and their impacts).  
Public Workshops (October 2008 and September 2009).

### Spring 2011 to Spring 2012

Alternatives 2B, 8 and 8B were added and Alternatives 4A and 7 were eliminated from further consideration.  
Additional technical studies performed for new alternatives.  
Draft findings were reviewed by state agencies and Alternative 8B was designated as the Preferred Alternative.

### May 2012

Environmental Assessment (EA) and Draft 4(f) De Minimis Analysis was signed by state agencies.

### June 2012

The Toll Study was completed.

### July 2012

The EA was approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

### Fall 2012

Complete Design Study and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) approval by FHWA.

## Project Funding

In 2005, \$18 million was appropriated to plan, design and construct a New Ohio River Bridge, south of Wellsburg. The estimated cost of Preferred Alternative 8B is \$125 million.

## Why should you be involved in the project?

Comments on this project and its potential impacts are requested from the public to assist in the study and development of alternatives resulting in the selection of a preferred alternative. The comments and suggestions you provide are important so the agencies involved can hear the concerns of the people who live and work in the area. Your input will be used to guide the study team as the project moves forward.

Comments are due September 28, 2012  
and should be sent to the following:

Mr. Gregory Bailey, P.E., Director  
Engineering Division  
West Virginia Division of Highways  
State Capitol Complex, Building 5, Room A-317  
1900 Kanawha Boulevard East  
Charleston, West Virginia 25305-0430

Visit the WVDOH Website at <http://go.wv.gov/dotcomment> (engineering projects)  
for project information and the opportunity to comment electronically.