

Innerbelt Integration Initiative
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ODOT / District 4
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The Innerbelt Integration Initiative would like to thank you for conducting such a well done town hall meeting last week at Archbishop Hoban. We enjoyed speaking with you about the alternatives presented. Before we critique any of them, let us tell you what we have been doing here at the Initiative.

About this time last year, a friend and I spoke about the future of this region, and past decisions that had impacted it. During the conversation we touched on the Akron Innerbelt. A lingering curiosity about its design brought us to the Municipal Planning Department, University of Akron Archives, and even to Philadelphia to look at planner Lawrence Halprin's Proposals. Today, we have gathered over a thousand documents pertaining to the planning, construction, and public relations of the project. Perhaps more than anyone else we would be able to address the proposed changes to the Innerbelt connection.

On January 19th, 1978, a Public Meeting was held at Thornton Junior High School discussing four alternatives to the design of the Innerbelt connection. The City of Akron and its consultant suggested a full interchange with I-76. Several years down the road they changed their mind, rationalizing that a partial interchange with I-76 would be superior, because it wouldn't require the closing of the Main / Broadway movement. The reality was that Ohio State Government was effectively bankrupt, and couldn't afford a full interchange. It wasn't until an Environmental Impact Study was completed in 1978 that the Federal government stepped in and funded the project.

Today we have the chance to right those design irregularities by providing a full interchange with Route 59. Alternative 2, which was favored by the demonstrator has a number of failures, most glaring of which is the failure to *actually improve* traffic flow downtown. The largest employment center downtown is Cascade Plaza and vicinity, which is more than two miles south of the Main / Broadway movement. Thus, the Main / Broadway interchange only effectively serves parts of Opportunity Park (Canal Park, AES, Gojo). The Innerbelt was designed to give efficient access to Cascade, in fact it was a stipulation of the Cascade Plaza project, but its development has been hampered by the **lack of accessibility**.

Alternative 2 claims to provide the most benefits for its cost, however, we believe the most cost effective concept is Alternative 4. While Main and Broadway are high capacity

one way streets, they are hampered by low speed limits, plentiful cross streets and traffic lights. Alternative 4 grants a limited access alternative that is both efficient and convenient. There are areas that the Innerbelt serves that Main / Broadway does not, including Lane-Wooster, Highland Square, Northside (Merriman Valley) and Route 8. The Innerbelt's value is reconfirmed every time an injured individual is transported to Akron General, Akron Children's, or St. Thomas Hospital; a completed interchange would make this convenience benefit more than westsiders.

According to Central Interchange literature, a goal of the project is "improved access to downtown Akron". Alternative 4 provides high accessibility at reasonable costs. In the scope of a multimillion dollar project, we believe a modest increase in costs to provide superior access, instead of acceptable access, is preferable.

However, if Alternative 2 is to proceed, what then is done in the way of detours? Certainly an incomplete Innerbelt can only ease the pain for travelers from the north and west. Alternative 4 would provide a superior detour plan (granted that construction begins at its project mileage), by detouring travelers to the Main / Broad movement until work is complete on the Innerbelt, and then moving the detour to the newly opened eastbound ramps.

We believe that procurement of Alternative 2 would be nearsighted. We understand the need to maintain excellent access to preexisting structures. At the same time, we need to provide increased access to quickly growing areas. Two housing projects which will potentially house hundreds of people are to be located in the little Merriman Valley (see Northside Lofts, Cascade Village). If present conditions are maintained, the city may not be able to attract the tenants it desires.

The Innerbelt is important because it provides direct and efficient access to Cascade Plaza, the place of the highest concentration of jobs downtown. The Innerbelt is important because redirects traffic off our busy downtown streets. The Innerbelt is important because it provides a valuable bypass of the Central interchange. And it's important the Innerbelt is completed.

We anticipate your vigilance in this matter...

Regards,

John Dziurlaj
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[Enclosure]