SR 161 Western Corridor Development Plan

Conceptual Framework

July 7, 2015
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The SR 161/37/16 four lane, divided highway opened for use in June 2010 providing faster and safer connection between Columbus, Newark, Granville and Heath. Additional interchanges will soon be added to the corridor at Mink Street and at Cherry Valley Road creating a continuous, four lane interstate look alike from Columbus east to SR 60 north of Dresden.

Development is already increasing along the western end of the corridor in the New Albany area. Traffic will also increase along the eastern end of the corridor due to planned transportation additions such as the Thornwood connector which will link the industrial development occurring in Heath to the new Cherry Valley interchange. The intent of this SR 161 Western Corridor Development Plan is to identify feasible improvements to meet the growing traffic demands and encourage economic vitality for the region.

The study area is along SR 161 from Beech Road to Cherry Valley Road, extending approximately 1 mile north and south of the corridor as shown in Figure 1. This first phase of the SR 161 Western Corridor Development Plan started with a Community Snapshot report which provided a baseline understanding of what is currently in the corridor and what is changing and identified place based characteristics such as land use, zoning, transportation and key demographic conditions and trends. This report can be viewed in Appendix A.

After review and input from the Technical Leadership Committee, a Conceptual Framework was developed, identifying potential land use and development locations along the corridor and transportation connections to support future development as traffic increases. The Conceptual Framework will serve as a building block for Phase 2 of the study which will further evaluate traffic connections and improvements and provide more detail on development and job potential.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Conceptual Framework for the SR 161 Western Corridor Development Plan is comprised of two elements: the Corridor Transportation Improvement Plan and the Corridor Concept Plan. The following is a summary of each of these plans.

A. CORRIDOR CONCEPT PLAN

The purpose of the Corridor Concept Plan was to work with the Steering Committee to identify principles to utilize in creating the development plan. The conceptual development framework describes the community’s intent for where and how future growth and development should occur along the SR 161 Western Corridor. It consists of principle statements that describe that intent in words and a map that illustrates where these concepts apply geographically.

The memorandum has the following structure:

1. Understanding
2. Vision for the Corridor
3. Development Principles
4. Conceptual Development Framework Map
1. Understanding

The SR 161 Western Corridor includes an area approximately one-mile to the north and south, along a 16.5 mile stretch of SR 161, from Beech Road in the west to Cherry Valley Road in the east. The area is all within Licking County, and includes portions of New Albany, Granville, and Newark. Non-incorporated areas within the planning area include portions of Jersey, St. Albans, Granville, and Newark townships.

Key Findings

A full version of the findings can be found in the Baseline Understanding Memo dated April 15, 2015. The following is a summary from that report.

- Planning area includes an area 37 square miles (23,680 acres) within western Licking County
- Population of more than 25,000, with expected increase of 10,000 by 2050\(^1\)
  - Higher levels of income, fewer instances of families in poverty. More than 67% of individuals earning more than $50,000 per year (48% Ohio), 6% of families living in poverty (12% Ohio)\(^2\)
  - High levels of educational attainment with close to 41% of residents with a Bachelor’s Degree or higher (24% Ohio)
  - Slightly younger population on average, with 40% of residents under the age of 24 (32% Ohio)

- Key development and employment nodes exist around Newark in the east, Granville in the northeast, and New Albany in the west, New Albany the most dynamic, and actively growing
  - New Albany expanding into the planning area (including 749-acre annexation in spring of 2015) with the intention to expand on the city’s 300-acre Beauty and Personal Care Campus
  - Beauty campus employs around 2,000, with 1,700 more jobs anticipated with the expansion
  - Owens Corning Science and Technology Campus located on a unincorporated parcel in Granville Township
  - Owens Corning research facility supports the Toledo based corporation, company employs more than 500 in manufacturing jobs in Newark, just outside the planning area (need to determine no. of employees in the research facility)
  - Denison University, in Granville, is a large employer
  - University campus just north of Granville has an enrollment of over 2,200 undergraduates, includes more than 900 acres, 550 of which are a biological nature preserve

- Two new interchanges along the corridor will improve access and increase development pressure for adjacent parcels

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\(^1\) 2015 MORPC Land Use Model and Population Forecasts

\(^2\) Demographic analysis is taken from relevant census blocks and includes a slightly larger geography than the study area. Data is from 2013 American Communities Survey.
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- Mink Road interchange being planned for and designed by ODOT as another entrance/exit options for increased traffic to Beauty Campus
- New interchange would be less than two miles from the recently completed (2010) Beech Road interchange, but is seen as necessary to relieve future traffic pressure from the New Albany growth
- Cherry Valley Road interchange to be completed in 2017.
- Plans include constructing an interchange a half a mile east of the Ohio 16-Cherry Valley Road intersection along with a new connector road between Cherry Valley Road and Granville Road removing the traffic signal and closing existing Cherry Valley Road on both sides of SR 16
- The new interchange is also the northern terminus of the largest manufacturing corridor in central Ohio.

- Lack of water and sewer in the service area will preclude development beyond current nodes for the foreseeable future.
  - Southwest Licking Community Water and Sewer District Water and Wastewater Master Plan (completed for Jersey and St. Albans Townships in 2012 by URS) identified roughly 6.5 square miles of new serviceable area along SR 161
  - Plan would require millions in resources and will likely occur as a response to serious development proposals
  - The village of Alexandria’s current water and sewer agreement prevents the town from any expansion

- More than 70% of the land area is used for agriculture. The frontage of many main roads is dominated by large-lot single family homes served by wells and septic
  - Densities of the residential development vary from very low-density rural lots (5-20 acres) to higher density suburban subdivisions (three to five units per acre)
2. VISION FOR THE CORRIDOR

The following draft vision statement was derived through the baseline analysis and conversations with the Steering Committee. The statement is expected to evolve through further deliberation.

_Western Licking County State Route 161 Corridor_

_The corridor is well-recognized for offering high-quality jobs and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. These jobs are clustered at strategic locations and served by efficient and effective transportation modes. The strategic locations include supportive residential areas—neighborhoods—that are walkable and offer a range of housing choices. Retail is integrated with other development and scaled to support local needs. Natural and cultural assets in the corridor are protected and development is distinguished by high-quality design._
3. DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The following principles convey values about land development, and work in concert with the conceptual development framework map. These statements primarily address “how” (character attributes) and “where” (conceptual location) the community’s land should develop. These principles are described as follows:

1. **Compact development will occur at logical nodes.** As new development occurs across the corridor it will take place at logical nodes served by transportation infrastructure. This approach is in contrast to a “leapfrog” form, and is more easily serviced by utility extensions.

2. **Strategic transportation investments will improve access and efficiency to and across the corridor.** Future improvements to the transportation network will consider the return on investment and be prioritized based on most impactful projects.

3. **Uses that improve the fiscal health of its jurisdictions and well-being of residents will be prioritized.** Improvements to the infrastructure within the planning area will likely facilitate new development. Proposals will be evaluated based on their contribution to the communities’ economic health. Large, job-producing uses will be favored over less productive ones, such as regional retail or stand-alone residential neighborhoods.

4. **Residential development will compliment employment nodes, providing diverse, quality housing, in a compact and walkable pattern.** The development of new residential areas will have strong neighborhood qualities, including sidewalks, mixed housing types, parks, and easy access to basic retail needs. As new residential development occurs it should provide a broad range of housing types, prices, and ownership options to strengthen the sense of community and attract a ready workforce.

5. **Retail development will support workers and residents within the corridor.** Retail development will be of a scale to support the needs of nearby commercial and/or residential neighbors.

6. **The corridor will continue to retain and attract high tech and innovative employers.** With the expansion of the New Albany Beauty Campus, the presence of Denison University (Along with nearby OSU Newark, Central Ohio Technical College, and Mount Vernon Nazarene University), growth of the Owens Corning Science and Technology Campus, and the tremendous resurgence of Newark’s industrial areas, the area has emerged as a manufacturing, technology and innovation hub within central Ohio. These, as well other evolving assets, will serve as the identity of the corridor, and attract continued regional and international investment.

7. **The historic downtowns in Granville and Alexandria will be strengthened.** The corridor is home to unique historic downtowns. While differing in scale, they offer amenities and cultural assets.
8. **Agricultural and open spaces will be conserved.** Close to 70 percent of the area is used for farming or preserved as open space. These prime agricultural areas and natural districts should be conserved by directing development into compact areas along major transportation corridors.

9. **Regional recreational connections will be provided through multi-use trails.** The T.J. Evans Trail, connecting Heath, Newark, Granville, and Alexandria, is a unique asset for the corridor. This trail will serve as a starting point for a comprehensive network connecting all of the corridor’s population centers in the future.

10. **Existing residential areas will be strengthened.** Within the existing population centers, subdivisions will provide housing choices for the workforce. They should be maintained and strengthened through continued investment in the public realm.

11. **Gateways and signage will reinforce a consistent brand and identity.** For marketing and regional identification, it is critical for the corridor to develop a unique brand or identity. This will be reinforced through cross-jurisdictional signage programs, as well as clear gateways when entering into the area. The identity for the corridor should reinforce its focus on science, technology, and innovation.

12. **Quality design will be emphasized.** New development within the corridor – residential, commercial, industrial, or retail – will have a high level of design. Careful consideration of new proposals, as well as consistent standards will ensure continuity in the character and style of development.
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4. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK MAP

The Conceptual Development Framework Map, Figure 2, illustrates the development principles for the Western Corridor while incorporating key existing conditions and imminent/underway projects. The map is not intended to show parcel-specific development programs. Rather, it – along with the principles – will guide future land use maps and policies for the included cities, villages, and townships. The map references each community’s most recent comprehensive plan and future land-use maps.

Several terms are used on the map, and explained below.

Conditions

Current Development Target Areas – The cities of New Albany, Newark, and Heath (outside of the planning area) have identified target investment areas as a component of their economic development strategies. These areas are adjacent to existing employment areas, or were established to revitalize existing neighborhoods (Newark Community Reinvestment Area).

Future / Existing Employment Nodes – There are clusters of employment within each community. Generally, the corridor exhibits a “barbell” shape for its employment concentrations, with New Albany’s expanding Beauty Campus in the west and the industrial park in the east. Future areas (such as a proposed “mega-project” site adjacent to New Albany) have also been included.

Potential Water/Sewer Extension Area – There is currently no water or sewer utility coverage within the unincorporated portions of the corridor. The map illustrates the potential serviceable area as determined through a 2012 study and work with the affected townships. This boundary is not final, but represents the most likely scenario for extension.

Future Concepts

Potential Growth Nodes – Three priority growth nodes have been identified along the corridor. These areas have the potential to accommodate future development of the character, quality, and intensity established within the plan’s development principles. Preferred development will occur at nodes along State Route 161 in areas identified as serviceable by future utility extensions. The nodal development would focus on employment-generating uses, but integrate supporting residential and retail uses.

Potential Growth Node 1 – The completion of the Mink Road Interchange along with the extension of Innovation Campus Way out of the New Albany International Beauty Campus, will increase development pressure for adjacent parcels. Straddling Mink Road and the Innovation Campus Way, and north of the new interchange, future development should follow the principles with integrated uses within a compact development pattern.

Potential Growth Node 2 – This node straddles Jersey and St. Albans townships, and was identified in each community’s future land use map as suitable for future commercial or mixed-use development. There are few environmental constraints and the area is within the serviceable area for water and sewer extensions.
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Potential Growth Node 3 – Growth Node 3 is entirely within St. Albans Township, south of Alexandria and SR-161. The township identified portions of the area as suitable for commercial development, but does reserve a 100-foot buffer along the existing floodway. Topography, especially near the floodway, would pose a challenge, but the area’s serviceability of utilities and proximity to an interchange will create development pressure.

Low-intensity Growth Corridor – The parcels along Worthington Road east of the New Albany expansion area will experience continued development pressure, and, in some cases, have already transitioned. The Jersey Township Future Land Use map identifies the area as appropriate for small scale neighborhood commercial uses. Larger, more intense projects would be funneled east into Growth Node 1 or 2. The completion of the Smith’s Mill Road extension out of the beauty campus will extend this pressure north of SR 161.

Environmentally Constrained / Protected – Sensitive environmental areas have been identified so they might be preserved. Stream channels, their riparian buffer, and wetlands are shown on the map as preservation areas.

Rural Edge – To preserve the rural character of the corridor, soft boundaries at the extent of the water/sewer serviceable area should push new development into the established growth nodes. Each community’s comprehensive plan mentions the importance of preserving the area’s rural character as a prime asset.
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**B. TRANSPORTATION NETWORK PLAN**

The SR 161 Western Corridor includes an area approximately one-mile to the north and south, along a 16.5 mile stretch of SR 161, from Beech Road in the west to Cherry Valley Road in the east. The area is all within Licking County, and includes portions of New Albany, Granville, and Newark. Non-incorporated areas within the planning area include portions of Jersey, St. Albans, Granville, and Newark townships.

1. **EXISTING ROAD NETWORK**

Licking County recently updated their functional classifications of roadways in April 2015 as shown in Figures 3. The County also identified and proposed to the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) several routes be upgraded to Federal Aid Routes, as shown in Figure 4. If approved, these roadways will be eligible for additional federal funding assistance.

The existing roadway network surrounding the SR 161 four lane divided corridor are primarily two lane local roads. There are currently five interchanges along the SR 161 corridor: Beech Road, SR 310, SR 37/York Road, SR 16/Columbus Road and SR 37/SR 661. Other than additional lanes at the ramps to SR 161, these arterials and collectors are two lane roadways with the exception of Beech Road which is being widened north of SR 161 from Innovation Campus Court to Jug Street. Two additional interchanges will be added to the SR 161 corridor study area in the near future: one at Mink Road and one at Cherry Valley Road. The Cherry Valley Road interchange is slated for construction starting this year and Mink Road is planned as a design build project for 2016.

2. **FUTURE ROAD NETWORK**

The general vision of the future land use and development along the SR 161 corridor summarized in the conceptual framework plan was utilized to review the existing transportation network in the study area and propose network additions and upgrades which will complement potential future development. The goal is to create a connected road system that can serve as a frame to an internal network of developer driven local roads in support of future commercial, industrial or residential land uses.

Collector roadways paralleling a major corridor such as SR 161 serve as an alternate route to freeway travel and can serve as the base network for development desiring visibility from a major highway. Smith’s Mill Road to the north and E. Dublin-Granville Road to the south parallels SR 161 in New Albany to serve this purpose and development has grown around these two roads. Additions are being made to this network such as extending a corridor from Smiths Mill Road / Innovation Campus Court to Jug Street. Additions are being made to this network such as extending a corridor from Smiths Mill Road / Innovation Campus Court to Jug Street, Beaver Road at Mink Road to the north and an additional connector road to the south as shown in Figure 5.

Outside of the New Albany corporation limits east of Beech Road to Cherry Valley, there are sections of roadways already paralleling the SR 161 corridor, some disconnected as part of the construction of the upgrade to a four lane divided freeway look alike, completed in 2010. As development occurs and land use changes, some of these roadways could be reconnected to create a parallel route system and utilize...
existing road right of way. Figure 5 and 6 show proposed connections north and south of the SR 161 corridor. Figure 5 shows the western half of the corridor from Beech Road to SR 37/York Road and Figure 6 shows the eastern half of the corridor from SR 37/York Road to Cherry Valley Road.

Starting from the west, in Figure 5 Worthington Road serves as the southern parallel route to SR 161 extending from Davis Lane at Beech Road ending east of York Road where it is called Bracken Road which can be seen in Figure 6. To continue this parallel route, consideration should be given to connecting Bracken Road east to General Griffin Road. However, any connection between York Road and Outville Road will involve the expense of crossing Moots Run/Lobdell Creek.

Moots Run Road parallels the north side of SR 161 from the SR 16/SR 37 interchange west past the SR 37/Outville Road interchange where its name changes to Davidson Lane to terminate approximately 1-1/4 miles west of SR 37. Connecting from the terminus of Davidson Lane west past SR 310 to connect to Beaver Road at Burnside Road would continue the parallel route planned by New Albany over to Smith’s Mill/Innovation Campus Court. To complete a north south connection in this area between the Mink Road interchange and the SR 310 interchange, consideration should be given to connecting Patterson Road south of SR 161 with Burnside Road north of SR 161.

With the future addition of the Cherry Valley interchange, a connection south to Thornwood Drive will provide direct access to the industrial park located in Heath west of SR 79. As a safety measure, the access across SR 161 for River Road was closed. Consideration is being given to reconnecting this roadway via an overpass to allow residents located south of SR 161 direct access to Granville.
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Figure 5 - Proposed Roadway Connections - West
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3. PROJECTED 2035 TRAFFIC VOLUMES

Upgrades to the current two lane road system will be needed as traffic increases due to development. Upgrades are planned for Beech Road north of its interchange with SR 161. Mink Road in particular, with the new interchange at SR 161 and its regional north south continuity through the county will require additional capacity both to meet traffic demands and address access required by development. SR 310 and Outville Road/SR 37 north and south of their interchanges with SR 161 will also require future additional capacity as these are targeted as potential growth areas.

Figure 7 and Figure 8 show Average Daily Traffic Volumes (ADT) projected for year 2035 for the SR 161 corridor. As these 2035 traffic volumes were developed prior to the growth currently occurring and expected to occur in the New Albany and Jersey Township area, projections are lower than anticipated on connector roads in the western portion of the corridor. These will be updated in the next phase of the study. The projected ADTs do provide a general look at the overall increases in traffic in 20 years.

On the west end of the corridor, volumes on Beech Road and on Worthington Road east of Beech Road show at or above the capacity of a two lane rural roadway. Mink Road north of SR 161 shows volumes nearing the capacity of a two lane roadway and these are expected to increase with the additional development expected to occur between Beech Road and Mink Road north and south of SR 161. SR 310 is a regional north south arterial which connects Johnstown to the north with Pataskala and I-70 to the south. Projections along SR 210 south of SR 161 show traffic volumes of approximately 10,000 vehicles per day (vpd) which is nearing the capacity of a two lane roadway.

On the east end of the corridor, York Road and SR 37 at Alexandria have future capacities that indicate additional lanes beyond their current two lanes are needed in the future. SR 16 and AR 37 south of SR 161 in the Granville area show volumes over 17,000 vpd and will require upgrades in the future.

The next phase of the SR 161 Western Corridor Development Plan will review the volumes associated with the updated land uses associated with the 2040.
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Figure 7 - 2035 ADT - West