

Richland Avenue Pedestrian Passageway Project Public Comment and Response Information

An Open House Public Involvement Meeting was held for the Richland Avenue Pedestrian Passageway Project (ATH-Richland Avenue Pedestrian Crossing, PID 104028) on Tuesday February 20, 2018, from 3:30 pm to 6:00 pm at the Grover Center Atrium, located at 53 Richland Avenue, Athens, OH 45701.

A press release for the Open House was issued by the City of Athens on February 2, 2018, and an online article about the Open House was released by Ohio University on February 5, 2018.

A number of individuals walked through the Open House and did not sign-in, 36 individuals attended the Open House and signed the attendance record. Comment forms and handouts were made available to all attendees. Open House exhibit information was uploaded to the City of Athens website by February 20, 2018.

Questions and comments submitted at the Open House, through the online comment form, or through email within the comment period are below, along with the response from the Engineering and Public Works Office.

Questions/Comments and Responses

Are there any specific elements of this project that you particularly like or dislike and why?

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| <p>Comment: I like the fact it's a safer alternative for students and pedestrians overall. It still doesn't address the major event space (Convo) pedestrian traffic that will not walk another block to cross.</p> |
| <p>Response: The project and design are not intended to address major events (such as large events at the Convocation Center), the project and design are intended to address every day pedestrian behavior.</p> |
| <p>Comment: Would like to learn more about the studies leading to right & left turns into & out of Bobcat Lane.</p> |
| <p>Response: The original left-turn prohibition was an attempt to limit the conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians on Richland Avenue. The Passageway Project will eliminate these conflicts and the left-turn prohibition is no longer necessary.</p> |
| <p>Comment: Like opening access to Bobcat Ln.</p> |
| <p>Response: Thank you for your comment.</p> |
| <p>Comment: Brick fits campus better.</p> |
| <p>Response: Thank you for your comment.</p> |
| <p>Comment: Love the brick and I Love the O for Ohio. I like how the project will separate pedestrians and drivers.</p> |
| <p>Response: Thank you for your comment.</p> |
| <p>Comment: I think it's a great project and much needed. I appreciate preserving the bike lane and making it accessible for all forms of transportation.</p> |
| <p>Response: Thank you for your comment.</p> |
| <p>Comment: I like the bus pull off</p> |
| <p>Response: Thank you for your comment.</p> |
| <p>Comment: I hate that some of the existing trees would have to be killed and removed.</p> |

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| <p>Response: Some trees have to be removed because their limbs will conflict with traffic or their roots may be damaged during construction. The designers have been directed to minimize tree conflicts, where possible. The City and Ohio University are coordinating on a landscape plan that includes replacement trees.</p> |
| <p>Comment: Like that pedestrians won't have to use stairs.</p> |
| <p>Response: Thank you for your comment.</p> |
| <p>Comment: Complete streets, i.e. bike lanes on Richland Ave in both directions would ensure safer commutes for bikers coming from and heading towards uptown.</p> |
| <p>Response: The southbound lane will include Shared Lane Markings instead of a dedicated bike lane.</p> |
| <p>Comment: I like: - maintaining the pedestrian crossing at the current grade - the size of the pedestrian passageway opening - integrated modes supported (bike, walk, disabled access) in the same space instead of trying to separate them - preventing peds from crossing at Bobcat Lane area - uphill bike lane maintained I love: the bus stop pull-off. Please find a way to include this in the project. If not, then adjust to try and reduce likelihood of peds crossing Richland Ave from bus stop. I dislike: - loss of shoulder in the downhill section along where turn lane for Bobcat Lane is proposed. While a full bike lane isn't critical, maintaining a 2-4' shoulder is so bicyclists can ride in traffic or not depending on their comfort level. - 11' vehicle lane widths, please reduce these to 10' (like the E. State St. Project)</p> |
| <p>Response: The bus stop pull-off is being designed as an alternative, construction of the pull-off may be completed with another project, however.</p> <p>Reducing the lane width to 10' would still be too narrow for bicyclists and motor vehicles to operate side by side. The southbound lane will include Shared Lane Markings and signage to indicate cyclists may occupy the travel lane.</p> |
| <p>Comment: There needs to be ample space in the project for bicycles. A dedicated bike lane that allows for easy crisscrossing by students in bicycles, scooters and long boards. This is extremely good important.</p> |
| <p>Response: The project includes a dedicated northbound bike lane and Shared Lane Markings and signage will be installed on the southbound travel lane.</p> |
| <p>Comment: Yes, I like the plan, but am concerned for the safety of cyclists without a continuous bike lane in the southbound direction.</p> |
| <p>Response: The existing width of the street is too narrow to provide a dedicated southbound bike lane. Shared Lane Markings and signage will be installed to indicate cyclists may occupy the travel lane.</p> |

Question: Which rendering do you prefer ("brick" or "O")? Please list specific likes, dislikes, concerns, or comments.

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| <p>Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brick, O- is open to graffiti.• "Brick" looks much more like our current campus design of buildings, structures, etc. "O" Alternative looks too modern for OU campus.• Brick! More OU• Brick• I like the O rendering, but love the brick.• First choice is the brick. I like the "O" but appreciate the use of more bricks. |
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- I like how the O seems more open and 'safe' but a brick face would look nice.
- I like the "O". It's aesthetically interesting and dynamic.
- Brick -O-design makes the passage appear more NARROW acting as disincentive. Definitely go for the brick design!
- Brick. Not a fan of "O" alternative as this really does not align with the true "O" brand for university.
- Brick
- I like the aesthetics and more open/inviting feeling of the "O Alternative." However, the Brick Alternative is probably more practical to build and maintain. Toss-up.
- Either

Response: Thank you for submitting comments about the design.

Question: How do you use the project area (i.e. do you walk, drive, bike, etc.)?

Comments:

- Walk, drive
- Drive
- Walk
- Walk & drive
- Walk and drive
- Walk, bike
- Mostly drive
- I walk and bus around this area often
- Bike, Bike, Walk
- Walk, drive
- I walk, drive, and bike through this area regularly.
- I generally bike on Richland Avenue in both directions at least a few times a week. Sometimes I cross Richland on bike using the current pedestrian crossing.
- Bike and long boarding
- Drive and bike

Response: Thank you for submitting comments about your use of Richland Avenue.

Question: What concerns or comments do you have about the sidewalks leading to the passageway?

Comment: Water runoff is my only concern, especially in winter months when it would freeze. This is already a problem by the closest bus stop.

Response: The detailed design will review storm drainage.

Comment: I appreciate the consideration of ample lighting in the passageway.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: No bicycle traffic provision.

Response: Ohio University currently does not have provisions that prohibit bicycles on sidewalks, but the University is committed to exploring opportunities that not only promote cycling connections within

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| <p>the campus, but also to neighboring bicycle networks.</p> |
| <p>Comment: I like how the sidewalks are on the bridge closer to Bentley Hall. The double wall barrier protects peds & keeps them from crossing at random points.</p> |
| <p>Response: Thank you for your comment.</p> |
| <p>Comment: I like how they seem wide enough to accommodate a lot of pedestrians.</p> |
| <p>Response: Thank you for your comment.</p> |
| <p>Comment: Don't leave scenic grass patches in sidewalk unless its filled with a shrub or bigger plant because it will be trampled.</p> |
| <p>Response: Thank you for your comment.</p> |
| <p>Comment: Will this passageway be suitable for pedestrians and bikes? I am guessing it might get a little hairy if you have people trying to navigate the low bridge on a bike with heavy pedestrian traffic.</p> |
| <p>Response: The passageway is designed wide enough to accommodate multiple forms of use.</p> |
| <p>Comment: no issues. looks like a good design</p> |
| <p>Response: Thank you for your comment.</p> |

Question: What concerns or comments do you have about the environmental, social, or economic impact of the project?

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| <p>Comment: Economic would have been my largest concern, but it appears most of the burden lies with the city.</p> |
| <p>Response: The preliminary cost estimate for the project is \$2.1 million - of which the City has received \$1.8 million from the Transportation Alternatives Program (Federal Highway Administration funds administered through the Ohio Department of Transportation).</p> |
| <p>Comment: I think the passage design will encourage walkers and bikers.</p> |
| <p>Response: Thank you for your comment.</p> |
| <p>Comment: Would OU or the City maintain the green space? This would be a great place to add more colorful plants or get decorative with the arrangements/planting.</p> |
| <p>Response: Ohio University will be maintaining the new greenspace areas on either side of the passageway project. As these greenspace areas are designed by the City's engineer, Ohio University will be working collaboratively with them to identify a variety of trees and ground covers that are relatively low maintenance, durable, and attractive. In keeping with the university's sustainability goals, a focus will be made in utilizing native Ohio plant and tree species that promote beauty and complement nearby existing greenspace areas, while avoiding non-native or invasive species plants.</p> |
| <p>Comment: It'll be a major pain while under construction to walk/bus.</p> |
| <p>Response: A pedestrian and vehicular detour will be included in the final plan set for the project.</p> |
| <p>Comment: Concern: pedestrians might use surface, avoiding tunnel probably not a safety concern given the design (illegible word).</p> |
| <p>Response: The sidewalks will be designed to naturally guide pedestrians to use the passageway.</p> |
| <p>Comment: Will there be adequate storm-water management, and will the soil conditions be favorable</p> |

given the location in/near the old river bed.

Response: The detailed design will review storm drainage.

Question: What concerns or comments do you have about the environmental, social, or economic impact of the project?

Comments:

- No
- No
- No
- No
- No
- N/A
- No
- None
- N/A
- no.

Response: Thank you for submitting responses.

General Comments:

Comment: If you go with the “O Alternative”, consider coating to make graffiti cleanup easier.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: Can I get a digital copy of plans for review and comment?

Response: Digital plans will be distributed for review to representatives from ODOT, City of Athens, Ohio University, and Utility owners. The plans will be posted on the City's website for individuals interested in viewing them.

Comment: I love the project. Both designs are beautiful. I appreciate the city and university collaboration.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

Comment: I think it would be nice to incorporate art into this project. Do something with the tunnel before it gets graffitied. Placing art here would lower the chance of this happening. I think this would be a great project for the use of “sharrows” or proper bike signage – help bicyclists feel comfortable on this “new” road. Reflective paint might be a good option.

Response: Art is not planned to be included in this project, and graffiti protection is being reviewed.

Shared Lane Markings will be incorporated in the southbound lane and reflective pavement markings will be used.

Comment: The slope up to the over street should be shrub and rock to discourage rolling down the hill.

Response: The City is coordinating with Ohio University on a landscaping plan for the side slopes.

Comment: Square design, not big O.

Response: Thank you for your comment.

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| <p>Comment: Look forward to completed project.</p> |
| <p>Response: Thank you for your comment.</p> |
| <p>Response: Seems to be that a raised walkway (footbridge) would make a lot of sense and on the lower end of the finances.</p> |
| <p>Response: A raised walkway over Richland Avenue would need to be designed to meet accessibility standards, which allows a maximum 5% grade. To achieve the required grade, and provide vehicle clearance under the walkway, the length of the walkway would be 560 feet.</p> |
| <p>Comment: There should be a crossing attendant stationed at this crosswalk to allow cars to pass through during heavily pedestrian traffic. If not this, then a stop/go light so students have to stop at some point to allow traffic to proceed.</p> |
| <p>Response: The City reviewed these ideas in fall, 2017. The cost to staff the crossing 24 hours a day was estimated at approximately \$360,000 per year in salaries for Police Officers. A traffic light at this location would not solve the issue with traffic backing up on Richland Avenue and near misses with pedestrians.</p> |
| <p>Comment: If the left turn lane for Bobcat Lane in the Southbound direction ends up squeezing or eliminating the shoulder in the same direction, then the turn lane should be removed in favor of providing a safe and comfortable environment for bicyclists. The convenience of a turn lane created so through vehicles can continue unimpeded should NOT outweigh the safety of bicyclists. Additionally, this roadway is a key connector between Uptown, the OU Campus, and the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway. If the route is not maintained so that it is comfortable for an average bicyclist, then the majority of bicyclists will not use it. A 4' shoulder must be maintained in the entire downhill stretch of the roadway to give bicyclists the option of riding in traffic or not.</p> |
| <p>Response: The turn lane was requested by the Athens Police Department to reduce potential for rear-end crashes. A wider shoulder without a left turn lane opens the possibility of an impatient driver traveling into the bikelane to pass a left-turning vehicle, further endangering the cyclist. Shared Lane Markings will be installed in the southbound lane.</p> |
| <p>Comment: I am looking forward to seeing this project done.</p> |
| <p>Response: Thank you for your comment.</p> |
| <p>Comment: Will there be any sidewalks on Richland Avenue in this section? Pedestrians may just choose to walk on the street surface.</p> |
| <p>Response: The north/south sidewalks are being modified to naturally guide pedestrians to use the passageway. There will not be sidewalks on Richland Avenue over the passageway.</p> |
| <p>Comment: Blue emergency lights should be installed at either end of the tunnel.</p> |
| <p>Response: The City is coordinating with Ohio University on this issue.</p> |

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by ODOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 11, 2015, and executed by FHWA and ODOT.