



City of Sidney

September 5, 2017

**RE: Preferred Alternative Update and Response to Comments
W. Court Street (SR 47) Corridor Improvements
SHE-SR 47-14.51 (PID-104615)**

Dear Sir or Madam:

You are receiving this project update letter as you were on the mailing list for the West Court Street (SR 47) Corridor Improvement project; provided contact information at the public meeting held back in March for this project; or you submitted comments on the project.

The City of Sidney appreciates your interest in the project and would like to thank you for any comments/feedback you have provided on the proposed improvements. All comments have been reviewed and taken into consideration in developing and selecting a Preferred Alternative to enhance the SR 47 Corridor.

The Preferred Alternative includes:

- Retain the four-lane roadway from 4th Ave. to Walnut Ave. on W. Court St. (SR 47);
- Upgrade the existing traffic signal at Walnut Ave. & W. Court St. (SR 47);
- Remove the existing median and median guardrail and replace with decorative concrete median barriers with median mounted lighting;
- Replace the existing sidewalk along the north side of SR 47 from 4th Ave. to Wilkinson Ave. with a 10-foot wide walkway;
- The southbound access from Wilkinson Ave. to W. Court St. (SR 47) will be eliminated, as shown on the attached figure. The intersection of Wilkinson Ave. and W. Court St. will otherwise remain in its current configuration;
- Provide pavement marking and signing improvements as needed.

The resulting Preferred Alternative listed above is a result of the many thoughtful comments and suggestions submitted on the project in combination with applying current design guidelines/standards to achieve a project that enhances the traffic operations and safety of the SR 47 Corridor. Public input is greatly appreciated and allows us to modify project design to meet community needs.

In regard to the public input on the project, the public meeting held on March 16, 2017 had a total of 198 individuals that officially signed in for the meeting and there were a total of 95 written comments submitted on the project. The enclosed updated Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) Summary provides feedback to

the various comments/suggestions/questions that were received on the project. The Preferred Alternative addresses many of the comments/questions that were received as noted on the updated FAQ. There were several common groups of questions not addressed by the Preferred Alternative, and the updated FAQ provides feedback on these questions. Attached with this update letter is the FAQ update sheets as well as a schematic of the Preferred Alternative.

If you have any specific comments/questions not covered by this update letter and responses to comments, please contact Gary Clough (see below). The City of Sidney appreciates your continued interest and participation in enhancing the transportation network of our community.

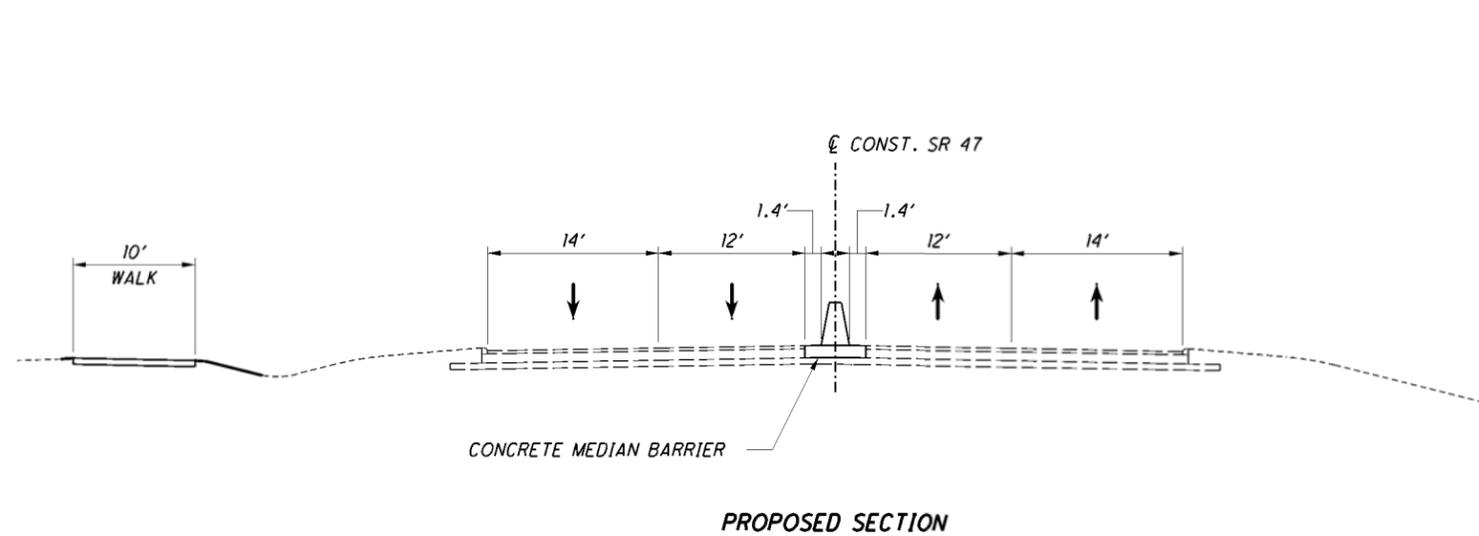
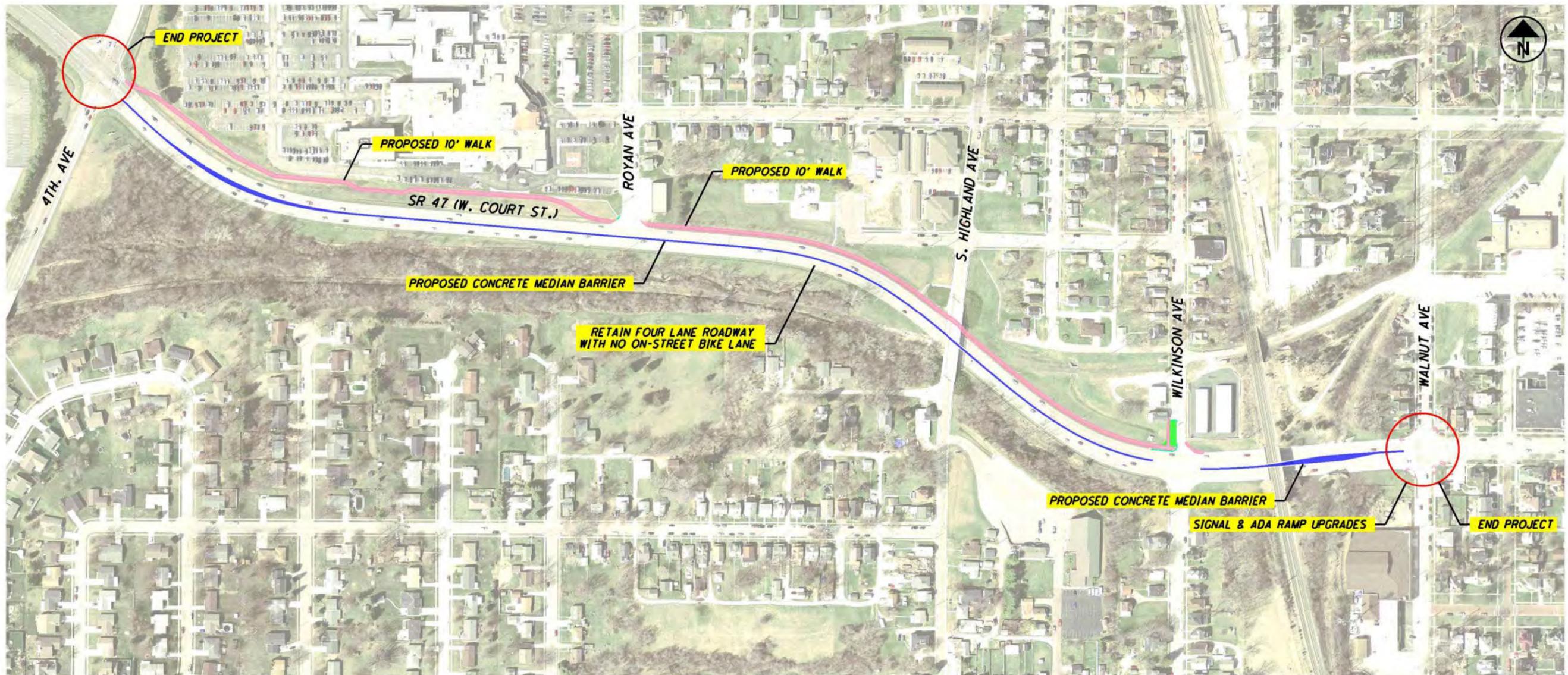
Contacts: Gary Clough
City of Sidney – Public Works Director
(937) 498-8141
gclough@sidneyoh.com



c: Reading File – File

The environmental review, consultation and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by ODOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated 12/11/2015, and executed by FHWA and ODOT.

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REMOVE EXISTING PAVEMENT AND GRASS SEED THE AREA TO ELIMINATE SOUTHBOUND ACCESS TO SR 47



Frequently Asked Questions

(Updated August 2017)

SR 47 (West Court Street) Corridor Improvements from 4th Ave. to Walnut Ave.
SHE-SR 47-14.51 (PID-104615)

Preferred Alternative Description

The resulting Preferred Alternative is a result of the many thoughtful comments and suggestions submitted on the project in combination with applying current design guidelines/standards to achieve a project that enhances the traffic operations and safety of the SR 47 Corridor. The public input was greatly appreciated and allows us to modify project design to meet community needs. Thus, the resulting Preferred Alternative selected for the project includes the following:

- Retain the four-lane roadway from 4th Ave. to Walnut Ave. on W. Court St. (SR 47);
- Upgrade the existing traffic signal at Walnut Ave. & W. Court St. (SR 47);
- Remove the existing median and median guardrail and replace with decorative concrete median barriers with median mounted lighting;
- Replace the existing sidewalk along the north side of SR 47 from 4th Ave. to Wilkinson Ave. with a 10-foot wide walkway;
- The southbound access from Wilkinson Ave. to W. Court St. (SR 47) will be eliminated, as shown on the enclosed figure. The intersection of Wilkinson Ave. & W. Court St. will otherwise remain in its current configuration;
- Provide pavement marking and signing improvements as needed.

The project will not include a roundabout and will not include on-street bike lanes as originally proposed. The project will retain the four lanes of traffic as currently exists, with only minor median enhancements taking place.

The updated list of Questions & Answers provided herein addresses concerns/questions related to the project as currently proposed. All comments/suggestions/questions that related to previously proposed project features (roundabouts, bike lanes, road diet, and landscaped median) that were not incorporated in the final Preferred Alternative will not be addressed in this document, as they have been addressed through the preferred design.

NEED FOR PROJECT

If accidents are due to driver error, why make changes to the roadway?

Reducing crashes, including those caused by driver errors, benefits everyone, by reducing damages and injuries to those involved, reducing emergency response and insurance costs, and reducing delays caused by crashes. When a roadway (such as the project segment of SR 47) exhibits more frequent crashes than are expected for similar roadways based on statewide averages, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) policies require the roadway to be evaluated for design and safety enhancements that could reduce the frequency of crashes.

Was the project developed just to use up grant money?

No. The City of Sidney applied to the Small City Grant program to improve the section of SR 47 from 4th Ave. to Walnut Ave. The project was selected for funding through a competitive ranking process from projects submitted statewide. These funds were specifically awarded to this roadway project section and may only be utilized consistent with the project application and award.



City of Sidney
SR 47 (W. Court St.)
Corridor Improvements

The environmental review, consultation and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by ODOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated 12/11/2015, and executed by FHWA and ODOT.

Are most accidents associated with snow & ice? How will this project reduce accidents associated with snow & ice?

No, most accidents were not associated with snow & ice. Based on the Safety Study findings, Snow & ice was a contributing factor in only 18 crashes out of the 191 total crashes (or 9.4%) for the entire SR 47 Corridor from I-75 to Walnut Ave. Therefore, the proposed improvements did not focus on this issue, as it was not a large portion of the crash patterns.

ALTERNATIVES

Could slip ramps/merge lanes be provided at the Wilkinson and Royan intersections?

Slip ramps/merge lanes were being considered under the single lane in each direction option that was presented at the public meeting. However, as the project will now retain the four-lane cross-section of roadway, these additional lanes will not be needed under the current Preferred Alternative.

Why not just reduce the speed limit on the roadway?

The Ohio Revised Code requires specific criteria to be met to lower a speed limit. A speed study was completed for the corridor in 2013. Based on that study, the lowest permitted speed limit for the corridor is 45 mph (the current speed limit established for the corridor).

Why not use rumble strips, to alert drivers to the reduced speed?

Rumble strips are typically used only to alert motorists of upcoming unexpected stops. The use of rumble strips in the roadway where free-flow traffic is occurring will cause undesired noise for nearby residential areas. Rumble strips can also lead to maintenance issues and will eventually wear down with continued higher speed traffic running over them.

Why not just increase law enforcement?

This is an option that can be considered by local officials and law enforcement to help enforce traffic laws on the corridor. The increased enforcement would involve additional operating costs/labor costs to the community and/or would reduce law enforcement in other problematic areas of the community.

Why not use this money to address other, much needed, maintenance issues?

The funding awarded from ODOT is specifically for improving the SR 47 Corridor from 4th Ave. to Walnut Ave. The City is not permitted to utilize these funds on other roadways in the community. If the funds are not used for improvements on the project segment of SR 47, the funds will be returned to ODOT for award to other projects in the State.

If line-of-sight at the railroad bridge is the problem, why not just deal with the railroad bridge?

The railroad bridge is on an active railroad line and is the property of the railroad operating the line. The City does not have authority over this bridge.

Why not just increase the roadway friction?

The crash patterns do not indicate that sliding off the roadway is a major factor in crashes on the corridor.

Could you provide a convex mirror at Wilkinson, to improve sight beyond the railroad bridge?

This suggestion was considered by the project team but was determined to not adequately address the sight distance issue. This option relies on drivers utilizing the mirror. Also, convex mirrors do not represent an accurate assessment of travel speeds and the distance of the approaching vehicles. The Preferred Alternative addresses the sight distance issues for southbound movements from Wilkinson Ave. by restricting these movements.

Why not provide cameras to catch speeders/hit & run drivers and make drivers more aware of their behavior?

Speed cameras have recently been challenged in the court systems and are now permissible only if an officer is also posted at the camera location. Further, drivers typically only modify their speed behavior within the vicinity of the camera.



Could you add a “through traffic use left lane” sign on the SR 47 approach to Wilkinson Ave., to make it easier for drivers on Wilkinson to see on-coming traffic?

Both lanes on SR 47 are through travel lanes, and the placement of the “through traffic use left lane” would not be enforceable unless the right lane was converted to an exclusive right turn lane to Wilkinson Ave. The Preferred Alternative will address the sight distance issue of southbound movements from Wilkinson Ave. accessing SR 47.

Why not do a separate, more comprehensive project to address bicycle safety on SR 47, instead of just addressing a few blocks?

Funding and timing constraints limit the City’s ability to address the entire corridor under a single project. The recently updated City of Sidney Comprehensive Plan contains a section to address pedestrian and bicycle connectivity improvements that outlines potential future corridors for these modes of transportation.

Could the existing outside curb be removed, to make it easier for cyclists to leave the roadway in an emergency?

No. The curb and gutter is needed to adequately drain the roadway surface. Without the drainage system in place, the water would not drain properly and would accelerate the deterioration of the roadway conditions over time.

DATA

If the project won’t be constructed until 2020, is the estimate even valid?

The cost estimate was projected to the anticipated year of construction, using inflationary factors (as established by ODOT).

Did you use 2012-2014 data because this is what supports what you want? What about 2015-2016?

Safety studies utilize the three most current years of data available. Analysis for the original Safety Study of the SR 47 Corridor for the section from I-75 to Walnut Ave. was initiated in November of 2015; the analysts correctly used the data from 2012 to 2014.

Why were the cost estimates in the mailer different from those in the presentation?

The cost data provided in the presentation was limited to construction and inspection costs, the project components that received funding under the Small City and Transportation Alternative funding programs. The cost estimates of the mailer also included design and right-of-way costs.

Were the accidents used for the study before or after implementation of the 45 mph speed limit?

The crash data used for the study was for the period of 2012-2014, and the reduced speed limit was implemented toward the last half of 2015. Crash data updated for 2014-2016 indicate that similar frequency and crash patterns continued after the speed limit revision was implemented.

Are the accidents presented in the handouts even related to the project segment, or did they occur further west? Why did some speakers report different data than that presented by the design team? Why was there no crash diagram provided?

We cannot comment on the sources or methodology of the information provided by public commenters at the meeting. The SR 47 corridor from I-75 to Walnut Ave. was analyzed in the 2015 Safety Study. The crash data used for the Safety Study followed all ODOT Safety Study guidelines, which require consideration of all crashes within intersection areas (250-feet on all approaches). During the preliminary engineering phase for the proposed project, the design team considered crash data specific to the project segment for the period of 2014-2016. This revealed a total of 94 crashes, including 1 fatality crash; 24 injury crashes; and 69 property damage only crashes. There were a total of 3 bicycle crashes and 1 pedestrian crash on this section during this 2014-2016 period. Crash diagrams from the Safety Study were not included in the presentation, but can be provided upon request; please contact the individuals listed at the end of this handout if you would like a copy of the crash diagrams.



Are bicycle counts available for this corridor? Why were no volume counts provided to show the daily use of the existing roadway by cyclists?

No, there are no bicycle count data available for the corridor. The presence of multiple vehicle/bicycle related crashes (7 crashes total for the period of 2012-2014) throughout the entire corridor (I-75 to Walnut Ave.) from the crash data records was deemed adequate to justify considerations for improving bicycle safety along the corridor. A review of updated crash data for 2014-2016 during the preliminary engineering phase indicates the section from 4th Ave. to Walnut Ave. experienced 3 bicycle related crashes.

Why were no volume counts provided to show the daily use by pedestrians?

The presence of multiple vehicle/pedestrian related crashes (4 crashes total for the period of 2012-2014) throughout the entire corridor (I-75 to Walnut Ave.) from the crash data records was deemed adequate to justify considerations for improving pedestrian safety along the corridor. A review of updated crash data for 2014-2016 during the preliminary engineering phase indicates the section from 4th Ave. to Walnut Ave. experienced one pedestrian related crash.

What are the numbers of large vehicles using the corridor? Can this data be broken down to distinguish between slow moving (semis and similar) and very slow moving vehicles (grain trucks and tractors)?

Based on 2013 ODOT counts, the section of 4th Ave. to Walnut Ave. carries a total of 530 vehicles per day that are classified as trucks (3.9% of the total traffic). The traffic data does not distinguish between types of trucks. It should be noted that the Preferred Alternative will retain the four-lane roadway, allowing slow moving vehicles, such as grain trucks or tractors, to be passed.

What year was the proposed project section listed as "Ohio's #79 ranked high crash section"? What ranking did the section receive other years?

The three year crash period analyzed (2012-2014) in the Safety Study contained the high crash section rankings of #94 in 2012; #167 in 2013; and #79 in 2014.

Does the City have data regarding how and to what extent the project will reduce vehicular, pedestrian, or cycle accidents? Why was the data not included in the consultant's presentation at the public meeting?

An analysis to determine the expected reduction in crashes based on the specific improvements proposed under this project has not been undertaken. An analysis of the corridor utilizing the ECAT (Economic Crash Analysis Tool) program does indicate that the corridor has potential for reductions in crashes through safety improvements

SAFETY

Does the project address all the identified safety concerns? Could the project team provide a clearer discussion of how each is addressed?

The project addresses the safety concerns identified within the corridor:

- **Guardrail Strikes:** Guardrail strikes will address this by removing the guardrail and installing a decorative median concrete barrier that is offset further from the travel lane than the current guardrail. The median will also include LED street lights, for improved corridor visibility during nighttime travel.
- **Pedestrian Safety:** Pedestrian related crashes will be addressed by providing a new 10-foot wide walkway along the north side of the SR 47 Corridor, as well as providing enhanced crosswalks and pedestrian countdown signal heads/pushbuttons at Walnut Ave. traffic signal.
- **Cyclist Safety:** Cyclists will have access to the new 10-foot walkway. Bike safety will be further improved by the new State Law that requires drivers passing bicyclists to provide a minimum of a 3-foot separation. The preferred alternative retains the four travel lanes on SR47, thus motorists can safely pass bicycles in the other lane they are not utilizing.
- **Signal Visibility:** Backplates will be provided at the upgraded traffic signal at Walnut Ave. to improve signal visibility.
- **Inadequate Line-of-Sight at Wilkinson Ave.:** The southbound movements from Wilkinson Ave. to SR 47 are being eliminated to address the limited sight distance issue.



Isn't it more dangerous for cyclists west of Fourth Street, than in the project corridor? What were the ages of the pedestrians/bicyclists involved in the crashes?

Traffic crash data do indicate a higher concentration of bicycle related crashes west of 4th Ave. However, this area is outside of the scope of the current project. The City is considering a future project to improve that portion of SR 47. The four pedestrians involved in crashes were listed as 57, 37, 42, and one had no age listed; and the seven bicyclists were listed as 46, 9, 18, 36, 53, 22, and 33.

What is meant by "improve driver recognition"?

In this context, it refers to improving a driver's ability to see and properly act on the traffic signals. Provision of backplates and higher intensity LED lighting on traffic signals has been demonstrated to improve driver recognition of the signals.

Did the design team discuss this project with the Police and Fire Chiefs?

The concepts of the project were and will continue to be communicated to the various City departments, including emergency services, for input and comment.

Could the catch basin covers be turned perpendicular to traffic, to make travel on the curb line safer for cyclists?

Bike safe grates will be provided in the project.

MAINTENANCE OF TRAFFIC

How will traffic be maintained during construction?

Traffic on SR 47 is expected to be maintained at all times during construction, but may require periodic single lane closures or lane shifts. A single lane of traffic in each direction will be maintained at all times on Walnut Avenue. Southbound traffic for the north leg of Wilkinson will be cutoff at the start of construction of the intersection. The north leg of Wilkinson will also be cutoff (limited to five working days) to construct the new one-way configuration.

AESTHETICS

If you want to improve the look of the corridor, why not just paint the railroad bridge and add a Welcome to Sidney sign?

The railroad bridge is on an active railroad line and is the property of the railroad operating the line. The City does not have authority over this bridge.

Isn't this just a thinly disguised beautification project?

The project addresses safety concerns. However, aesthetics are given consideration in the design process.

Could the chain link fence along the limited access right-of-way line be removed or replaced with more decorative fencing?

The City of Sidney will explore removal of the existing chain link fence along the northern edge of the corridor, as well as providing a decorative fence adjacent to the park area located just east of Royan Ave.

CONGESTION

Do your delay estimates consider how long it takes for large vehicles to get up to speed, particularly when travelling up-grade?

The traffic analysis software utilized to calculate delays does factor into the analysis the grade of a roadway and the mix of large vehicles in the overall traffic volumes to account for these slower moving vehicles. As the Preferred Alternative is retaining the four lane roadway, this concern is less of an issue.



Has the project considered the use of the corridor by the Amish/Old Order German Baptists, in horse & buggy or farm tractor?

The project analysis has taken into consideration slower moving and wider vehicles like trucks and tractors. As the Preferred Alternative is retaining the four lane roadway, this concern is less of an issue.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

Why weren't more people notified about this project?

Over 900 residents/businesses in the project vicinity were mailed project information packages that also announced the public involvement meeting. In addition, various media outlets/websites were used to notify the community of the public meeting.

Who pays the difference between the federal money and the actual project cost? What if the project goes over budget – Who is responsible for the difference? Where do City funds come from for the local match and for the planning/grant applications that were prepared?

In addition to the required local match, the City of Sidney will be responsible for all costs above the awarded Small City and Transportation Alternative funds. Local funds from the City for the local match and for the planning/grant preparation is from the general fund.

How long ago did this project start? Why was public input prior to public meeting limited to small fraction of people?

The Safety Study for the SR 47 Corridor (I-75 to Walnut Ave.) started in December 2015 and was finalized in February 2016. The Safety Study does not involve broad public input as the study is simply an assessment of crash patterns and roadway conditions with the focus on developing concept countermeasures to address safety. The Preliminary Engineering phase of the project is when broad public input is sought, which occurred at the March 16, 2017 public meeting.

Why did I have to send my comment form to Maumee?

The civil engineering firm and project manager selected to design the project are best equipped to answer many of the questions raised by the public; their offices are located in the Maumee, Ohio. However, citizens were also provided the option to provide comments directly to the City Administration office.

What are the City's future plans for bicycle facilities in the area? Are estimated construction dates available?

The City of Sidney recently updated its Comprehensive Plan that outlines future concepts for pedestrian and bicycle facilities to provide enhanced connectivity throughout the community. Currently, the anticipated start of construction for the SR 47 improvements from 4th Avenue to Walnut Avenue is for March 2020.

Will the overall pavement width change?

Under the Preferred Alternative, there will be no change in the overall pavement width.

Does ODOT have a position on this project?

ODOT has no position on the project. ODOT's role is limited to oversight of the project, to ensure the project complies with the requirements of the federal funding.

Who can I contact if I have additional questions?

Raymond Luk, PE – Project Manager The Mannik & Smith Group, Inc. 1800 Indian Wood Circle; Maumee, OH 43537 Phn: 419-891-2222 Email: rluk@manniksmithgroup.com	Gary Clough – Public Works Director City of Sidney 120 W. Poplar Street; Sidney, OH 45365 Phn: 937-498-8141 Email: gclough@sidneyoh.com
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 SR 47 (W. Court St.)
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