

Thursday, July 11, 2002

Feds give RTA OK to proceed with Euclid Corridor Project

CLEVELAND -- The massive Euclid Corridor Transportation Project, which will breathe new life into Cleveland's "Main Street", has cleared a major hurdle.

U.S. Senator **Michael DeWine** has informed RTA and City officials that the letter authorizing Final Design of the Euclid Project was signed by Jennifer L. Dorn, Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

The Project is the largest capital improvement in Cleveland public transit history, and today's announcement brings it one step closer to completion, says RTA CEO & General Manager **Joe Calabrese**.

"We couldn't be happier," Calabrese says. "People have talked about improving transportation on Euclid Avenue for years, and now, we are close to making this a reality. The consultants are already on board, and work on Final Design aspects will start immediately. We will continue to refine the design to best serve the community."

Cleveland Mayor **Jane Campbell** agrees.

"The Euclid Corridor Project is a priority, not only for the City of Cleveland, but for the entire region," Mayor Campbell says. "When completed, it will provide a tremendous economic stimulus and improve the quality of life for citizens of Northeast Ohio."

The Project enjoys widespread community support, says **George F. Dixon III**, President of the RTA Board of Trustees and a key player in the American Public Transit Association, a national trade group.

"We have achieved so much because everyone has pulled together," Dixon says. "Our Board and staff have worked closely with Mayor Campbell and Council President Frank Jackson to keep them informed on all aspects of this Project. We thank them, as well as Dennis Eckart at the Greater Cleveland Growth Association, and our private-sector partners, for all their support. We especially thank our federal legislators, who have worked hand-in-hand with us to move this Project forward -- Senators George Voinovich and Mike DeWine, House Appropriations Committee member Ralph Regula, Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones, and Congressmen Steve LaTourette and Dennis Kucinich.

Project details

The \$220-million Euclid Corridor Bus Rapid Transit Project is a joint effort. About 60 percent of the Project is being funded with federal grants, with the remaining 40 percent coming from the State of Ohio, the City of Cleveland and the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority. RTA's portion is from the capital budget, which is separate from RTA's operating budget.

RTA hopes to break ground in early 2004. Construction projects will continue to the end of 2006, when work should be complete.

Cleveland is one of 10 cities selected by the FTA as a pilot for a new transportation concept called Bus Rapid Transit, or BRT. BRT systems combine the most attractive features of bus and rail, using bus-only lanes, traffic signal prioritization and off-board fare collection. Euclid Avenue will receive a total facelift and become more pedestrian-friendly.

The Project consists of a 6.7-mile Bus Rapid Transit system operating from Public Square to the Stokes/Windermere Rapid Transit station in East Cleveland. It includes transit improvements along the parallel arterials of St. Clair and Superior avenues in downtown Cleveland. Using an

exclusive center median busway, the Bus Rapid Transit line will connect Cleveland's two largest employment centers -- downtown and University Circle.

The Project will use an environmentally friendly 60-foot articulated hybrid electric vehicle that is not constrained by overhead catenary wires.

"This project will become a model for other cities throughout the country to follow," says Calabrese. "It will provide a catalyst for continuing economic development, access to jobs, and housing opportunities for residents throughout Cuyahoga County and beyond. The transportation improvements will enable suburban transit riders to arrive at their downtown destinations more efficiently than is currently possible."

Stakeholders applaud approval

Today's announcement was greeted warmly by community leaders and stakeholders along Euclid Avenue.

"When Clevelanders work together, good things happen," says **Dennis Eckart**, President and CEO of the Greater Cleveland Growth Association. "Mayor Campbell, our Congressional delegation, and RTA are taking a major step towards Euclid Avenue's rebirth."

"This is wonderful news for downtown," says **Lee Hill**, President and CEO of Downtown Cleveland Partnership, the not-for profit advocate for economic and commercial real estate development in downtown. "Moving ahead with this project at this point is very important to building the momentum for a growing number of projects developing on and around the Euclid Avenue corridor. Successful completion of this project is absolutely critical to the continued revitalization of downtown."

Tom Yablonsky is Executive Director of the Historic Gateway Neighborhood Development Corp., which represents stakeholders along Euclid Avenue, from Public Square to E. 12th St.

"We are greatly encouraged by this approval," Yablonsky says. "We remain strong in our support of the Project, as it will continue the positive development momentum for lower Euclid Avenue."

"This is great news for Cleveland and, in particular, for University Circle, says **Dave Abbott**, President of University Circle Inc. "It strengthens the prospects for our planned residential and retail development, and it brings us closer to the day when Euclid Avenue will no longer run like an ugly scar through the center of a district that must become more pedestrian friendly."

Midtown Cleveland represents stakeholders along Euclid Avenue from the Innerbelt to E. 79th St.

"This renewed commitment from the federal government signals to the Greater Cleveland community that Euclid Corridor is back on track, and the timing could not be better, says **Robert V. Munson**, Chairman of Board of Directors. "We at MidTown Cleveland are focusing our economic development efforts on Euclid Avenue, particularly around the MidTown Technology Center. Great public transportation will only fuel our plans."

"MidTown Cleveland is no doubt excited at the FTA's commitment to the Project, " says **James A. Haviland**, Executive Director. "Representing MidTown's Euclid Avenue stakeholders, we look forward to continued collaboration with RTA and their consulting team in planning a smart system."

Project background

Other key stakeholders are East Cleveland, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), Cleveland State University, Case

Western Reserve University, University Hospitals, Cleveland Clinic, Fairfax Renaissance Development Corp., the Quadrangle and Cleveland Tomorrow.

Final Design work will be conducted by a team led by Wilbur Smith Associates as the prime consultant. The team includes 15 sub-consultants, including 10 Cleveland-area firms. Wilbur Smith Associates has a Cleveland office. Total contract for Final Design work is \$9.1 million, with 20.33 percent going to eight Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs). Their design team continues the efforts in the earlier stage of Preliminary Engineering, concerning roadway, streetscape, signage, lighting and utility design, traffic engineering, bus stations, communications, public art coordination, environmental compliance, precision docking, public involvement and other areas.

Need more information?

Residents seeking more information on the Euclid Corridor Transportation Project can visit www.rideRTA.com or www.euclidtransit.org. Contact Project Officer **Danielle Willis** at 216-771-4144, fax 216-771-4145, or dwillis@gcrta.org

For media inquiries only contact:

Jerry Masek
RTA Media Relations Manager
P: 216.566.5211
F: 216.566.5240
jmasek@gcrta.org