

Newtown Community Partner Committee
3536 Church Street
Newtown, Ohio 45244

October 11, 2013

Theodore Brown Hubbard, P.E.–P.S.
Hamilton County Engineer
Hamilton County Engineer's Office
10480 Burlington Road
Cincinnati, OH 45231

Patrick J. Manger
Clermont County Engineer
Clermont County Engineer's Office
2381 Clermont Center Drive
Batavia, Ohio 45103

Dear Mr. Hubbard and Mr. Manger:

The Newtown Community Partner Committee ("CPC") has received and reviewed your letter of September 19, 2013. While the CPC appreciates your interest in the Village of Newtown, we feel compelled to respond to several statements in the letter which are either misleading or inaccurate.

First, Newtown officials have always engaged in "clear, honest and productive lines of communication" with officials of Hamilton County and the Ohio Department of Transportation ("ODOT") regarding the Eastern Corridor Project. For over 40 years, Newtown officials have attended and participated in countless discussions and presentations concerning the extension of a new road near or through Newtown. They observed this planning process as the road shifted from US 50 close to the river to a position further south, and then with the completion of the Horizon Church in Anderson Township, the road project came right into the Village of Newtown.

Newtown officials have emphatically stated for years that Newtown is unequivocally opposed to the project. At a recent public meeting in Newtown on September 25, three current or former Mayors of Newtown stated how they expressed the Village's opposition to the Eastern Corridor Project for decades. Newtown's Village Council has passed three resolutions in 2009, 2011 and 2013 opposing the relocation of State Route 32 in Newtown as part of the Eastern Corridor Project. The fact that the Hamilton County Engineer, Mr. Hubbard, may not like Newtown's position is no basis for asserting that Newtown officials have been anything but open, honest and clear in stating Newtown's position on this unneeded \$ 1.4 billion road project.

Second, the CPC estimates that Newtown will lose approximately 20% to 30% of its current municipal income and property tax revenue because of the relocation of SR 32. This is based on the Eastern Corridor website map, which shows the corridor for the four-lane highway going through Newtown. The CPC used that map to estimate the loss of municipal income and property tax revenue. Common sense dictates that a four-lane divided and elevated highway going through Newtown – a small village of approximately 2.4 square miles-- will result in the loss of significant income and property tax revenue for Newtown. Such tax receipts comprise 88% of Newtown's revenue. The CPC will certainly revise its estimate upon receipt of more detailed information from ODOT or Hamilton County officials, but to date no such information has been forthcoming. To fail to attempt to quantify the loss of revenue would do Newtown residents a disservice in evaluating the highway project.

Third, the CPC estimates that the elevation of the highway would be at least 20 feet above the current street level when it crosses Church Street and Newtown Road to accommodate an underpass for through traffic. Mr. Hubbard admits the roadway will be elevated and have controlled access but provides no additional details. The CPC believes ODOT will not put in a four-lane divided highway with stop lights at both the intersections of Church Street and Valley and at Valley and Round Bottom Road, given the short distance between the two points. Thus, an underpass with an elevated roadway is likely at one of the two locations. Any underpass would require 16 feet of clearance (ODOT standard) and an allowance for overpass construction of 4 feet

results in an elevation of 20 feet as shown in our diagram of the road project. Mr. Hubbard and ODOT officials are vague about the road project and continue with the refrain that things have “not yet been determined.” The CPC strives to give Newtown residents an accurate and realistic rendering of the road project and its effect on Newtown as the project proceeds and millions of tax dollars are spent.

Fourth, the CPC believes the roadway will be approximately 400 feet wide to accommodate the four-lane divided and elevated highway. While Mr. Hubbard asserts that the width of the roadway “has yet to be determined,” at a public meeting in Newtown in July 2009, Mr. Hubbard stated that the roadway project would be approximately 400 feet wide. Steve Mary of ODOT recently stated that the width of the right of way would be 160 feet, which is what the CPC used in its diagram, and the earthen berm for the elevated roadway accounts for the total 400 foot width. The CPC based its width estimate on information available from the Eastern Corridor website, ODOT, FEMA flood elevations and the Hamilton County Engineer’s office. Unfortunately, the County’s descriptions of the roadway project appear to change in an effort to convince Newtown to accept a road project that it does not want.

Fifth, Mr. Hubbard asserts that “the relocated SR 32 will not be an interstate facility.” Nonetheless, it is undisputed that the projected roadway is to be a four-lane divided and elevated roadway with controlled access. This sounds to us like a major highway. It is an undeniable fact that if the new four lane roadway is built, there will be 10 lanes of roadways traversing east and west within less than one mile of the center of Newtown—four lanes on SR 50, four lanes with the new roadway and two lanes on existing SR 32. Accordingly, Newtown residents will certainly feel like they are living next to an interstate highway system.

The CPC believes that a new analysis of traffic patterns demonstrates that the Eastern Corridor relocation of SR 32 is no longer needed. This is based on traffic studies conducted by the Sierra Club, which used ODOT’s own traffic counts, and first-hand observations of Newtown’s Police Chief. Moreover, with more and more people working from home via the internet, the CPC believes that traffic studies predicting long commute times in 2040 are inherently unreliable and essentially meaningless. In fact, a draft analysis of the Eastern Corridor project estimated that travel time in an average one-way trip in the region would increase by only 6.3 minutes between 2015 and 2045. The CPC believes it is unreasonable and profligate to spend almost \$750 million on the road project and disrupt communities to deal with an estimated 6 minute longer commute time.

Mr. Hubbard also asserts that “Madisonville did not oppose the eastern Corridor program.” However, Madisonville has passed resolutions opposing the Eastern Corridor project and as recently as August 26, 2013, a representative of Madisonville represented to ODOT officials that Madisonville supported the “no build option.” While Madisonville may now support a “low build” option, low build options have not been presented to Newtown or Mariemont.

Finally, Mr. Hubbard cites a *Cincinnati Business Courier* editorial of July 12, 2013 in response to the *Cincinnati Enquirer* editorial of June 23, 2013 which was entitled “Stop the Eastern Corridor”. The CPC places more credence in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* editorial board which looks at all aspects of the quality of life as opposed to the *Business Courier* which is focused only on business.

The Newtown CPC stands by the statements and content in its educational document on the Eastern Corridor project ~ **“The End of Newtown”** ~ and believes that such information is helpful and useful to Newtown residents in understanding the likely effect of a four-lane highway going through Newtown. Furthermore, the Village of Newtown is entitled to post the document on its website and express its opinion and opposition to the unneeded billion-dollar megaproject.

Sincerely,

Newtown Community Partner Committee