

Tuesday, Oct. 19, 2004

Cleveland breaks ground for long-awaited transformation along the Euclid Corridor

CLEVELAND -- A project that has been talked about for more than 50 years finally became reality today. Euclid Avenue -- Cleveland's historic main thoroughfare -- is getting a \$200-million facelift.

In the late 1800s, prominent travel writer Bayard Taylor once called Euclid Avenue, "one of the most beautiful streets in the world," with many homes built by millionaires. Today, Euclid Avenue connects Cleveland's downtown area with a prosperous entertainment district, two major universities, world-class medical centers and museums, and a host of cultural institutions in the University Circle area.

Officials have long sought a method to tie improved public transportation to the revitalization of this important Corridor.

That idea was the key focus today, as elected officials from every level of government gathered to break ground for the Euclid Corridor Transportation Project. The Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA) is the lead agency in the Project, which will transform Euclid Avenue from storefront-to-storefront for more than seven miles.

With the help of more than \$80 million in New Starts money from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Project will use a pioneering mode of travel called "Bus Rapid Transit" (BRT) to move more than 20,000 people a day along Euclid Avenue. BRT combines the best features of bus and rail, and is more cost-effective than light rail. The new service will be called the Silver Line, joining RTA's existing color-coded rail lines.

Keynote speaker at today's event was U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta, who also signed a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) with RTA CEO and General Manager Joe Calabrese and RTA Board of Trustees President George F. Dixon III.

The Cleveland project is historic because:

It is the first BRT project in the nation to be funded from the federal New Starts pot -- a much sought-after pool of money that usually goes to fund rail construction.

It is the first project in the nation to utilize all the features of BRT. In recent years, other cities have built transit improvements with only partial BRT features, and even then, ridership increases have exceeded expectations.

Project description

Euclid Avenue will be rebuilt from storefront-to-storefront for 7.07 miles. The new streetscape will be totally ADA accessible and pedestrian-friendly with wider sidewalks, dedicated transit lane in each direction, a median strip where 36 bus stations will be located. About 2.31 miles of adjoining streets will also be improved, for a total project area of 9.38 miles.

Hybrid-electric, articulated 60-foot Rapid Transit Vehicles (RTVs) will serve the stations every five minutes. (A typical bus is now 40 feet long) Customers waiting at uniquely-designed stations will enjoy state-of-the-art signage with real-time service information. Because of off-board fare collection, larger vehicles, fewer stops, dedicated lanes and signal preemption, trip times will be reduced by an estimated 26 percent. This will also serve to increase RTA's efficiency and lower operating costs

Economic benefits

In anticipation of the Silver Line being completed, more than \$400 million in new projects have already been completed along the Corridor, and many more building are either under construction or in the planning stages.

Officials expect to see an eventual capital investment of \$1.3 billion, with 7.9 million square feet of commercial development, more than 5,400 residential units, and more than \$62 million annually in new local taxes.

Officials expect to see a 9.6 percent increase in population along the Corridor. About 4,000 construction jobs will be created, with 9,000 more jobs created after the Project is complete. RTA officials project significant ridership increases along Euclid Avenue, which already sees more than 20,000 riders each day.

Funding information

48.8 percent	\$ 82.2 million	FTA New Starts
29.7 percent	\$ 50.0 million	Ohio (TRAC funds) (1)
10.4 percent	\$ 16.6 million	RTA
5.9 percent	\$ 10.0 million	NOACA (2)
4.8 percent	\$ 8.0 million	City of Cleveland
0.4 percent	\$ 0.6 million	FTA Rail Modernization
100 percent	\$168.4 million	BRT portion of Project

- (1) Transportation Review Advisory Council, Ohio Department of Transportation
- (2) Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency

In addition, the State of Ohio is contributing \$21 million for streetscape, landscape and urban design. The City of Cleveland is spending \$10 million for the repair and/or replacement of vaults underneath the sidewalk, and \$7 million to replace aging water lines and rehab sewer lines underneath Euclid Ave.

Construction schedule

October 2004, Groundbreaking. Begin work on improving roads in the downtown Transit Zone --sidestreets that will see a heavy usage during construction work on Euclid Ave.

Spring 2005, Euclid Ave., from the Innerbelt to E. 79th St.

Spring 2006, Euclid Ave., from Public Square to the Innerbelt.

Summer 2006, Euclid Ave., E. 79th St. to East Cleveland

2008, Project completion.

They said it

"Right here and right now, we are witnessing the beginning of the 'new' Euclid Avenue. In its hey-day, Euclid had the distinction of being the most beautiful street in all of America. And with this groundbreaking, this venerable thoroughfare begins its return to glory as the crown jewel of Cleveland. In a city that is almost synonymous with urban renaissance and rebirth, this new, state-of-the-art bus rapid transit line will breathe new life into the area. Funding the Euclid Corridor Project was one of President Bush's top transit priorities this year."

Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation

The Euclid Corridor Project "is a vision I have had for 30 years. This is a special day for me. There were times I thought this would never happen."

U.S. Senator George V. Voinovich, R-Ohio

Former Mayor of Cleveland, former Governor of Ohio

"The Euclid Corridor Project represents a critical next step toward Cleveland being recognized as the world-class community that we know it to be and I'm delighted to have played a role in making it happen. Our ongoing challenge, however, is to ensure that the residents of the City of Cleveland benefit from the economic opportunities created by this important Project."

Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones, D-11, Ohio

"The real key to the success of this Project is the phenomenal level of local cooperation. Today signals the start of a new era of transit in Cleveland."

Bob Taft, Governor, State of Ohio

"The Euclid Corridor Project is not just any project in the City of Cleveland. It is one of biggest projects our City has seen in many years, and one of the largest investments by the federal government in our city as well. Clevelanders will certainly benefit from this opportunity as move forward to revitalize this vital corridor."

Jane Campbell, Mayor, City of Cleveland

"NOACA is proud to have put in \$10 million for the construction of this Project. But even more significant is that the decision to contribute these funds was made by elected and appointed officials from a five-county area. This decision shows that the Euclid Corridor is truly a regional Project."

Howard Maier, Executive Director, NOACA

"Today is just the beginning of making the Silver Line a reality. We are determined to keep our eye on the ball, and maintain our focus until this transit line is complete."

Joseph A. Calabrese, CEO, Greater Cleveland RTA

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