

the JOURNALpress & the REGISTER

HOME

NEWS

SPORTS

OPINION

OBITUARIES

CLASSIFIEDS

PUBLIC RECORD

COMMUNITY

EVENTS

SUBSCRIBE



Going On Now!
September 2 thru 30
Storewide Savings Up To
60% OFF MSRP
On everything throughout the store!

Stop in and
register to win a
\$500
Merchandise
Certificate!

There's no place like...
HOME FURNITURE
557 W. Exds Pkwy • 812-537-1610

HOME



CITIZENS CROWD INTO 'PRIVATE' BRIGHT 74 ADVISORY BOARD MEETING TO BE HEARD

Mon, 08/22/2016 - 01:52 Journalpress1

Two connector road concepts no longer under consideration

SHARE

BY: DENISE FREITAG BURDETTE "Something as committee members, as council members and as commissioners- what you should be hearing tonight- there's a lack of trust."

That is how Whites Hill Road resident Tracy Coon helped wrap up the citizen comments heard during the Wednesday night, Aug. 17, Bright 74 advisory committee meeting at North Dearborn Branch Library.

About 50 people squeezed themselves into the library's meeting room after citizens caught wind of the advisory committee meeting that was referred to as "private" more than once.

But Dearborn County Commissioner and OKI Regional Council of Governments Board of Directors president Kevin Lynch said at the beginning of the meeting the committee would "love to take questions and comments at the end of the meeting if we have time."

OKI was asked by county commissioners to conduct the year-long Bright 74 study to investigate possible improvements for current roadways along with possible new roadways that would meet access and safety needs between the Bright area and Interstate 74.

The advisory committee, as described by OKI, consists of OKI Dearborn County board members as well as "key stakeholders who represent 20 diverse and well-established governmental agencies, local



*All of Your Real Estate Needs...
UNDER ONE ROOF. CALL ME TODAY!*

Ken Maddin, CRS

HUFF REALTY

513.519.0006
www.KenMaddin.com

Starter Home or Dream Home...I Can Make It Happen!

The Friendship State Bank

YOUR COMMUNITY BANK

RELY ON FRIENDSHIP

friendshipstatebank.com

CALL TOLL FREE 877-667-5101

Member FDIC

CERTIFIED 100 YEARS ORIGINAL

businesses, emergency service providers and civic-based organizations in the area.”

That was questioned by Coon who also added “consider a balance on your advisory committee that there is not just business owners on it, but there is residents that do not have businesses.”

Life-long Bright resident and business owner Brian DeBruler said the people in the community have expressed to him the need for a better balance on the advisory board.

DeBruler started a Facebook page and web site expressing concerns about the study after a second open house on the study was held in June at East Central High School.

During that open house, four possible concepts were presented to the public including the improvement of existing roads; improvements to Whites Hill; the construction of a new connector road from Carr Road to near the Harrison/Brookville I-74 entrance/exit ramps and a new connector road from State Line Road to near the Harrison/Brookville I-74 entrance/exit ramps.

Committee members first met in December, then again in January with the first public open house in February, followed by a 30-day public comment period. Another advisory board meeting was held in May prior to the June public open house. A final public open house is scheduled for 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 14, at the ECHS Performing Arts Center, St. Leon.

After DeBruler started the Facebook page, soon after, county resident Tony Luers started an online petition against a Bright to I-74 road project. At least 790 people have signed the petition with over 370 comments against the potential project.

In comparison, the second OKI survey received 506 responses during a 30-day period.

“The fact that we have more signatures for our petition than your survey should be eye-opening,” said Coon.

“A lot of residents in the community felt that in both instances of the online survey and the paper surveys that were offered in the study phases there was no option or question on the survey for residents to indicate direct opposition to the project ...,” said DeBruler, who live-streamed the meeting on Facebook.

Open house sneak peek

Before the citizen comments were allowed at the end of the meeting, project manager Robyn Bancroft of OKI and Gary Mroczka and Dave Wormald of lead consultant AECOM, presented an overview of feedback from the June open house as well as recommendations of what should be considered going forward.

In both the first and second survey, residents expressed the need to preserve the rural quality of the area.

“We heard that time and time again,” said Bancroft, who also stated financial costs also is a big issue.

The original estimated costs of the four concepts presented at the second open house were \$10 to \$20 million for improving existing roads; \$20 to \$30 million for improving Whites Hill Road as a connector; \$35 to \$50 million for a Carr Road connector and \$30 to \$50 million for a State Line Road connector.

Each concept was evaluated by the consultants using a tool used by many technical teams to quantify hard facts in the best way possible, said Bancroft.

It was decided that there would be no further evaluation of the Carr Road and State Line Road connector concepts, said Mroczka.

Both concepts did not receive an overall favorable reaction from those who took the second survey.

Another look was taken at improving existing roads and the Whites Hill connector. The modified cost estimates for these concepts were \$15 to \$20 million for the improvement of existing roads and \$35 to 45 million for improvements to Whites Hill Road as a connector, he said.

The rise in cost regarding Whites Hill was based on taking a closer look at utility impacts and the amount of earthwork involved, he said.

Although the amount of public support in the survey for improving existing roads was much higher than for Whites Hill, the team looked at that possibility in more depth as part of due diligence, said Bancroft.

The preliminary recommendation concepts previewed were:

1. Enhancing maintenance
2. Evaluation of other Interstate connections
3. Indiana Department of Transportation/ Ind. 46/U.S. 52 future improvements
4. North Dearborn Road improvements
5. Whites Hill Road improvements

Possible overall maintenance enhancements include widening road shoulders where possible on North Dearborn Road and Whites Hill Road; adding lighting a key intersections; removing roadway obstructions such as utility poles and trees; improved signage, and addressing draining or slippage issues.

In regards to North Dearborn Road specifically, vertical and horizontal curvature issues would be addressed; current 10-foot lanes could be widened to INDOT design standards of 12 feet along with shoulders added along the road; realigning intersection with Carr Road to be more perpendicular and possible roundabout intersections at North Dearborn and State Line roads and North Dearborn and Whites Hill roads.

Citizens in the audience listening to the presentation almost immediately bristled at the idea of widening the road, roundabouts and additional signage based on negative whispers exchanged after each concept was mentioned.

Wormald said the team wanted to receive feedback from the public about considering roundabouts, which can provide a free-flow of traffic. Mrocza said roundabouts are increasing in popularity in Indiana. They are proven to reduce the number of extreme crashes.

Residents also later questioned possible plans to widen the roads when many houses were already located close to the roadways. Some whispers also relayed a lack of enthusiasm for signage that points out ways Bright and I-74 can be accessed fearing it would bring an increase of unwanted traffic.

Improvement to Whites Hill was broken out into three phases including widening of the road in some areas. Wormald said the main purpose of this possible improvement would be to lessen the steep grade centered in the middle portion of the road, which would also be the most costly section at \$8 to \$10 million.

During citizen comment at the end of the meeting, Whites Hill resident Melissa Dennis said her family owns the land indicated for improvements in the center section of Whites Hill Road.

She expressed issues with working with the county during past efforts to improve the road. She stated that her family donated land last time, but that the county profited from the sale of timber and top soil on the land, said Dennis.

"We will fight this tooth and nail to get one inch of space ... We were screwed once we will not be again ... We do not want this," said Dennis.

We the people

Although he can see the need to look out 20 or 30 years, DeBruler called the study "overly ambitious." The focus should be on the immediate maintenance needs of the county infrastructure, he said.

Bright is a bedroom community. People accept it takes longer to travel to the interstate to be part of a rural community, said DeBruler.

Citizens also expressed that widening and straightening North Dearborn Road in certain areas may result in more people speeding, negating the purpose to make the roads safer.

After the meeting, new Bright-area resident John Watson shared his thoughts on moving to the area.

"I think the area has a lot of great things. Moving here recently from Florence, Ky., I appreciate the walking trail that links Greendale, Lawrenceburg and Aurora. I love the Music in the Street downtown. I love Fall Fest. These are all things that even a big city like Florence doesn't do. It shows the place cares about its citizens and provides unique things to do that made us immediately feel part of the community."

But spending our money on a useless connector ... that serves no purpose is ridiculous. We left Florence because as the city 'improved and experienced economic growth.' The quality of life deteriorated to the point that many long-term residents, we were there 23 years, moved out ... And crime rates rose and there were shootings one road over from ours," he said.

Pinhook Road resident Al Powell said he wished the citizens had been given more notice of the advisory committee meeting so more people could have attended. He did not see the meeting advertised on the OKI web site.

"This is of keen interest of everyone in the area," said Powell.

"This is an advisory board meeting. It's not really a public meeting. It's just we prepare for the public meetings that we have at the high school and welcome the public there. Obviously this room isn't adequate for that type of meeting. So really the nature of tonight's meeting is for the advisory board and for the consultants and the other people involved with the project. We're glad for the public to come, but it's not really a public-type meeting," said Lynch.

Later DeBruler suggested a open-forum community meeting be held at a certain time during the September open house to give residents a chance to meet together and express their thoughts about the study. He has been inspired by the people, new and long-time residents, who have come together on this issue.

Bancroft said that the suggestion would be taken under consideration.

For more information go click on the following links:

<http://bright74.oki.org>

[Bright74 Facebook page](#)

[Sign the online petition](#)

Section: NEWS

LATEST

POPULAR CONTENT

TODAY'S:

- Appeals court agrees Franklin County lawsuit vs L'burg needs new venue
- custom login page
- BLOOMQUIST WINS WHISKEY CITY 60
- Over \$1M doled out for local roads, bridges
- Unemployed workers approved for assistance

RELATED ARTICLES

Latest survey results in for Bright to I-74 connector study

Council OKs \$40,000 for Bright to I-74 connector road study

Bright 74 study: Look at 4 concepts

Second public meeting for Bright 74 study is June 22

New connector road only one option

UPDATED: Initial surveys do not show public support for a new Bright to I-74 connector road

SITE LINKS

- o Home
- o News
- o Sports
- o Opinion
- o Obituaries
- o Classifieds
- o Public Record
- o Community
- o Events
- o Subscribe

AFFILIATES

The Ada Herald
Delphos Herald
Eagle Print
Falmouth Outlook
Iron County Reporter
Monroe County Beacon
Ohio County News
Paulding Progress

AFFILIATES (CONT.)

Putnam County Sentinel
Rising Sun Recorder
Star Gazette
The Business Journal
The Harrison Press
The Journal Press
The Times Bulletin
Vilas County News Review
Waushara Argus

USEFUL INFO

Media Kit
Rate Card
Careers



Comey & Shepherd
513-367-3650
REALTORS.

**Ohio • Indiana
Kentucky**
1151-1 Stone Drive
Harrison, OH

Surf New Media