

Morse/Bethel Connector Study  
Summary and Recommendation  
October 21 & 22, 1998



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# MORSE/BETHEL --- CONNECTOR



S T U D Y

Morse-Bethel Connector Study  
Summary

10/21/98

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## STUDY BACKGROUND

### I. Introduction

For over three decades, there has been discussion of building a bridge over the Olentangy River to connect Morse and Bethel roads. In 1984, a citizens initiative petition to place a proposed Morse-Bethel connector on the Columbus ballot was ruled by the Franklin County Board of Elections to be not in compliance with city charter provisions requiring notarization of circulator's signatures and, therefore, was not allowed to appear on the November 1984 ballot. Over a decade later in 1996, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) North Outerbelt Major Investment Study identified that a Morse-Bethel connector was "projected to help relieve congestion on I-270." From 1997 to the present, numerous meetings among neighborhood/community-based groups have taken place discussing the pros and cons of a Morse-Bethel connector.

However, no recent comprehensive studies had been undertaken to identify the traffic, land use, environmental, cost and social impacts of a connector or to identify the best alignment if a connector is justified. This was due primarily to a 1968 referendum prohibiting the city of Columbus from undertaking any engineering studies of a connector.

On July 6, 1998, Citizens for Growth Through Cooperation completed a successful petition drive which placed a new Morse-Bethel connector initiative on the November ballot. The issue calls for the city to build a bridge over the Olentangy River and connect Morse and Bethel roads through Rathbone Avenue.

Identifying the need for unbiased data about a Morse-Bethel connector to assist the citizens of Columbus in making an informed decision in November, the city of Columbus asked MORPC to undertake a comprehensive study of alternative connections, including the ballot option and a no build option. On July 30, 1998, MORPC's commission members approved the request to undertake the study. In the meantime, an alternate Morse-Bethel connector option through the Graceland shopping center was announced as the subject of a second petition drive aimed for the May ballot.

### II. Study Purpose

As stated in MORPC's original scope of services prepared for the city of Columbus, the purpose of the study is:

- To study alternative highway connections between Morse and Bethel roads and a no build option so that the MORPC staff can present information and a recommendation on October 22, 1998. The study will examine transit, ridesharing and other travel demand management techniques to gauge their effect on reducing demand for travel across the river.
- To impartially assess the benefits, impacts and costs of a connector between Morse Road and Bethel Road. As part of this study, facts will be determined in conjunction with a spectrum of interests from the community including proponents and opponents of a connector. The information developed is intended to address all of the issues that have been or will be identified in relation to the proposed connector. It will be presented in an unbiased manner for general public use.

### **III. Study Scope**

The Morse-Bethel Connector study was performed using a combination of MORPC staff and the consultant services of Burgess & Niple, Limited; Basile Baumann Prost & Associates; Barr Engineering, Inc.; Evans, Merchwart, Hambleton & Tilton; Lorz Communications; and R.D. Zande and Associates.

#### **A. Study Area**

In cooperation with the Advisory Committee, the study area was defined as bordered on the east, north and west by I-270 and on the south by an uneven line that connects Agler Road on the east and Scioto Darby road on the west. It was necessary that the study area be large enough to capture the majority of the benefits and impacts of the alternative corridors/alignments. It was anticipated that some impacts would be geographically limited in scope and could be more satisfactorily addressed within more limited study areas.

#### **B. Major Study Elements**

- Public Involvement Process - An extensive public participation process was developed to review assumptions, analyses and results during each phase of the study.
- Alternatives - To identify several broad alternatives for consideration, which were grouped into three categories: No Build, Other Build and Connector Build.
- Public Policy - To identify the consistency of each alternative with adopted public policy.
- Neighborhood – To identify and describe social issues and impacts on the neighborhood for each alternative.
- Environmental Analyses – To identify and describe environmental issues for each alternative.
- Land Use/Economic - To provide the basis for projecting traffic volumes and evaluating the impacts that each alternative would have on land use issues.
- Traffic – To assess the impact on traffic and changes in accident number for each alternative.
- Cost of Construction, Right-of-Way Acquisition and Relocation – To determine cost estimates for each alternative.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS**

### **I. Introduction**

One of MORPC's many goals and challenges was ensuring that the public was informed and involved during every step of the study. MORPC strived to create an atmosphere of fairness, neutrality and equal opportunity for all interested parties to participate in the process. MORPC achieved this goal through use of the Internet, media education, a biweekly newsletter and direct mail to interested parties. Public participation was successfully accomplished with the formation of the Morse-Bethel Connector Study Advisory Committee, reserving time for public input during the meetings and through the Internet, written comment forms, correspondence with MORPC offices, and a speaker's bureau.

Biweekly Advisory Committee meetings were held at the Haimerl Center, which is located in the study area. Meetings were scheduled from 7 to 9 p.m. to maximize public attendance and participation. Due to the controversial nature of the project, a professional, process-oriented facilitator assisted with conducting all of the meetings.

### **II. Informing the Public**

Since time was of the essence, MORPC sought innovative ways to inform the public on the status of the project. All information methods needed to promptly reach committee members and the general public. Technical material and the various issues associated with the project needed to be communicated to the public in simple terms and through graphics and charts. For example, the announcement for the first meeting and initial study information was published in a two-page paid advertisement in the *ThisWeek* newspaper editions going to homes in Worthington, Northland, Dublin, Upper Arlington and Clintonville.

#### **A. Biweekly Newsletter**

Biweekly newsletters detailed the progress of the study, summarized the Advisory Committee meetings and provided a tentative agenda for the next meeting. A total of six newsletters were prepared.

The newsletters have been distributed to over 200 civic, public and private organizations by direct mail. In addition, over 500 copies of each newsletter have been delivered to public libraries. The Upper Arlington, Whetstone, Worthington and Karl Road library branches each received 100 newsletters. A total of six newsletters were prepared.

#### **B. Internet**

MORPC's website, [www.morpc.org](http://www.morpc.org), was used to keep the public informed about the study process. Display materials presented to the Advisory Committee, summaries of public comments, Advisory Committee meeting summaries and editions of the biweekly newsletter were posted on the website. In addition, a specific e-mail address, [morse-bethel@morpc.org](mailto:morse-bethel@morpc.org), was created to provide a vehicle for the public to ask questions or give comments.

### **C. Direct Mailings**

Packets of information from each Advisory Committee meeting were sent to community stakeholders and others who were not serving on the committee.

### **D. Speaker's Bureau and Other Activities**

Presentations about the Morse-Bethel Connector Study given by staff included MORPC's Transportation Advisory Committee, Citizen Advisory Committee and Commission/Policy Committee. Staff also participated in interviews and presented study updates to the media and special interest groups through its speaker's bureau service.

## **III. Advisory Committee**

The Morse-Bethel Connector Study Advisory Committee was formed to be the cornerstone of an organized public involvement process for the study and to be advisory to MORPC and its consultants. Biweekly meetings held from August 19 through October 19 addressed and discussed issues for the study. The goals of the committee were to:

- Provide broad representation of all viewpoints by including affected communities, proponents, opponents, neighborhood organizations, city of Columbus, Franklin County, ODOT, environmental organizations, chambers of commerce and other business interests, and other interested parties.
- Review the assumptions, analyses and the results during each phase of the study and identify areas of agreement.
- Identify additional criteria to be included in the study.
- Agree upon a summary of the benefits and impacts of the various alternatives to assist the general public to make an informed decision at the November election.

### **A. Advisory Committee Representatives**

Because of the short time to conduct the study and the controversial nature of its subject, it was desired to have an advisory committee that could identify a broad range of issues and concerns. It was also hoped that the committee might be able to provide local knowledge of the area that might otherwise be difficult for the study team to obtain in the short time available. Representatives from both the proponents of the initiative and its opponents and from several major nearby citizen organizations were invited to advise MORPC on the make up of the committee and the committee meeting format. Representatives from the Clintonville Area Commission, Northland Civic Association, Northwest Civic Association, other smaller nearby citizens groups, the opponent and proponent organizations, business groups, environmental groups and government agencies were invited to participate. No attempt was made to strike a balance between the number of opponents and proponents. The final roster of 47 organizations is attached.

### **B. Advisory Committee Meeting Format**

Before each Advisory Committee meeting, there was a one-hour open house from 6 to 7 p.m. Information presented during the meeting was exhibited on maps, graphs and, in some instances,

text form. Meeting materials were also made available at an information resources table. During the open house, staff and project consultants were available to the public to answer questions and provide further clarification.

At the meetings, the public was given an opportunity to address the Advisory Committee and study team during a half-hour public comment period from 8:30 to 9 p.m. Written comments were also accepted at the meetings and distributed to the Advisory Committee and public at the next meeting, while comment summaries were posted on MORPC's website.

### **C. Survey of Advisory Committee Members**

A survey of committee members was conducted early in the public involvement process to determine if the committee members were receiving the information prior to the meetings, how many had web access and if they had any problems accessing and/or downloading the information. Results showed that the members were receiving the information prior to the meetings and the majority did have web access.

## **IV. Advisory Committee Process**

### **A. Subcommittee Work**

The Advisory Committee was divided into subcommittees in the following topic issues: public policy, environment, social, land use/economic, traffic and rights-of-way/cost. Members met throughout the study in their respective subcommittees that were charged with turning issues into decision criteria, finalizing alignments for the connector build alternatives and in some cases, narrowing connector build alternatives. One member of the group was named as facilitator and in each group a technical advisor from the study team provided clarification and answered questions.

Members of each subcommittee determined whether the public could provide direct input into the work of the group.

### **B. Decision Criteria Development**

Due to the volume of information that could be developed in the study and the desire to make it understandable for the general public, a process was needed to organize the information and determine which parts of it would be most important for assessing the various alternatives being considered. Within the subcommittees, sub-issues were identified by MORPC, consultant staff and through comments and question posed by the public and Advisory Committee members. Using these sub-issues, study tasks to develop information were identified. With the information that would be generated during the study tasks, "decision criteria" were developed which would capture the most important aspects of the alternatives and allow differentiation among them.



## ALTERNATIVES

### I. Introduction

As part of the process of conducting the study, the study team identified several broad alternatives. The Advisory Committee identified an additional broad alternative for consideration.

All of the alternatives considered share certain components, which include the existing transportation system and certain projects that are underway or expected to be in place by the year 2020. Many of these projects have been included from MORPC's Transportation Improvement Program and a selected few from MORPC's Transportation Plan. Future projects include completion of the I-270 north outerbelt widening, the SR 315/I-670/Spring Sandusky Interchange, the widening of SR 161, etc. From MORPC's Transportation Plan, a more extensive transit system is included which roughly doubles the amount service over that available today. Continuing growth was forecasted for the Columbus area, and is reflected in the traffic forecasts developed for each alternative.

### II. Alternatives

Alternatives for the Morse-Bethel Connector Study have been grouped into three major categories. They are the No Build, Other Build and Connector Build.

#### A. No Build

None of these alternatives contain a new crossing over the Olentangy River or recommend any new construction projects beyond those that are already proposed. The No Build category contains the following:

- A1 Existing and Committed** - The existing transportation system plus any projects that have been committed. This is the same as the shared common components for each alternative described above.
- A2 Transportation Demand Management (TDM)** - This alternative assumes a continuation of current public attitudes and governmental policies towards travel. This alternative considered if there were additional efforts regarding transit, ridesharing, and staggered work hours, etc. that would be effective in addressing cross-river traffic. Given that the doubling of transit service was included in all of the alternatives and the assumptions, there were no additional TDM efforts identified that had a realistic possibility of having a significant effect on cross-river traffic. This alternative became essentially the same as A1.

#### B. Other Build

None of these alternatives contain a new crossing of the Olentangy, but they do include new projects beyond those that are already proposed. The Other Build category contains the following:

- B1 Fiscally Constrained System Improvements** - Relatively small improvements such as the recent reconstruction of High Street and Morse/Rathbone Roads. This alternative may also be called Transportation System Management (TSM). Only one improvement of this scale was identified: a southbound right turn lane from High Street to Henderson Road. Compared to the travel and congestion in the area, this alternative is not sufficiently different to distinguish it from A1 or No Build alternative.
- B2 Widen Henderson, High, SR 161** - Upgrading roads that currently serve traffic that would use a connector to an acceptable Level of Service. This alternative includes widening of the following facilities to four through and a center turning lane, where this does not already exist, plus additional turning lanes at intersections and upgrades to interchanges where needed.
- Henderson Road from High Street to and including the SR 315 interchange
  - High Street from Henderson Road to SR 161
  - SR 161 from Huntley/Sinclair Roads to and including the SR 315 interchange

### C. Connector Build

Each Connector Build alternative contains a new crossing over the Olentangy River in the vicinity of Morse and Bethel Roads. On the scale of the study area, relatively small changes in how land uses develop by the year 2020 are anticipated if a connector is built. In general more land use will develop in the center of the north side rather than at the periphery if a connector is built. These changes are described more fully in the Land Use/Economic Section. All of the alternatives are generic in that they assume design standards and practices typically used by the city of Columbus. No special amenities were included in any of these alternatives (except Rathbone). Four groups of alternative connectors were considered: C1/Rathbone; C2/through Graceland ending at High Street; C3/through Graceland extending east of High Street to Morse; and C4/through Graceland extending straight over SR 315 creating a split diamond interchange with the existing Bethel Road interchange.

The first three Connector Build alternatives (C1, C2 and C3) begin at the Bethel Road interchange. The interchange would have to be upgraded to incorporate the additional turning movements associated with the traffic accessing Morse Road. This upgrade could include an added loop ramp taking traffic from the connector to SR 315 southbound. In the alternatives that make use of Graceland Shopping Center, North (N) or South (S) is included in the titles of the design variations. The letter stands for North or South that describes which portion of Graceland is traversed. The N or North alternatives generally traverse Graceland over the existing main driveway. The S or South alternatives generally traverse Graceland over its southern edge and would require the removal of the buildings along that edge.

The Connector Build alternatives and any of their design variations are described below.

**C1 Rathbone** - This alternative is basically a straight-line connection between the end of Bethel Road to the intersection of High Street and Morse Road. The exact alignment could vary down the center or along one side of Rathbone, although the one developed in the study is very much like the connector described on the November ballot. The costs of the extra amenities identified in the ballot issue are separately identified in the cost section.

## Design Variation -

**C1 Rathbone** - From the existing Bethel Road structure to Morse Road and High Street.

**C2 Through Graceland Ending at High Street** - This alternative would involve an alignment that would curve north from Bethel Road, run through Graceland and end at High Street. This corridor could begin at the existing end of Bethel Road or involve rebuilding the SR 315 interchange to allow for a straighter alignment toward Graceland. This study assumed use of the existing interchange. The exact alignment could also be anywhere within or bordering Graceland. The Advisory Committee generally did not prefer alternatives that included the south side of Graceland.

## Design Variations -

**C2N Graceland North to High** - From the existing Bethel Road structure, then north through the Graceland parking lot, ending at the existing signalized High Street entrance to Graceland.

**C2S Graceland South to High** - From the existing Bethel Road structure, then north to and along the extreme southedge of the Graceland property, ending at High Street. **No subcommittee preferred this alternative when compared to the other design variations for alternative C2. Therefore, the study team dropped it from further consideration.**

**C3 Through Graceland Extending East of High Street to Morse Road**-This alternative is the same as above but a direct connection on through to Morse Road is provided. This connection could curve down immediately to the east of High Street or be extended further east and rejoin Morse Road between Sharon Avenue and Indianola Avenue. Alternatives along the south side of Graceland were generally not preferred by the Advisory Committee. A possible connection to Morse Road through the grounds of the Ohio State schools for the deaf and blind was rejected because a conservation easement had been created through the state legislation and other reasons which made it problematic to use.

## Design Variations -

**C3N Graceland North to Morse** - From the existing Bethel Road structure, then north through the western portion of the Graceland parking lot, curving south to tie into Morse Road near High Street.

**C3S Graceland South to Morse** - From the existing Bethel Road structure, then north along the south edge of Graceland (as in C2), then curving south to tie into Morse near High. **No subcommittee preferred this alternative when compared to the other design variations for alternative C3. Therefore, the study team dropped it from further consideration.**

**C4 Split Diamond Interchange Through Graceland**- Alternatives extending straight over SR 315 from Graceland creating a split diamond interchange with the existing Bethel Road

interchange. These alternatives could terminate at High Street or Morse Road as do the C2 and C3 alternatives. Alternatives along the south side of Graceland were generally not preferred by the Advisory Committee.

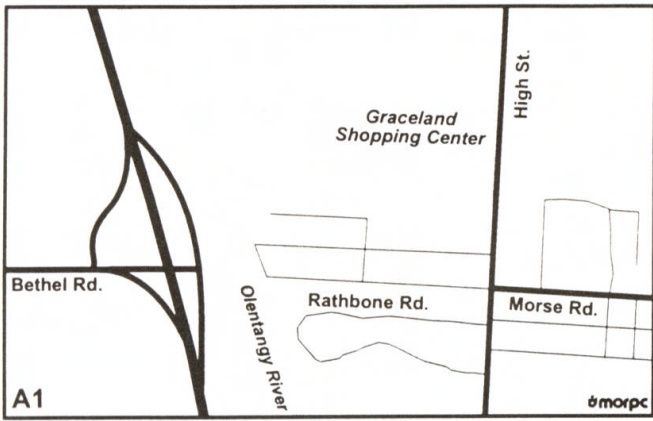
#### **Design Variations -**

**C4S/C2S Split Diamond South to High** - From a new structure crossing SR 315 north of Bethel Road, extending to the C2S alignment ending at High. **No subcommittee preferred this alternative when compared to the other design variations for alternative C4. Therefore, the study team dropped it from further consideration.**

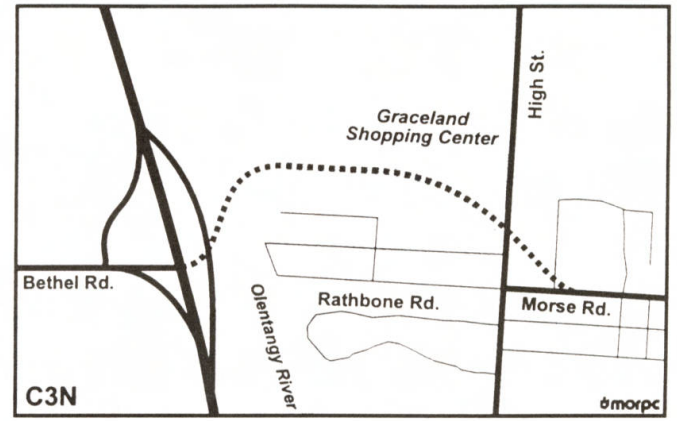
**C4N/C2N Split Diamond North to High** - From a new structure crossing SR 315 north of Bethel Road, extending to the C2N alignment ending at High Street.

**C4S/C3S Split Diamond South to Morse** - From a new structure crossing SR 315 north of Bethel Road, extending to the C3S alignment ending at Morse Road.

**C4N/C3N Split Diamond North to Morse** - From a new structure crossing SR 315 north of Bethel Road, extending to the C3N alignment ending at Morse Road.



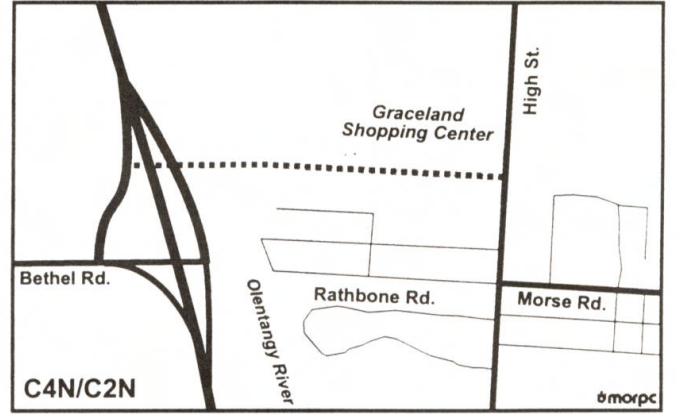
No Build



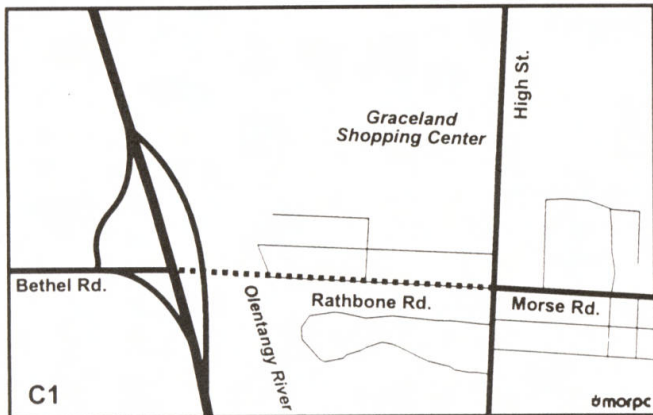
Graceland North to Morse



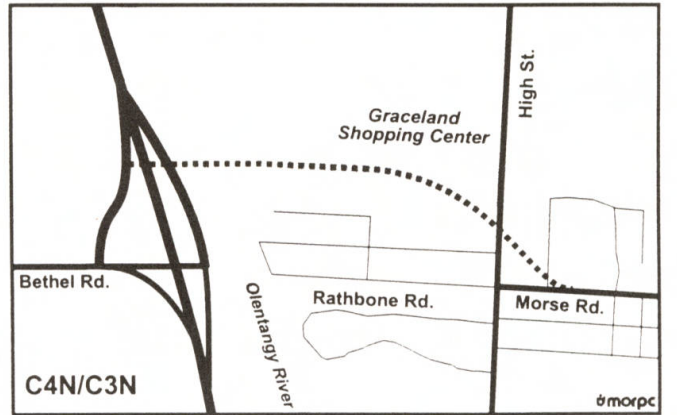
Upgrades to Henderson, High and SR 161



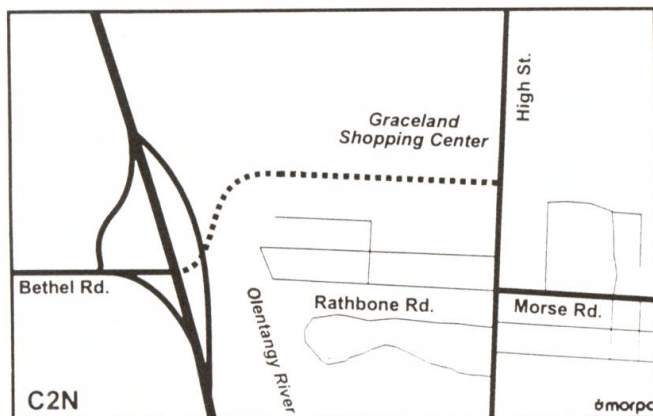
Split Diamond North to High



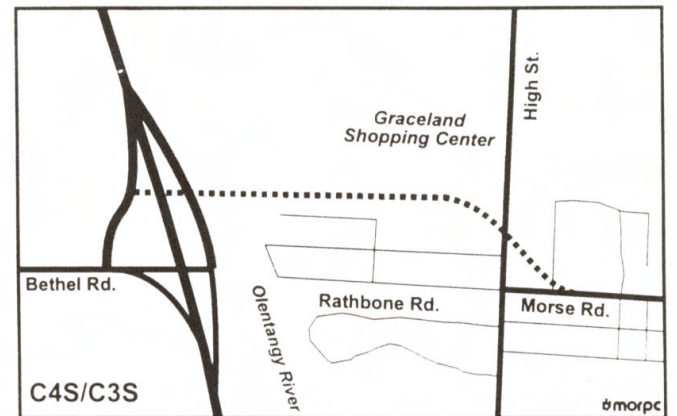
Rathbone Connector



Split Diamond North to Morse



Graceland North to High



Split Diamond South to Morse

## **PUBLIC POLICY**

### **I. Introduction**

The Advisory Committee was asked to identify additional areas of investigation that had not been proposed by the study team. The Advisory Committee identified consistency with already adopted public policies as important to include in the study scope. The community went through several planning processes that identified goals and policies in which the actions that the government agencies undertake should adhere, to the extent possible. The committee identified three plans and two policy areas to consider which were:

- The Columbus Comprehensive Plan (1993)
- Priorities '95
- Greenways: A Plan for Franklin County (1997)
- Legal consequences of the ballot initiative passage/failure
- Project ranking priority

In addition to examining the consistency of the various alternatives with adopted policies, the policy subcommittee was concerned about the options for the city depending upon whether the November ballot issue passed or failed and the confusion the voters may feel as a consequence. They also identified using the city and federal-aid priority processes to see how each alternative ranked compared to other projects already ranked on the priority lists.

### **II. Consequences of the Initiative Petition**

The initiative petition requires construction of a particular bridge and roadway between Morse and Bethel Roads along Rathbone Avenue. It requires that certain features and amenities are included and that a specific amount of compensation be provided to anyone whose property must be taken to construct the connector. Questions from the Advisory Committee, policy subcommittee and general public have been raised about its consequences. Although the initiative petition alternative is not explicitly included in this study, one similar to it was included. The following paragraphs are the study team's understanding of some of the ramifications of if the petition is accepted by the voters and is in no way intended to be taken as legal advice.

#### **A. Effect on Use of Federal Funds**

It may not be possible to use federal funds to construct the petition alternative, as it appears on the ballot. An Environmental Impact Statement would have to be prepared under the requirements of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and other pertinent laws, and the selection of the alternative would have to be based upon the information obtained in this process. This process requires that all feasible alternatives be considered including a No Build alternative. Since passage of the initiative would require that only one alternative be constructed (a particular Rathbone alternative), the No Build option is foreclosed and the requirements of the NEPA process can not be met.

#### **B. City Options if Initiative Fails**

Because of its complexity, it is impossible to fully explain the ramifications of either failure or passage of the initiative. If the issue fails, the constraints the city is operating under with regard to pursuing a Morse-Bethel Connector remain in place. That is, that the city may not engage any services for engineering, design or construction of a Morse-Bethel Connector. Section 45 of the Charter of the city of Columbus states: "Ordinances rejected or repealed by an electoral vote shall not be re-enacted, in whole or in part, except by an electoral vote. Ordinances approved by an electoral vote shall not be repealed, amended or supplemented except by an electoral vote."

### **C. City Options if Initiative Passes**

If the issue passes, the city is required to implement all terms specified in the ordinance unless the courts overturn any or all of them. The city will be required to construct the connector exactly as it has been described in the initiative petition. Someone may challenge all or some of the ordinance and someone may challenge various aspects of the project as the city advances it. Only the courts can decide the merits of those challenges. As in section "B" above, other changes could be made to the initiative by an electoral vote.

## **III. Financial Impacts on Other Planned Projects**

It is difficult to assess the financial impact of building one of the alternatives in this study because the process is not entirely objective. There are conditions and circumstances that affect project importance for funding that can not be reduced to a simple numerical process. In addition, as conditions change from year to year, so do community priorities.

Neither of the processes used by the city of Columbus or MORPC to evaluate the importance of projects to receive funding is directly applicable to evaluating the alternatives in this study. In applying the Columbus Service Department process to rank and prioritize highway projects, it is only possible to determine the approximate priority of a "generic" connector. The generic connector would be rated 11 on a list of 28 already ranked projects. The factors considered by Columbus in their process include corridor relief, accident rate, community impacts, average daily traffic, economic development, condition of pavement, leverage of dollars, total cost and environmental impact.

In MORPC's process to evaluate the importance of a project for federal funding, projects must undergo a screening process that identifies the basic need for the project and support for it by the project sponsor and its constituents. This means that only one specific alternative would have been put forward by the sponsor, rather than a set of alternatives. Once a project has been submitted for funding, MORPC collects basic data about it and applies a numerical rating and ranking process. After the numerical part of the process is completed, projects are assigned to funding years based upon their phasing, readiness to proceed, score, and most importantly discussions with MORPC's committees and the project sponsors during a project selection workshop.

The most important criteria in differentiating among the alternatives considered in this study are travel time, congestion relief, impact on sensitive land and number of users. Among the 49 projects on MORPC's list, the two split diamond alternatives that extend to Morse Road and the widening of Henderson, SR 161, and High Street would have ranked the highest. The Graceland alternative ending at High and the Rathbone alternative would have ranked low. The other alternatives would be ranked just below the middle.

#### IV. Consistency with Adopted Public Policies

In order to evaluate the consistency of the alternatives with the above-mentioned plans it was necessary to identify the applicable policies from the Priorities '95, Greenways Plan and Columbus Comprehensive Plan. This was done with the assistance of the agencies that had prepared each plan. The policies were then grouped under four major categories, and the consistency or inconsistency of the alternatives with each policy was determined. Next, the alternatives' "relative" consistency/inconsistency with the policies was determined and a score between -5 (very inconsistent) to +5 (very consistent) was assigned. A score of +1/-1 was considered to be slightly consistent/inconsistent while +3/-3 was consistent/inconsistent. Because of the large number of policies identified, the subcommittee chose to consider them within the four major categories: environmental, land use/development, infrastructure and community facilities.

Thirteen environmental policies were identified. Most of these related to protecting or enhancing open space or natural habitat and preserving waterways. All of the connector alternatives generally were considered to be inconsistent with environmental policies. The Rathbone alternative was considered to be slightly better than the others are since it required the acquisition of less parkland. The widening of Henderson Road, High Street, SR 161 alternative was considered to be neutral with respect to the environment.

Five land use/development policies were identified. These dealt with compatibility of adjacent land uses, preserving neighborhoods, and promoting redevelopment. The subcommittee preferred alternatives that passed through the center of Graceland over those that passed on the south side because these had less effect on the neighborhoods to the south. The Split Diamond-North to High and Graceland North to High alternatives were considered to be consistent with these policies. The widening of Henderson, High Street, SR 161 and the Rathbone alternatives were considered to be slightly inconsistent with the policies. The other alternatives were viewed as slightly consistent. The subcommittee was concerned about the impacts that the alternatives had on preserving the Delawanda neighborhood.

Fourteen infrastructure policies were identified. These included preserving neighborhoods, reducing congestion, and promoting small scale, transit solutions and pedestrian facilities. When all 14 policies were considered as a whole, all of the alternatives clustered around neutral. From an overall standpoint, the transportation system was positively affected. Due to the neutral effects on the neighborhood when going through Graceland, the subcommittee preferred alternatives that connected to Morse Road because they best met many of the goals.

Three policies were grouped under community facilities. These included connecting parklands and neighborhoods with bikeways or sidewalks, maintaining positive neighborhood identity and image, and maintaining safe levels of traffic conducive to housing. The Split Diamond North to High Street and the Graceland North to High Street alternatives were considered to be consistent with these policies. The Other Build alternatives were slightly consistent. The others were slightly inconsistent except for the Rathbone alternative, which was inconsistent.



## ENVIRONMENTAL

### I. Introduction

In 1993 the Columbus Comprehensive Plan recommended that the city "develop its river corridors as a system of greenways, containing a mix of cultural, natural, recreational and transportation opportunities." This was reinforced two years later by the city's Priorities 95 project that recommended that the city "emphasize green space policies that protect, maintain and enhance waterways and park resources." It also recommended that the city "restate its commitment to protecting natural protective barriers along water courses as valued components of floodplain management so as to maximize both habitat protection values and to minimize capital losses from floods."

Then, in 1997, MORPC adopted the Franklin County Greenways Plan of which one of the objectives is to provide long term protection for key riparian areas. This plan described the Olentangy River as "a surprisingly biologically healthy stream, worthy of protection from any further degradation." It also cited data from Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) which identified much of the Olentangy upstream from Henderson Road as having exceptional water quality.

There is a pervasive feeling among the members of the Environmental Subcommittee of the Morse-Bethel Connector Study Advisory Committee that the data presented to date is not sufficient to address their concerns. The environmental data used in this report has been gathered from available literature sources and resource agencies. Because of the very preliminary nature of this planning study, field observations were limited to those that could be accomplished during a brief visit. Even a casual observer of the study process may conclude that a more detailed study could produce more data of the kind that would be useful in evaluating the effects of the proposed action on the local environment.

Likewise, the subcommittee is concerned that no information is as yet available regarding bridge structure type, methods of construction, and possible measures to mitigate the impacts of construction practices and pollution resulting from the operation and maintenance of the bridge and roadway. See additional recommendations in section IV, Environmental Conclusions.

If it is determined that a connector should be given further consideration after the election, it is a foregone conclusion that subsequent studies of potential environmental impacts will be conducted to the appropriate level dictated to meet all applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations, and codes.

Examples of these include: The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), The Clean Water Act (CWA) and its provisions for permits under Sections 401 and 404, and Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act which limits the use of parklands, natural areas and historic properties. Even if a connector was funded with 100 percent local funds, permits would be required under the Clean Water Act that would also trigger provisions of the NEPA and the NHPA.

Along with requirements for additional and more rigorous environmental studies, these statutes also mandate significant opportunities for public involvement in the decision making process.

The data sought and obtained for this study is of the sort that is typically used during planning level studies. Its quality and depth is primarily dependent upon the status of the existing database. The quality and depth of this data base is itself dependent upon a variety of factors, not the least of which are previous federal-aid construction projects in the area. The limitations of using available data are evident. They do not, however, preclude arriving at reasonable and valid conclusions regarding the general nature of environmental impacts by the proposed action(s) within the study area.

## **II. Issues Raised by Advisory Committee and Public**

The primary concern of the Advisory Committee is the tentative nature of the environmental data available for the study. They concluded that the data presented to the committee is inadequate for the purpose of allowing the public to make an enlightened decision about the environmental impacts of a proposed Morse-Bethel connector.

There are no data that definitively address the impacts of the alternatives for the proposed connector on existing stream and riparian habitats and wetlands. The inclusion of this data would provide a more precise evaluation of impacts than that which has been presented. Staff does not feel that the absence of such data precluded drawing a conclusion concerning the efforts of a proposed action.

The Environmental Subcommittee resolved that the following issues summarize their concerns and topics most likely to be of concern to the public:

- Policy Issues and impacts which are perceived to be inconsistent with existing public policy (such as, Priorities '95, the Franklin County Greenways Plan, and the Columbus Comprehensive Plan)
- Water quality, non-point source pollution, construction impacts, creation of new impervious surface (resulting in increased run-off) and the possible placement of piers in the river channel
- Possible impacts to parks and public open spaces, and the possible segmentation of currently contiguous public recreational resources that contribute to a higher quality of life
- Habitat impacts (resulting in loss of biodiversity, diminished carrying capacity and a general degradation of the local biotic systems)
- Potential impacts to cultural resources including the Old Beechwood and Delawanda neighborhoods, and known archaeological sites (including a mound)--related to this are possible social impacts including loss of neighborhood cohesion, barriers to pedestrian traffic and safety concerns over increased traffic in the area
- Adverse impact on air quality in adjacent residential areas.

## **III. Final Matrix of Issues**

The environmental issues table shows that there is minimal difference in impacts of the connector build alternatives. Staff notes that all Graceland routes take more parkland and more seriously impair park uses. It is not clear which route would impact the highest quality resources. Each would pose similar potential impact on endangered species and water quality. Because much of the right-

of-way of Graceland alternatives is already paved, the Rathbone alternative adds the largest amount of paved surface. The existence of potential archeological sites on the east side of the river would need to be investigated on site in future studies.

#### **IV. Environmental Conclusions**

In applying the decision criteria, the environmental subcommittee concluded that any of the proposed 'build' alternatives would have a detrimental effect upon the local environment relative to each criterion considered. The subcommittee found no basis to determine a preference for any of the build alternatives and could only support a recommendation for the No-Build alternative.

Staff and the consultant assigned to the subcommittee agree that there is no basis to determine a preference for any build alternative in relation to environmental impacts. Only a more detailed study would produce data needed to evaluate effects of a proposed connector on the environment. Based upon concerns raised by the subcommittee when renewing this report, staff recommends that the impacts of potential bridge construction be mitigated and that bridge drainage be collected in a detention basin so as not to impact the river environment.

## NEIGHBORHOOD

### I. Introduction

The social subcommittee used the Delawanda neighborhood, which is a long-established community of about 210 single-family residences located between Old Beechwold and Graceland shopping center, to apply the decision criteria and discuss the alternatives. Kenny Park provides a buffer for the neighborhood from SR 315 on the west. The compact nature of this area makes it particularly sensitive to major transportation improvements and/or to changes in land use within or adjacent to the neighborhood. Local residents are extremely concerned about maintaining their quality of life should any of the connector alternatives be implemented.

### II. Issues Raised by Advisory Committee and Public

Social issues concern the continued integrity of the neighborhood with emphasis on changes that the neighborhood may experience from roadway construction including effects from Graceland Shopping Center, cut through traffic, noise and property values. From a broader perspective, issues raised about the connector build alternative include the number of homes and businesses actually affected and the safety benefit in terms of emergency response times and reduced traffic accidents.

Local residents recognize the potential for some positive impacts for the broader community if one of the Connector Build alternatives was implemented. These include an improvement in emergency response time for police and reduction in accidents and travel time. However, these benefits are presumed insufficient to offset the impacts that would occur to the Delawanda neighborhood.

#### A. Graceland Shopping Center

Potential effects on Graceland Shopping Center are discussed in the Land Use/Economic Impacts section. Generally redevelopment potential is greatest if a built connector crossed Graceland property, providing maximum visibility and access to travelers on the roadway.

#### B. Noise

A noise analysis was conducted using projected traffic volumes, anticipated mix of vehicles and modeling procedures commonly accepted in environmental analyses for road projects.

#### C. Traffic

With improvements to the arterial system, neighborhood cut through traffic would not be impacted. This issue is discussed in more detail in the Traffic Section.

#### D. Property Values

All neighborhood concerns factor into changes in property values. Of most concern to the subcommittee are the effects of the Rathbone alternative. Fishinger Road was analyzed as a situation in which a rural roadway abutted by single family homes was widened into an arterial street. Based upon the Franklin County Auditor's records, the homes in the vicinity of the roadway improvement continued to appreciate at a level comparable to homes in the broader area, suggesting that the widening did not have a significant impact.

The actual impacts of any of the Connector Build alternatives would depend upon the specific roadway design, location and use. It is important to note that the deep lots on Fishinger Road probably reduced the road impact on property values, particularly in comparison to potential impacts in Delawanda where the lots are particularly shallow. The subcommittee challenged the relevance of the Fishinger study to the Delawanda situation. They also noted that Fishinger was already a through street prior to widening, unlike Rathbone. They found no other similar situation for comparison.

The subcommittee also believed the impacts of the Rathbone alternative would be higher on the Delawanda neighborhood than on Jeffrey Place in Old Beechwold because Delawanda will be surrounded by major arterial roads and Graceland Shopping Center, while the old Beechwold neighborhood will be left intact.

#### **E. Emergency Services**

Impact on emergency services was analyzed from empirical data, travel model results and professional judgement. No significant impact on fire departments is expected because most of their emergency responses originate from existing substations that are already able to provide coverage to the area without a Morse-Bethel connector. Police response would be improved based on the current average response time. It was determined by using a sample of 250 trips crossing the river.

#### **F. Traffic Accidents**

Total change in accidents was based upon output from the regional travel-forecasting model. Accidents are largely a function of the miles of travel on different types of roadways. The congestion and accident data indicate that the Connector Build alternatives would result in a significant improvement in the transportation system.

#### **G. Residential and Business**

The number of family residences and businesses immediately impacted differ for the various Connector Build alternatives. The Rathbone alternative has the most severe impact on the neighborhood because it removes a large portion of the neighborhood and has the greatest proximity impact on the remaining residences. It also does little to support the economic vitality of Graceland. Measurements of residences and businesses directly affected by a connector are listed in the table below.

**Figure 2**  
**Number of Residences and Businesses Affected by the Alternatives**

| (1) → Alternatives                | A B1                         | B2                 | C1       | C2N                     | C3N                      | C4N/C2N                     | C4S/C3S                      | C4N/C3N                      |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (2) Affected Homes and Businesses | No Build/ Minor Improvements | 161/High/Henderson | Rathbone | Graceland North to High | Graceland North to Morse | Split Diamond North to High | Split Diamond south to Morse | Split Diamond north to Morse |
| Homes within 500 ft of Alignment  | n/a                          | N/a                | 193      | 18                      | 80                       | 0                           | 145                          | 62                           |
| Residences Displaced              | 0                            | 39                 | 41       | 0                       | 37                       | 0                           | 42                           | 37                           |
| Businesses Displaced              | 0                            | 4                  | 1        | 5                       | 30                       | 5                           | 26                           | 30                           |

(1) Alternatives C2S (Graceland south to High), C3S (Graceland south to Morse), and C4S/C2S (Split-Diamond south to High) are not shown as they were dropped from the analysis.

(2) Number of Residential and Commercial Relocations were developed using the conceptual right-of-way limits and Auditor's mapping, supported by field survey.

### III. Summary

The Delawanda neighborhood would suffer severe impacts from the Rathbone alternative. There is no definitive evidence of how much property values would be affected. Connector Build alternatives which go through Graceland shopping center would increase the value of that property and propel redevelopment potential. Improving the value of Graceland would have positive impact on nearby residential and commercial areas. A connector would not create cut-through traffic in adjacent areas, provided arterial roadways remain adequately sized and maintained. A connector would have little effect on safety issues.

## LAND USE/ECONOMIC

### I. INTRODUCTION

There is a close relationship between land use and transportation, and any changes to the regional transportation system will impact both existing and future land use conditions. Land use is a term describing what type of development is on the land such as houses, apartments, stores, offices, warehousing, factories, parks or schools. Land use and transportation facilities cannot be studied independently of the other. So when analyzing a transportation project, the study area in which land use is analyzed must be relatively broad. For purposes of the analyzing the affects of a Morse-Bethel connector, land use was reviewed for the area within the outerbelt and north of Ackerman Road.

Future land use conditions are regularly forecasted so communities can plan for future needs, whether it be parks, roads, schools, fire or police stations. Having a general picture of future development also allows communities to plan the expenses of maintaining public services, as well as gauge revenue from taxes.

### II. METHODOLOGY

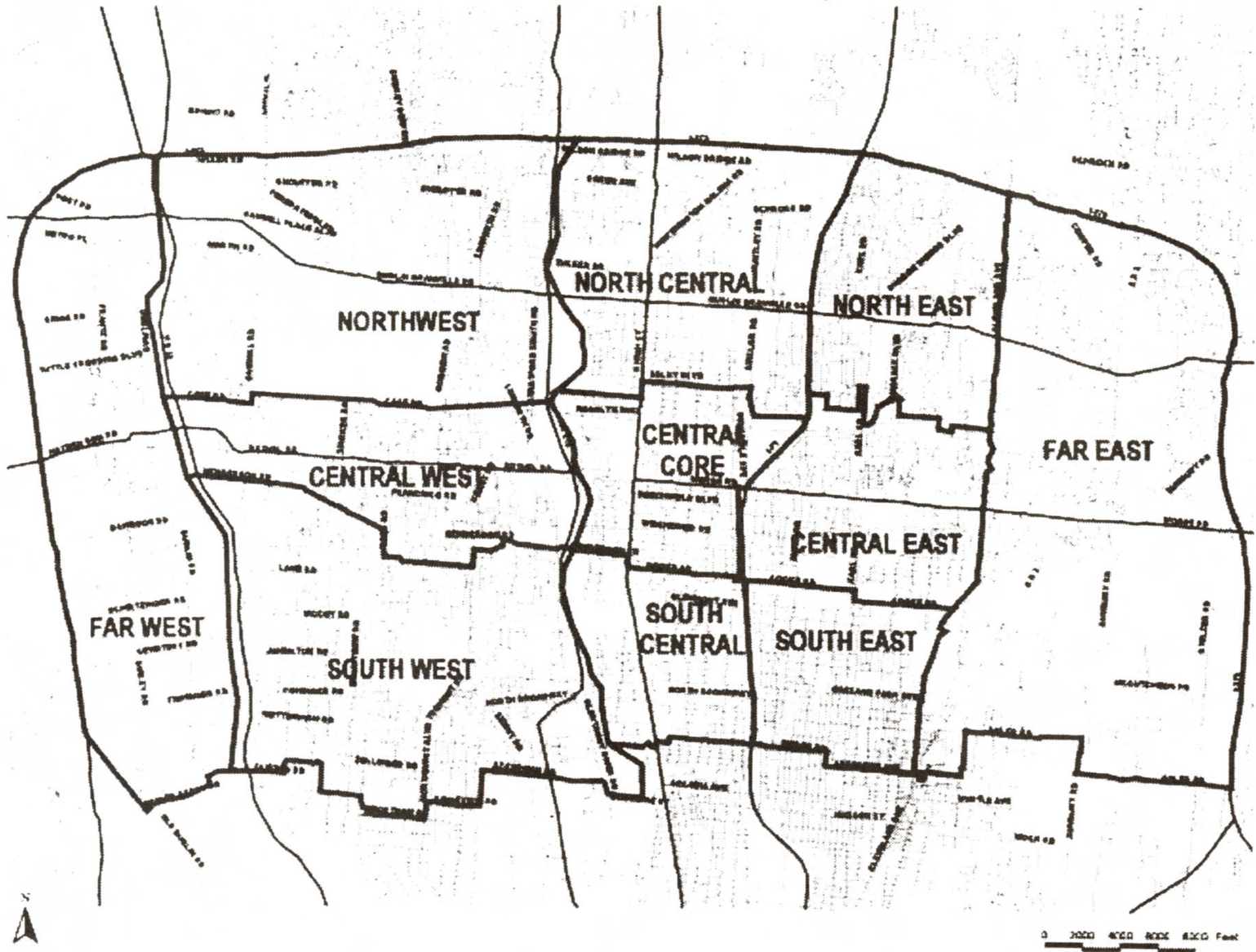
As part of standard regional transportation planning procedures, long range land use forecasts are developed and maintained by MORPC. Forecasts are based on long range local land use plans and known development activities. Residential growth is balanced against employment growth. Forecasts developed for the area before the recent Morse-Bethel connector discussions began included an additional 14,700 housing units, 19,500 jobs, 5.0 million square feet of retail, 5.1 million square feet of office and 600,000 square feet of industrial uses for the area identified for the year 2020. The majority of this growth is expected to occur at the outer edges of the study area with the Easton and Tuttle Crossing developments capturing the majority of new growth.

**Figure 3**  
**Changes in Land Use: 1980, 1995 and 2020**

|                          | 1980   | 1995    | 2020    | Pct Change<br>1980-1995 | Pct Change<br>1995-2020 |
|--------------------------|--------|---------|---------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Housing Units            | 87,000 | 112,500 | 127,000 | 29 %                    | 13 %                    |
| Retail Space (sq ft)     | 12.6 M | 18.8 M  | 23.7 M  | 49 %                    | 26 %                    |
| Office Space (sq ft)     | 5.9 M  | 13.9 M  | 19.1 M  | 136 %                   | 37 %                    |
| Industrial Space (sq ft) | 8.6 M  | 10.2 M  | 10.8 M  | 14 %                    | 6 %                     |

Figure 4

Trade Markets of the Morse-Bethel Connector Study Area





A revised land use scenario was developed that includes a shift of development from various identifiable trade markets within the study area. Shifts occur as a result from expected savings in travel time. These assumptions are supported by discussions with local retail experts, developers and leasing agents. The area was divided into 11 trade markets (Figure 4). Approximately five percent of the new growth anticipated for the study area was expected to be affected by the construction of a connector. This five-percent is projected to move from the outer edges of the study area toward the middle. The expected shift in land use resulting from construction of a connector is displayed in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**

Shift of Future Development Expected in the Study Area from Construction of a Morse-Bethel Connector

| STUDY AREA    |             | Change between<br>1995 – 2020 | Number Shifted<br>from Connector | Percent Shifted<br>from Connector |
|---------------|-------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Housing Units |             | 14,700                        | 720                              | 5.6                               |
| Retail        | Jobs        | 9800                          | 722                              | 7.4                               |
|               | Square Feet | 5.0 million                   | 345,000                          | 6.9                               |
| Office        | Jobs        | 13700                         | 577                              | 4.2                               |
|               | Square Feet | 5.1 million                   | 63,400                           | 1.2                               |
| Industrial    | Jobs        | -2600                         | 0                                | 0.0                               |
|               | Square Feet | 600,000                       | 0                                | 0.0                               |

### III. Issue Raised By Advisory Committee and Public

#### A. How will a Morse-Bethel connector affect existing businesses?

Businesses that depend on drive-by traffic will either be helped or hurt, depending on changes in traffic flow driving past these establishments and the directness of the connector to existing routes. Businesses that are destination-oriented, such as specialty shops or medical offices, are not as dependent on traffic flow and would be neither negatively or positively affected.

The Rathbone alternative would negatively impact drive-by dependent businesses located on High Street around the Morse Road intersection as competing businesses on Bethel Road would be easier to access. A Graceland alternative that connects to Morse would also have negative impact on businesses along High Street, as less traffic would be passing by.

There is no evidence that regional shoppers will use a connector to go from Easton to Tuttle. Travel time data indicated that I-270, with or without the connector, would still be the fastest route.

#### B. If Graceland redevelops, is there a way to incorporate pedestrian and bike paths into the development?

Any significant redevelopment of the Graceland shopping area would most likely require an application for rezoning and/or zoning variance. This would present an

opportunity for the city to encourage the inclusion of pedestrian and bike paths in the development plans

**C. What affect will a Morse-Bethel connector have on the probability of the redevelopment ?**

Redevelopment of Graceland is more likely to occur if a connector is built, especially if the alignment of the roadway is on Graceland property. Owners of the property have expressed a desire to incorporate a residential component into the redevelopment. The Central Core is anticipated to experience the largest impact from future land use if a connector is built. Projections for the Central Core in the "No Build" alternative indicate a slight increase in households and office jobs, but a decrease in retail and industrial jobs over the next 25 years. A connector would improve access between two viable trade areas located east and west of the Olentangy River in northern Franklin County, merging a potential market size of 110,000 people who live between the Scioto River and I-71, from I-270 to Ackerman Road. This would promote competitive redevelopment and employment opportunities that are reflected in the land use scenario developed for the "Connector Build" alternative shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6**

Comparison of Future Land Uses in the Central Core for the Build and No-Build Alternatives of a Morse-Bethel Connector

| CENTRAL CORE  |             | 1995   | 2020 NO-BUILD | 2020 BUILD | Net Difference |
|---------------|-------------|--------|---------------|------------|----------------|
| Housing Units |             | 6,660  | 7,080         | 7,330      | 250            |
| Retail        | Jobs        | 2,740  | 2,440         | 2,840      | 400            |
|               | Square Feet | 1.41 M | 1.17 M        | 1.30 M     | 125,000        |
| Office        | Jobs        | 1,510  | 1,560         | 1,620      | 65             |
|               | Square Feet | 0.41 M | 0.42 M        | 0.44       | 15,000         |
| Industrial    | Jobs        | 1,910  | 1,790         | 1,790      | 0              |
|               | Square Feet | 1.32 M | 1.40 M        | 1.40 m     | 0              |

Land use projections that do not include impacts from a connector reflect a continuing trend of less retail space used in the area. A connector would serve to link the 75,000 people who live west of the Olentangy River to the 45,000 who live between the Olentangy and I-71.

Most redevelopment occurring in direct relation to a connector will be localized, with little spillover into the Morse/Northland corridor. As the Olentangy River separates trade areas between the Central Core and Central West.

**D. How will a Morse-Bethel connector affect property values?**

An analysis of an area where a roadway was widened shows that other than properties directly in the alignment, property values are only affected during the time

of construction, as long as sufficient buffering is installed. The area used for comparison has substantial differences in lot depth and impacts from sound may be a negative factor. This question is discussed in greater detail in the Neighborhood Section. A connector through the Graceland property would have a more limited effect on neighborhoods, but could increase the value of the Graceland tract due to improved access. If Graceland was redeveloped or updated, the effect would be positive on adjacent property values.

#### **IV. Summary**

A Morse-Bethel connector would serve to merge two viable trade markets. It would induce redevelopment opportunities into an urban community that is losing market share of commercial revenue to the suburban areas. Some of the expected residential and commercial growth anticipated for Tuttle Crossing, Sawmill Road and Easton areas may instead occur in the Central Core, especially in the Graceland area. The connector will have little or no impact on the Morse Road/Northland Corridor of the Graceland alignments. Alternative C2N, Graceland North to High Street appears to bring the highest potential for redevelopment of Graceland, especially as a mixed-use development that contains a residential component. Potential redevelopment will be enhanced by updated zoning overlays to encourage pedestrian and non-vehicular consideration in development plans.

## TRAFFIC

### I. Introduction

Traffic in the northern part of the county has increased as a result of the increased development in this part of the region. The growth is especially apparent in east-west travel. There are several barriers to east-west travel in the study area, namely I-71, SR 315, railroads and rivers. Consequently, the limited routes through these barriers have seen an increase in traffic and congestion.

Today over 225,000 vehicles a day cross the Olentangy River using the five bridges between North Broadway and I-270. This is expected to grow to more than 330,000 vehicles a day in the year 2020. It has been generally discussed that a road over the Olentangy River connecting Morse and Bethel Roads would reduce congestion in the area and improve travel efficiency, especially for the other Olentangy River crossings.

### II. Issues Raised by Advisory Committee and Public

The Advisory Committee was presented with several issues and study tasks, which could be used for decision criteria. Based on these discussions, the following information was requested:

- Daily volumes for the study area and percentage of change on key segments
- Peak hour congestion levels for key intersections within the study area
- Improvements required for each of the alternatives
- Total travel time/delay for key travel paths which would be substantively affected by the alternatives
- Impacts of the alternatives to neighborhood cut-through traffic
- Traffic accident data
- Regional vehicle miles of travel and road user costs savings

The primary concern was to identify where there would be volume reductions leading to congestion reductions and, conversely, volume increases leading to increased congestion or the need to widen existing facilities. Another concern was that with increased traffic on some roads, neighborhood cut through might increase due to increased congestion. The cost subcommittee was concerned with road user cost savings that would result from a change in regional vehicle miles of travel.

### III. Methodologies

Based on the land use information, traffic projections for the study area were made for the years 2003 and 2020. As described in the land use section, it is expected that building a connector will result in some shifts in land use. The traffic projections for the various alternatives accounted for the expected change in land use. The result of this showed slight increases in the number of trips generated in the central part of the study area and slight decreases in the areas where the expected land use was to be reduced compared to the no build land use. In addition, the introduction of a new river crossing will change travel patterns slightly providing opportunities for people to cross the river for their needs which they otherwise would not have done.

The traffic projections also reflect the completion of several projects either currently under construction or planned in the near future. For the 2003 projections these projects include the widening of I-270, widening of SR 315 from SR 161 to I-270, widening of I-71 north of SR 161, and the completion of all the projects in the Easton area. For the 2020 projections the widening of SR 161 from Sawmill to Linworth was also included.

#### IV. Key Traffic Information

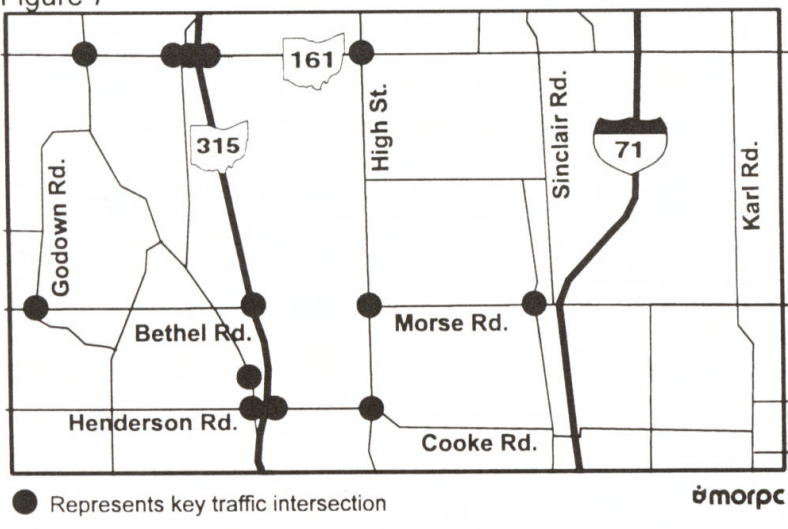
##### A. Transit and Travel Demand Management

The No Build alternative discussed travel demand management techniques which attempt to reduce the amount of peak hour vehicle travel by promoting alternatives such as ridesharing, using transit and shifting travel to less congested times of the day among others. All of the traffic projections include COTA's long range bus expansion plans. COTA is currently completing an update to their plan including investigation of starting rail transit service on several corridors leading into downtown in addition to their bus expansion plans. Because of the east-west travel, which the river crossings facilitate, and the inclusion of their bus expansion plans in the forecasts, it is not expected that the results from the completion of COTA's plan would significantly alter the traffic projections.

##### B. Traffic Impact Area

The study area traffic projections were examined to identify where there would be significant changes in daily volumes. From this, a smaller traffic impact area was defined. This smaller impact area is bounded by SR 161 on the north, Linworth/Godown/Kenny on the west, Henderson Road on the south, and Karl Road on the east. The traffic projections indicate that there will not be any changes in traffic volumes greater than 10 percent outside of this traffic impact area. As the peak hour level of congestion analysis continued, 13 key intersections were identified that would be impacted by one or more of the alternatives. The traffic impact area and key intersections are shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7



C. Traffic Volumes

Five key road segments were identified with the most substantial traffic volume changes. These road segments, along with the connector, are shown in the tables below.

Figure 8

2003 weighted ADT volumes and percent change at key locations

|  | No Connector | Rathbone |        | Graceland to High |        | Graceland to Morse |        | Split Diamond to High |        | Split Diamond to Morse |        |
|--|--------------|----------|--------|-------------------|--------|--------------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|------------------------|--------|
|  | Volume       | Volume   | Change | Volume            | Change | Volume             | Change | Volume                | Change | Volume                 | Change |
| Total Traffic crossing River on SR 161 Henderson or North Broadway | 84,000       | 68,000   | -19.0% | 73,500            | -12.5% | 69,500             | -17.3% | 72,500                | -13.7% | 71,500                 | -14.9% |
| Bethel Road Between Godown and Olentangy River Road                | 39,500       | 46,500   | 17.7%  | 46,000            | 16.5%  | 46,000             | 16.5%  | 45,500                | 15.2%  | 45,000                 | 13.9%  |
| Morse Road Between High Street and I-71                            | 24,000       | 26,500   | 10.4%  | 25,437            | 6.0%   | 28,500             | 18.8%  | 25,500                | 6.3%   | 28,000                 | 16.7%  |
| High Street Between Henderson & Morse                              | 28,500       | 24,500   | -14.0% | 19,000            | -33.3% | 25,500             | -10.5% | 22,500                | -21.1% | 25,500                 | -10.5% |
| High Street Between Graceland & SR 161                             | 27,000       | 26,500   | -1.9%  | 24,294            | -10.0% | 25,500             | -5.6%  | 23,500                | -13.0% | 24,500                 | -9.3%  |
| Connector River Crossing   |              | 35,000   |        | 30,000            |        | 33,500             |        | 26,500                |        | 29,500                 |        |

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## 2020 weighted ADT volumes and percent change at key locations

|  | No Connector | Widen Henderson, High, SR161 |        | Rathbone |        | Graceland to High |        | Graceland to Morse |        | Split Diamond to High |        | Split Diamond to Morse |        |
|--|--------------|------------------------------|--------|----------|--------|-------------------|--------|--------------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|------------------------|--------|
|  |              | Volume                       | Volume | Change   | Volume | Change            | Volume | Change             | Volume | Change                | Volume | Change                 | Volume |
| Total Traffic crossing River on SR 161 Henderson or North Broadway | 90,000       | 130,000                      | 45.0%  | 84,500   | -6.1%  | 83,500            | -7.2%  | 84,500             | -6.1%  | 82,000                | -8.9%  | 84,500                 | -6.1%  |
| Bethel Road Between Godown and Olentangy River Road                | 46,000       | 48,000                       | 4.3%   | 50,000   | 8.7%   | 50,500            | 9.8%   | 50,000             | 8.7%   | 48,000                | 4.3%   | 48,500                 | 5.4%   |
| Morse Road Between High Street and I-71                            | 23,500       | 24,000                       | 2.1%   | 30,500   | 29.8%  | 26,000            | 10.6%  | 32,000             | 36.2%  | 27,000                | 14.9%  | 29,500                 | 25.5%  |
| High Street Between Henderson & Morse                              | 28,500       | 39,000                       | 36.8%  | 24,500   | -14.0% | 19,000            | -33.3% | 25,500             | -10.5% | 22,500                | -21.1% | 25,500                 | -10.5% |
| High Street Between Graceland & SR 161                             | 27,000       | 32,000                       | 18.5%  | 26,500   | -1.9%  | 24,500            | -9.3%  | 25,500             | -5.6%  | 23,500                | -13.0% | 24,500                 | -9.3%  |
| Connector River Crossing   |              |                              |        | 40,500   |        | 39,500            |        | 40,500             |        | 33,500                |        | 36,000                 |        |

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### D. Traffic Congestion

Traffic patterns in the area change with the addition of a connector and the resulting increase in growth expected in nearby areas. Peak hour congestion was analyzed for the 13 key locations identified above. Based on the analysis, the resulting volume changes do not cause significant overall changes in congestion levels at any of the key locations among the alternatives.

### E. Regional Vehicle Miles of Travel Impacts

Although traffic volumes on many roads in the impact area did not experience large reductions, the increased capacity provided in the Connector Build alternatives resulted in shorter travel routes for many motorists. A more global measure of an alternative's impact on the region's travel is the change in regional vehicle miles of travel. This can then be used to quantify the cost savings resulting from less fuel use and wear and tear on one's personal automobile. The following table shows the average daily reduction in regional vehicle miles of travel and the associated annual cost savings. The annual cost savings was calculated by multiplying the reduction in vehicle miles of travel by the current year vehicle operating cost of \$.30 per mile.

| Alternative                     | Reduction in Regional VMT | Vehicle Cost Savings per Year |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| No Build, TDM, Minor TSM        | n/a                       | N/A                           |
| Widen Henderson, SR 161, High   | 40,000                    | \$3.1 M                       |
| Rathbone                        | 64,000                    | \$5.0 M                       |
| Graceland N- High               | 36,750                    | \$2.9 M                       |
| Graceland N-Morse               | 35,750                    | \$2.8 M                       |
| Split Diamond-Graceland N- High | 21,750                    | \$1.7 M                       |
| Split Diamond-Graceland S-Morse | 14,500                    | \$1.1 M                       |
| Split Diamond-Graceland N-Morse | 14,500                    | \$1.1 M                       |

Figure 9

### F. Travel Time and Delay

Another expected benefit of providing a connector would be to decrease travel times across the river. To measure this, travel times for trips beginning along three separate points on Olentangy River Road and ending east of the intersection of High Street at Morse Road were estimated. These are shown in the table below

### Average Estimated 2020 Travel Times (eastbound/westbound)

|   | Widen Henderson, High and SR161 | Rathbone   | Graceland to High | Graceland to Morse | Split Diamond North to High | Split Diamond South to Morse | Split Diamond North to Morse |           |
|---|---------------------------------|------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|
|   | No Build                        | TSM        | C1                | C2N                | C3N                         | C4n/C2n                      | C4s/C3s                      | C4n/C3n   |
| Olentangy & SR 161 to east of Morse & High    | 9:45/10:05                      | 9:10/10:25 | 7:20/7:25         | 8:20/8:00          | 8:10/7:30                   | 7:35/7:30                    | 7:20/7:20                    | 7:20/7:20 |
| Olentangy & Bethel to east of Morse & High    | 7:40/8:00                       | 6:25/7:50  | 2:50/4:20         | 4:05/5:25          | 3:55/4:05                   | 3:30/3:35                    | 2:55/3:25                    | 2:55/3:25 |
| Olentangy & Henderson to east of Morse & High | 5:30/6:50                       | 6:05/7:00  | 4:55/5:25         | 4:40/6:10          | 5:40/6:05                   | 4:45/4:35                    | 4:25/4:25                    | 4:25/4:25 |

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Figure 10

### G. Traffic Safety

The implications on traffic safety were based largely on the total vehicle miles calculated for each of the alternatives. In other words, an alternative that would reduce the total vehicle miles by a certain percentage was also expected to reduce the number of accidents by the same percentage.

In addition to the accident reduction associated with the vehicle miles, additional analyses were also conducted to assess the expected accidents at key intersections within the study



area. At these intersections, accidents were expected to increase (or decrease) in direct proportion with the increase or decrease in daily traffic volumes.

Overall there will be slight reductions in accidents with a connector because each Connector Build alternative reduces vehicle miles of travel region wide.

#### H. Neighborhood Cut-Through

The impacts of the alternatives to cut-through traffic were based on a travel time analysis. The travel time associated with cutting through a residential area was compared directly with the travel times expected on the arterial corridors. The posted legal speed limit, route distance and estimated delays at signalized intersections were used to calculate these travel times.

Improved travel times on primary arterials will slightly reduce the likelihood of heavy cut-through traffic through study area neighborhoods for the Connector Build alternatives. Volumes on some routes do increase, because the operation of the signals are still expected to be acceptable and there would not be an increase in cut through traffic. The High-Morse intersection will be constrained unless TJ's is taken for the Rathbone alternative, thereby increasing the likelihood of neighborhood cut-through traffic. For the alternative of widening Henderson/High/SR 161 to five lanes, there could be increased cut-through traffic because not all of the intersections can be expanded enough to handle the increased traffic.

#### I. Additional Improvements needed

All of the connector build alternatives required some improvements to the SR 315 interchange. Also the widening of Henderson, High and SR 161 involve modifications to the SR 315 interchanges at SR 161 and Henderson Road. There were no other improvements identified as needed on Bethel Road west of the Olentangy River Road intersection or on Morse east of the High Street intersection. All associated construction and right-of-way cost are included in the cost estimates presented later.

### V. Summary

The large volume of travel across the Olentangy River and the limited number of crossings cause a significant change in travel patterns when the capacity of a crossing is increased or a new one is created. The Connector Build alternatives will provide some reduction in traffic volume on parallel routes. However, the shift in land use development toward the area of a possible connector increases trips in the vicinity of the connector and coupled with the increased ability to cross the river does not translate into noticeable peak hour reductions in congestion levels overall. Another factor in the less than expected traffic volume reduction on adjacent river crossings is because the reductions extend over many river crossings. Shifts in travel occur at additional river crossings with minor traffic volume reductions occurring on I-270, Ackerman Road, and Lane Avenue. For example, when travelers move off of Henderson to use a connector, some traffic that was previously using North Broadway can now use Henderson to make their trip. This shifting results in the minor reductions on other crossings away from a connector.

When viewed at a regional level, the shift in land use and the change in travel patterns provide reductions in total vehicle miles traveled. There was no net increase in the amount of development in the region expected to occur in the future. Thus, the increase in trip making in the connector vicinity slightly reduces trip making in other parts of the region. Also, the shift in travel patterns result in the ability for some traveler's trips to be shorter than they previously would have been. This all translates in various degrees of road user cost savings and reductions in accidents.

## **COST OF CONSTRUCTION, RIGHT-OF-WAY ACQUISITION AND RELOCATION**

### **I. Introduction**

Evaluating all of the alternatives equally necessitates a uniform base for comparison, and therefore, all assumptions used in the cost estimate are consistent. These assumptions include uniform design and construction standards used by the city of Columbus and the cost of acquisition of right-of-way based on standard practices. The only exception made is for the Rathbone Corridor, requiring the special provision contained in the initiative petition.

### **ii. Cost of Construction**

Cost of construction includes the roadway pavement, bridge and other amenities such as sidewalks, street lighting and landscaping. Any additional costs for auxiliary construction needed for the project or credit for a planned project but deemed unnecessary due to the connector. It is determined that there are no such projects, and no additional cost or credit is necessary. Similarly, the cost of maintenance being uniform and consistent for all the alternatives is also not included, as these do not affect comparison between the alternatives. As provided in the ballot, the cost of environmental mitigation for the Rathbone alternative is separately included. All costs include a 25 percent construction contingency to reflect unknown items. For example, the assumed length of 300 feet for the Olentangy River bridge may change once detailed hydraulic and environmental analyses are performed.

### **III. Cost of Rights-of-Way**

Acquisition of properties affected by the project is based on the Franklin County auditor's appraised value. This, in addition to any cost due to adjacent land improvement, is also considered. The right-of-way costs are inflated by 10 percent for all alternatives.

### **IV. Cost of Relocation**

The applicable provision for the Uniform Relocation Assistance by the Federal and State governments are used to assist the property owners move from one location to another. Supplemental payments are included to assure that the homeowner is relocated to a decent, safe and sanitary dwelling.

### **V. Cost Comparison**

The attached table shows the cost for each one of the seven alternatives. As stated beforehand, all of these costs are based on uniform assumptions and standard practices with the exceptions noted above for the Rathbone Corridor.

**COST COMPARISON TABLE**  
**ALL DOLLARS IN 1998 (Million)**

| <b>Build Alternatives</b>            | <b>Cost of Const-<br/>ruction</b> | <b>Cost of Right-<br/>of-Way</b> | <b>Total<br/>Cost</b> | <b>Rathb-<br/>one<br/>Ameni-<br/>-ties</b> | <b>Rathb-<br/>one<br/>Total</b> |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| TSM -161/High/Henderson              | \$19.2                            | \$7.1                            | \$26.3                |  |                                 |
| C1-Rathbone                          | \$7.3                             | \$5.6                            | \$12.9                | \$4.0*                                     | \$16.9                          |
| C2N-Graceland North to High          | \$9.6                             | \$6.4                            | \$16.0                |  |                                 |
| C3N-Graceland North to Morse         | \$10.0                            | \$15.0                           | \$25.0                |  |                                 |
| C4N/C2N- Split-Diamond North to High | \$13.6                            | \$6.4                            | \$20.0                |  |                                 |
| C4S/C3S-Split-Diamond South to Morse | \$14.2                            | \$14.5                           | \$28.7                |  |                                 |
| C4N/C3N-Split-Diamond North to Morse | \$13.9                            | \$15.0                           | \$28.9                |  |                                 |

Figure 11

**\*added cost of amenities per ballot issue**

**Note:**

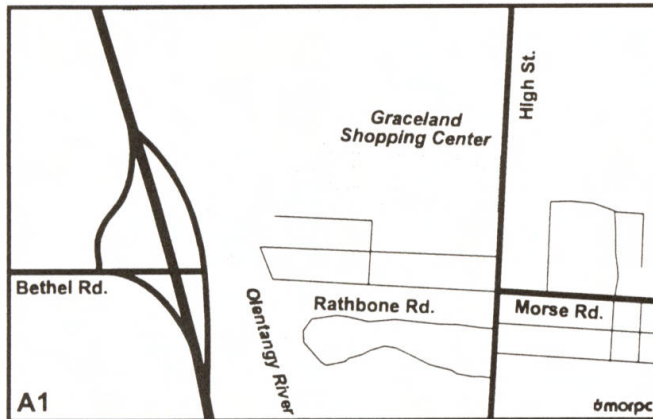
1. The no build and demand management alternatives are essentially the same based on current public policies and do not cost any additional expenditure.
2. The other build, fiscally constrained alternative is a low cost option (less than \$1 million) to add a right turn lane from High St. South bound to Henderson does not merit comparison with high capital cost of alternatives.

## **Summary by Alternative**

This section summarizes the analysis for each of the alternatives using the following evaluation factors: environment, traffic, public policy, cost, land use/economic and neighborhood impacts. Due to the qualitative nature of most, the factors and descriptive index such as high, medium and low are used. Where possible, actual figures such as cost and percentage for changes in traffic are given. The potential for redevelopment is shown for all the connector build alternatives.

The following alternatives were selected by the Advisory Committee for further analysis.

# A1 - No-Build



No Build

## Environment

Maintain current status

## Immediate Vicinity Traffic in 2020

An average of 46,000 and 23,500 vehicles per day is expected on Bethel and Morse roads respectively

## Traffic on Broadway, Henderson and SR 161 over the River in 2020

A total of 90,000 vehicles per day is expected

## Travel Time Between Morse and Bethel Corridors in 2020

The average time from the intersection at Bethel and Olentangy to the intersection of Morse and High is about eight minutes

## Regional Vehicle User Cost

Not applicable - as vehicle miles of travel increase, user costs increase

## Consistency with Public Policy

### Environment

- Neutral consistency

### Land Use/Development

- Consistent with preserving historic structures and preserving older neighborhoods

### Infrastructure

- Mostly neutral
- Highly consistent with not serving or fragmenting neighborhoods

### Community Facilities

- Inconsistent with connecting parklands to neighborhoods with bikeways
- Highly consistent with maintaining positive neighborhood identity and image

## Potential for Redevelopment of the Area

### Commercial

- There is less commercial redevelopment potential

## Neighborhood

- No interruption to existing neighborhood
- No mitigation future traffic increases

## Costs

No cost

## B2 - Widen Henderson/High/161



Upgrades to Henderson, High and SR 161

### Environment

Medium impact

### Immediate Vicinity Traffic in 2020

Adds four percent more traffic to Bethel Road and two percent more to Morse Road compared to No Build

### Traffic on Broadway, Henderson and SR 161 over the River in 2020

Increases 45 percent compared to No Build

### Travel Time Between Morse and Bethel Corridors in 2020

Saves about one minute

### Regional Vehicle User Cost

Saves \$3.1 million/year

### Consistency with Public Policy

#### *Environment*

- Mixed consistency with preservation and enhancement of open space, habitats, and waterways
- Consistent with preserving Clintonville ravines and conserving riparian areas

#### *Land Use/Development*

- Highly inconsistent with preserving historic structure
- Inconsistent with discouraging non-local through traffic on local streets
- Consistent with promoting redevelopment and retail

#### *Infrastructure*

- Mixed consistency with improving transportation system

#### *Community Facilities*

- Inconsistent with maintaining positive neighborhood identity and image

### Potential for Redevelopment of the Area

#### **Commercial**

- Commercial redevelopment opportunities are unknown

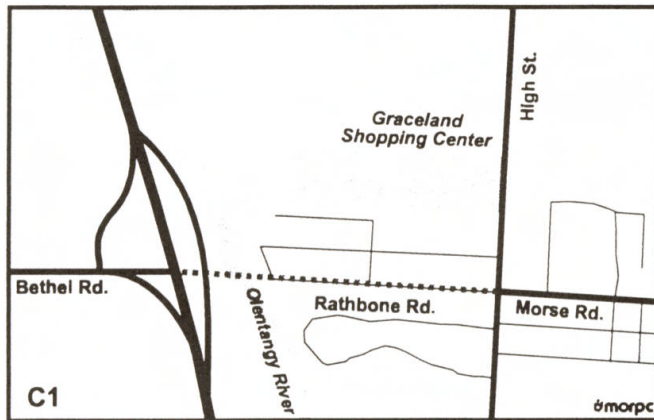
#### **Neighborhood**

- Negative impact on residential property values that front on Henderson Rd.
- Negative impact on pedestrian friendly atmosphere of downtown Worthington and its Village Green

### Costs

\$26.3 million

# C1 - Rathbone



Rathbone Connector

## Environment

High impact

## Immediate Vicinity Traffic in 2020

Adds nine percent more traffic to Bethel Road and 30 percent more to Morse Road compared to No Build

## Traffic on Broadway, Henderson and SR 161 in 2020

Reduces six percent compared to No Build

## Travel Time Between Morse and Bethel in 2020

Saves four to five minutes

## Regional Vehicle User Cost

Saves \$5 million/year

## Consistency with Public Policy

### Environment

- Inconsistent with preservation and enhancement of open space, habitats and waterways

### Land Use/Development

- Highly inconsistent with adjacent land uses, preserving older neighborhoods
- Consistent with promoting redevelopment

### Infrastructure

- Slightly consistent with improving transportation
- Highly inconsistent with not fragmenting neighborhoods

### Community Facilities

- Consistent with connecting parklands to neighborhoods with bikeways
- Highly inconsistent with maintaining a positive neighborhood image and identity and safe levels of traffic conducive to housing

## Potential for Redevelopment of the Area

- Increases the potential for development in the area. It promotes redevelopment in the central core area by 400 retail jobs (125,000 sq.ft.), 65 office jobs (15,000 sq.ft.) and 250 residential units

## Neighborhood

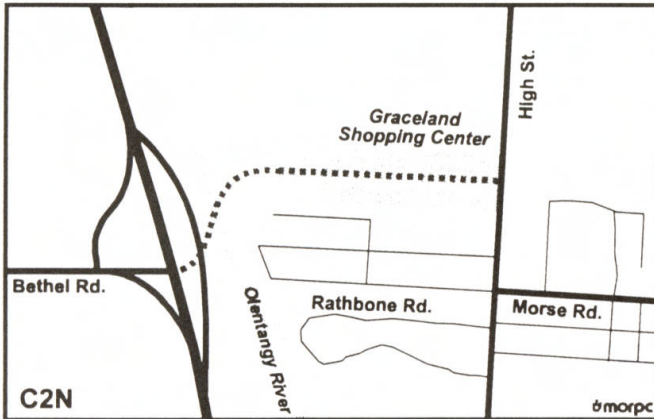
- Highest negative impact on Delawanda in terms of loss of residential structure, noise and isolation of the community from other residential areas
- Improve emergency response time for police
- Negative impacts on residences that front Morse Road from more traffic

## Costs

\$12.9 million without the additional requirements of the petition that would add \$4 million



# C2N - Graceland North to High



Graceland North to High

## Environment

High impact

## Immediate Vicinity Traffic in 2020

Adds 10 percent more traffic to Bethel Road and 11 percent more to Morse Road compared to No Build

## Traffic on Broadway, Henderson and SR 161 in 2020

Reduces 7 percent compared to No Build

## Travel Time Between Morse and Bethel in 2020

Saves approximately three minutes

## Regional Vehicle User Cost

Saves \$2.9 million/year

## Consistency with Public Policy

### Environment

- Inconsistent with preservation and enhancement of open space, habitats and waterways, especially greenways and open space

### Land Use/Development

- Consistent with compatibility of adjacent land uses and preserving older neighborhoods
- Consistent with promoting redevelopment

### Infrastructure

- Mixed consistency with improving transportation system
- Highly consistent with not severing or fragmenting the neighborhood

### Community Facilities

- Consistent with connecting parklands to neighborhoods through bikeways and maintaining safe levels of traffic conducive to housing

## Potential for Redevelopment of the Area

- Increases the potential for development in the area. It promotes redevelopment in the central core area by 400 retail jobs (125,000 sq.ft.), 65 office jobs (15,000 sq.ft.) and 250 residential units

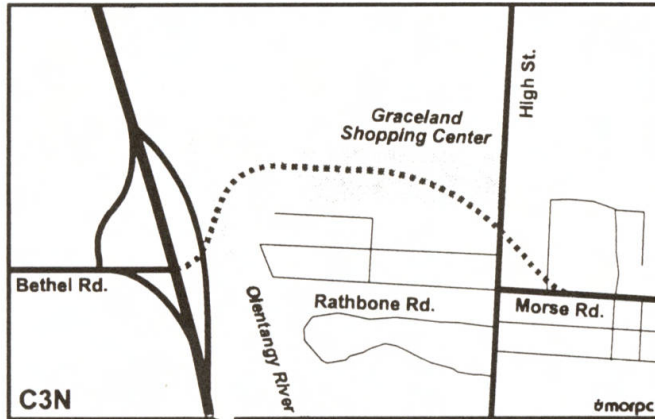
## Neighborhood

- Potential for commercial redevelopment could increase the buffer between Graceland and Delawanda
- Redevelopment of Graceland could provide a strong pedestrian link between residential and commercial area
- Improve emergency response time for police

## Costs

\$16 million

# C3N - Graceland North to Morse



Graceland North to Morse

## Environment

High impact

### Immediate Vicinity Traffic in 2020

Adds nine percent more traffic to Bethel Road and 36 percent more to Morse Road compared to No Build

### Traffic on Broadway, Henderson and SR 161 in 2020

Reduces six percent compared to No Build

### Travel Time Between Morse and Bethel in 2020

Saves about four minutes

### Regional Vehicle User Cost

Saves \$2.9 million/year

### Consistency with Public Policy

#### *Environment*

- Inconsistent with preservation and enhancement of open space, habitats and waterways, especially greenways and open space

#### *Land Use/Development*

- Mixed consistency
- Consistent with promoting redevelopment

#### *Infrastructure*

- Mixed consistency with improving transportation system

#### *Community Facilities*

- Consistent with connecting parklands to neighborhoods through bikeways
- Inconsistent with maintaining positive neighborhood identity and image and maintaining safe levels of traffic conducive to housing

### Potential for Redevelopment of the Area

- Increases the potential for development in the area. It promotes redevelopment in the central core area by 400 retail jobs (125,000 sq.ft.), 65 office jobs (15,000 sq.ft.) and 250 residential units

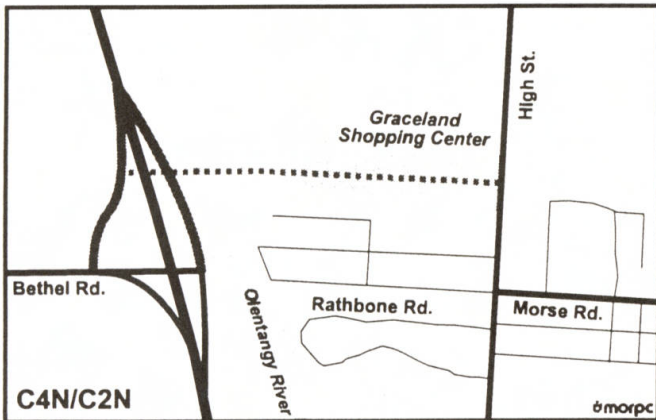
### Neighborhood

- Potential for commercial redevelopment could increase the buffer between Graceland and Delawanda
- Redevelopment of Graceland could provide a strong pedestrian link between residential and commercial area
- Improve emergency response time for police
- Negative impacts on residences that front Morse Road from more traffic
- Impacts pedestrian linkages between residential areas and commercial business on High Street

### Costs

\$25 million

# C4N/C2N - Split-Diamond North to High



Split Diamond North to High

## Environment

High impact

## Immediate Vicinity Traffic in 2020

Adds four percent more traffic to Bethel Road and 15 percent more to Morse Road compared to No Build

## Traffic on Broadway, Henderson and SR 161 in 2020

Reduces nine percent compared to No Build

## Travel Time Between Morse and Bethel in 2020

Saves approximately four minutes

## Regional Vehicle User Cost

Saves \$1.7 million/year

## Consistency with Public Policy

### Environment

- Inconsistent with preservation and enhancement of open space, habitats and waterways, especially riparian areas and greenways

### Land Use/Development

- Highly consistent with compatibility of adjacent land uses and preserving older neighborhoods
- Consistent with **promoting redevelopment** discouraging non-local through traffic on local streets

### Infrastructure

- Mixed consistency on improving transportation system
- Highly consistent with not severing or fragmenting neighborhoods

### Community Facilities

- Consistent with connecting parklands to neighborhoods through bikeways maintaining positive neighborhood identity and image and maintaining safe levels of traffic conducive to housing

## Potential for Redevelopment of the Area

- Increases the potential for development in the area. It promotes redevelopment in the central core area by 400 retail jobs (125,000 sq.ft.), 65 office jobs (15,000 sq.ft.) and 250 residential units

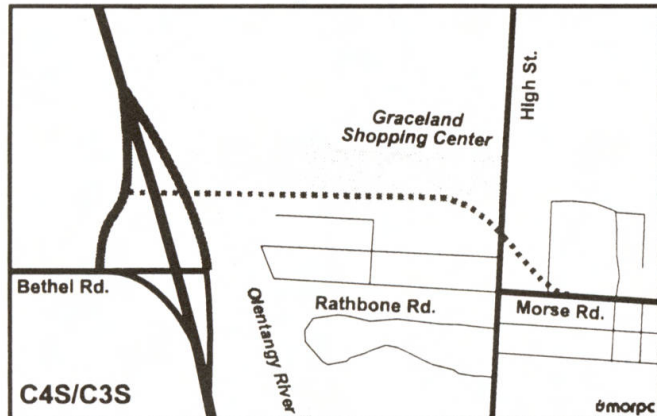
## Neighborhood

- Potential for commercial redevelopment could increase the buffer between Graceland and Delawanda
- Redevelopment of Graceland could provide a strong pedestrian link between residential and commercial area
- Improve emergency response time for police

## Costs

\$20 million

# C4S/C3S - Split-Diamond South to Morse



Split Diamond South to Morse

## Environment

High impact

## Immediate Vicinity Traffic in 2020

Adds 5.4 percent more traffic to Bethel Road and 26 percent more to Morse Road compared to No Build

## Traffic on Broadway, Henderson and SR 161 in 2020

Reduces six percent compared to No Build

## Travel Time Between Morse and Bethel in 2020

Saves about five minutes

## Regional Vehicle User Cost

Saves \$1.1 million/year

## Consistency with Public Policy

### Environment

- Inconsistent with preservation and enhancement of open space, habitats and waterways, especially riparian areas and greenways

### Land Use/Development

- Mixed consistency as to affects neighborhoods and historic structures
- Consistent with promoting redevelopment

### Infrastructure

- Mixed consistency with improving transportation system

### Community Facilities

- Consistent with connecting parklands to neighborhoods through bike paths
- Inconsistent with maintaining positive neighborhood identity and image and maintaining safe levels of traffic conducive to housing

## Potential for Redevelopment of the Area

- Increases the potential for development in the area. It promotes redevelopment in the central core area by 400 retail jobs (125,000 sq.ft.), 65 office jobs (15,000 sq.ft.) and 250 residential units

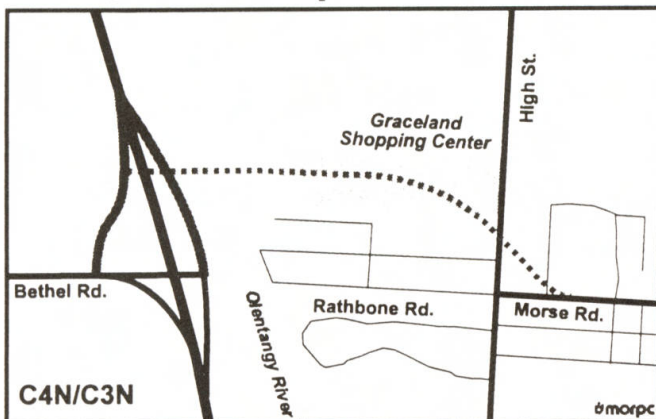
## Neighborhood

- Potential for commercial redevelopment could increase the buffer between Graceland and Delawanda
- Redevelopment of Graceland could provide a strong pedestrian link between residential and commercial area
- Improve emergency response time for police
- Negative impacts on residences that front Morse Road from more traffic
- Impacts pedestrian linkages between residential areas and commercial business on High Street

## Cost

\$28.7 million

# C4N/C3N - Split-Diamond North to Morse



Split Diamond North to Morse

## Environment

High impact

## Immediate Vicinity Traffic in 2020

Adds 5.5 percent more traffic to Bethel Road and 26 percent more to Morse Road compared to No Build

## Traffic on Broadway, Henderson and SR 161 in 2020

Reduces six percent compared to No Build

## Travel Time Between Morse and Bethel in 2020

Saves about five minutes

## Regional Vehicle User Cost

Saves \$2.8 million/year

## Consistency with Public Policy

### Environment

- Inconsistent with preservation and enhancement of open space, habitats and waterways, especially riparian areas and greenways

### Land Use/Development

- Mixed consistency as to affecting neighborhoods and historic structures
- Consistent with promoting redevelopment

### Infrastructure

- Mixed consistency with improving transportation system

### Community Facilities

- Consistent with connecting parklands to neighborhoods through bike paths
- Inconsistent with maintaining positive neighborhood identity and image and maintaining safe levels of traffic conducive to housing

## Potential for Redevelopment of the Area

- Increases the potential for development in the area. It promotes redevelopment in the central core area by 400 retail jobs (125,000 sq.ft.), 65 office jobs (15,000 sq.ft.) and 250 residential units

## Neighborhood

- Improve emergency response time for police
- Negative impacts on residences that front Morse Road from more traffic
- Impacts pedestrian linkages between residential areas and commercial business on High Street

## Costs

\$28.9 million

## MORSE BETHEL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ROSTER

| Organization Name                                 | Name             | Alternate              |
|---|------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Neighborhood Organizations</b>                 |                  |                        |
| Citizens for Columbus Neighborhoods               | Thomas P. Pappas | Dennis Barron          |
| Citizens for the Morse-Bethel Connector           | Russ Crouse      | Joe Neidhardt          |
| Clintonville Area Commission                      | Paul Carringer   | Tom Erney & Greg Myers |
| Courtney Woods                                    | Jim Gerrity      |                        |
| Delawanda Residents Association                   | Randy Leffler    | Barbara Scanlon        |
| East Beechwold Association                        | John DeFourny    |                        |
| Far Northwest Coalition                           | John Best        | Allan Kundtz           |
| Forest Park Civic Association                     | Herb Crites      |                        |
| Katherine's Woods                                 | Dave Blodgett    |                        |
| MORPC Citizens Advisory Committee                 | Bill Inglis      |                        |
| Northland Community Council                       | Andy Bukovinsky  | Kevin Clark            |
| Northwest Civic Association                       | Peggy McElroy    | Cliff Ferrell          |
| Old Beechwold Association                         | Henry L. Hunker  |                        |
| Sharon Hills Civic Association                    | Tony Knapke      |                        |
| <b>Government Agencies</b>                        |                  |                        |
| City of Upper Arlington                           | Richard A. King  | Trish Fodor            |
| City of Worthington                               | Dave Elder       | Lou Goorey             |
| Clinton Township                                  | Larry Wilkes     |                        |
| Columbus Division of Engineering and Construction | Ted Beidler      |                        |
| Columbus Division of Planning                     | Steve McClary    |                        |
| Columbus Division of Traffic Engineering          | Jim Davis        |                        |
| Columbus Public Safety Department                 | David Wilson     |                        |
| COTA  | Ron Barnes       | Mike Greene            |
| Federal Highway Administration                    | Scott McGuire    |                        |
| Franklin County Engineering Department            | Dave Philips     |                        |

Ohio Department of Transportation District 6  
Perry Township  
Sharon Heights Commission Association  
Sharon Township  
Village of Riverlea

G. Raymond Lorello  
John O. Ford  
Jim Dowdy Tom Green  
Jack Moss  
Pat Anderson Bill Charles

**Environmental/Resource Agencies**

Division of Real Estate and Land Management  
Franklin County Greenways (MORPC)  
Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed  
Neighbors Interested in the City Environment NICE  
Ohio Chapter Sierra Club  
Ohio EPA  
Priorities Partners, Inc.  
Rivers Unlimited

Wayne R. Warren Kim Baker  
Frances Beasley  
Katie Martin  
Jim Priest Christine Kasselmann  
Cynthia Sibrel Craig Copeland  
Ric Queen  
Joanne Leussing Robert Frey  
Joseph DiNova

**Business/Other Interests**

Church Representative  
Clintonville Area Chamber of Commerce  
Columbus Public School  
North Outerbelt TMA  
Northwest Civic Business Representative  
Ohio School for the Blind  
Ohio School for the Deaf  
OhioHealth  
The Raphael Company  
Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce

Stewart E. Roberts  
Jane Fox  
Dr. Rosa Smith  
Frank Eastman  
John Barry  
Dr. Louis Mazzoli  
Dave Wojnowski  
Jon Fishpaw  
John P. Raphael  
John Butterfield

# MORSE/BETHEL **CONNECTOR**



S T U D Y

Morse-Bethel Connector Study  
Recommendation to be added  
October 22, 1998



## Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission: Morse-Bethel Connector Study Decision Process

The decision process and recommendation were completed using extensive input from the Morse-Bethel Study Advisory Committee and expertise and data from consultants and MORPC staff.

All identified build and no build options were evaluated. Several pertinent comments precede the evaluations.

- All build options impact the environment to some extent. Information needed to determine the degree of impact could not be collected within the scope of this study. Federal laws will control future project development regardless of funding source.
- Because of the way the Rathbone alternative emerged, it will be difficult to use federal funds to build the connector. Use of city funds on the connector will displace other projects. Decisions to build projects are not based solely on costs. If projects have merit, there would be alternative ways identified to finance them.
- The study area is projected to continue to lose its economic market share. A connector will provide impetus for redevelopment of commercial retail space, helping to stabilize the residential community. Stabilization and redevelopment will bring increased vitality.
- Providing a variety of options for travel across a geographic barrier is beneficial on a day-to-day basis. It is especially beneficial when a parallel crossing fails. The relatively few roadway lanes crossing the Olentangy River result in congested travel today. This congestion will increase in the future.
- Since motorists seek to minimize travel time even at the expense of driving longer distances, providing additional roadway capacity would allow motorists to shorten trips, thereby saving significant costs of vehicle operations.

As part of the decision making process, several alternatives were selected for further evaluation and comparison. These are as follows:

- **Evaluation of Graceland Alternatives** – Graceland North to High was chosen as the best Graceland alternative because:
  - It does the most to promote redevelopment.
  - It connects to Bethel Road (split diamond does not).
  - It has better alignment in relation to Delawanda (Graceland south does not).
  - It does not affect properties east of High or within Delawanda.
  - It is the lowest cost Graceland alternative.
  - It provides the largest reduction in travel cost.
  - It displaces fewer buildings in Graceland (versus alternatives connecting to Morse Road).
  - It provides an acceptable connection between Morse Road and the west side of the river.

- **Evaluation of Graceland North to High Street Versus Rathbone Alternatives –**  
Graceland North to High was chosen over Rathbone because:
  - It does not adversely impact Delawanda or Old Beechwold neighborhoods.
  - It provides more impetus for Graceland redevelopment.
  - It is more compatible with land use and development policies as set out in the Columbus Comprehensive Plan; e.g., compatibility with adjacent land uses (Delawanda) and preservation of older neighborhoods.
  
- **Evaluation of SR 161/High/Henderson Alternative –** this alternative was rejected because:
  - It displaces residents along Henderson Road.
  - It is one of the most expensive alternatives.
  - Widening SR 161 and the northern end of High Street is not consistent with the city of Worthington's policies and has been opposed in the past.
  
- **Evaluation of Graceland North to High Street Versus a No Build Alternative**

**Factors in Favor of a No Build:**

- It allows expenditure of city resources on other priorities.
- There is no disruption of the neighborhood or the river corridor environment.
- There is no displacement of existing recreational facilities.
- It does not increase traffic on Morse and Bethel roads.

**Factors in Favor of Graceland North to High Street**

- It induces redevelopment of nearby commercial retail space.
- It helps stabilize the neighborhood.
- It connects east-west road systems.
- It saves \$2.9 million per year for people operating vehicles.
- It provides access to the Olentangy Bikeway as well as better connections across the river for pedestrians and bicyclists.

**Recommendation**

MORPC recommends construction of a connector between Morse and Bethel roads, beginning at Bethel Road, extending through Graceland Shopping Center, terminating at High Street.

We recommend that steps be taken to redevelop Graceland to improve its image and to help stabilize surrounding neighborhoods.

Extra efforts should be made to design the connector through the river corridor in an environmentally sensitive manner. This should include detention of road and bridge stormwater and design of the connector from Bethel Road to the east abutment. We recognize that this may increase costs above those stated in this report.