



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Ohio Division
February 11, 2015

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Columbus, OH 43215
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In Reply Refer To:
HDA-OH

Jerry Wray
Director
Ohio Department of Transportation
1980 West Broad Street
Columbus, OH 43223

Subject: FHWA Re-Evaluation of Brent Spence Bridge Replacement/Rehabilitation Project

Dear Director Wray:

The Federal Highway Administration has conducted a re-evaluation of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Brent Spence Bridge Replacement/Rehabilitation Project. Ohio Department of Transportation Project Identification of HAM 89068, and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet Project Identification of 6-17. The purpose of the reevaluation is as follows:

- Introduce and document the need for further environmental analysis to support alternative delivery mechanisms not previously considered in the NEPA document that may have environmental impacts.
- Meet the required time frames to maintain a NEPA decision as valid.

This reevaluation has been coordinated with the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. The reevaluation is enclosed.

If you have questions or concerns, please call or e-mail Mr. Adam B. Johnson, Major Projects Engineer at (614) 280-6843 or abjohnson@dot.gov.

Sincerely,

For: Laura S. Leffler
Division Administrator

Enclosure(s)

By messenger (ODOT)

ecc: David Snyder
Duane Thomas
David Talley, KYTC
Julie Gwinn, ODOT

The Brent Bridge Replacement/Rehabilitation Project
KYTC Project Item No. 6-17
ODOT PID 89068
Kenton County, Kentucky and Hamilton County, Ohio
Re-evaluation
February 6, 2015

On August 9, 2012, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) the Brent Spence Bridge Project. Since that time, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) have continued with project development. Discussions are ongoing between the States regarding funding of the project as presented in the original FONSI, estimated at \$2.4 - \$2.9 billion. These discussions revealed that tolling the users of the facility is an option that needs to be considered. That option, however, was not considered in the original FONSI.

Purpose of the Reevaluation

A reevaluation is required per 23 CFR 771.129 when changes have occurred between the previous NEPA approval and the request for additional federal action. The reevaluation takes place after the FONSI has been approved and prior to the advancement of the next project stage. The reevaluation provides evidence in determining whether or not the preparation of a new EA or EIS is necessary in order to advance the project to the next stage. The purpose of the reevaluation is to determine the validity of the previous NEPA decision. It is the mechanism to determine and document whether or not the NEPA decision remains valid for the requested action or if additional analysis and/or documentation is necessary.

Proposed Project

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) plan to improve a 7.8-mile segment of Interstate-75 (I-75) within the Commonwealth of Kentucky (state line mile 186.7) and the State of Ohio (state line mile 2.7). The southern limit of the project is 5,000 feet south of the midpoint of the Dixie Highway Interchange on I-71/I-75 in Fort Wright, south of Covington, Kentucky. The northern limit of the project is 1,500 feet north of the midpoint of the Western Hills Viaduct Interchange on I-75 in Cincinnati, Ohio. The eastern and western limits of the study area generally follow the existing alignment of I-75.

I-75 within the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky region is a major thoroughfare for local and regional mobility. Locally, it connects to I-71, I-74 and US Route 50. The Brent Spence Bridge provides an interstate connection over the Ohio River and carries both I-71 and I-75 traffic. The bridge also facilitates local travel by providing access to downtown Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Ohio and Covington, Kenton County, Kentucky. Safety, congestion and geometric problems exist on the structure and its approaches. The Brent Spence Bridge, which opened to traffic in 1963, was designed to carry 80,000 vehicles per day. Currently, approximately 160,000 vehicles per day use the Brent Spence Bridge and traffic volumes are projected to increase to approximately 233,000 vehicles per day in 2035.

The 1-75 corridor within the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky region is experiencing problems, which threaten the overall efficiency and flexibility of this vital trade corridor. These problems include, but are not limited to, growing demand and congestion, land use pressures, environmental concerns, inadequate safety margins, and maintaining linkage in key mobility, trade, and national defense highways. The purpose of the project is to improve the operational characteristics within the 1-75 corridor for both local and through traffic. In the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky region, the 1-75 corridor suffers from congestion and safety related issues as a result of inadequate capacity to accommodate current traffic demand. The objectives of this project are to:

- improve traffic flow and level of service,
- improve safety,
- correct geometric deficiencies, and
- maintain connections to key regional and national transportation corridors.

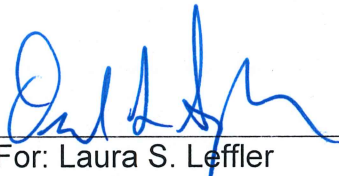
The 1-75 corridor is a major north-south transportation corridor and is one of the busiest freight movement (trucking) routes and as such is important link for the local, regional and national economies. The project is included in a conforming Transportation Plan in accordance with the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

Finding of the Reevaluation

FHWA has determined that based on the possibility of tolling the facility, ODOT and KYTC will begin preparation of a Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA). The SEA will be of limited scope and only evaluate the additional impacts associated with tolling the facility. Based on the potential for unknowns, ODOT will follow their NEPA process to prepare the document. The alternatives and findings of the existing EA/FONSI can be pulled forward into the SEA to limit additional work needed to complete the document. There are three alternatives to evaluate:

- The facility without tolls from the existing FONSI
- Tolling of the facility
- No-Build Alternative

Until ODOT and KYTC have committed to the potential changes in project scope and the requested reevaluation is completed; the existing FONSI dated August 9, 2012 remains valid.



For: Laura S. Leffler
Division Administrator

Date

2/11/15