

Minutes
Committee of the Whole
June 2, 2025

The Committee of the Whole met on June 2, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Conference Room at the City Building. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Melissa Monich. Attendance was as follows:

Members Present: Dan Driehaus, Joe Hornsby, Melissa Monich, Cindy Peebles, April Robles, Jodi Woffington, Chris Woodside

Staff Present: Rusty Herzog-City Manager; Brooke Brady-Police Chief; Rob Nicolls-Public Works Director

Discussion of ODOT's I-75 Thru the Valley Project

The meeting opened with a detailed update on the Ohio Department of Transportation's (ODOT) long-term plan for the I-75 corridor, specifically the area extending through Lockland and Arlington Heights. Mr. Herzog explained that the current highway configuration, where the northbound and southbound lanes are separated as they pass through the valley, will be merged. This merger will bring the two directions of traffic closer together through Lockland. He noted that the Thru the Valley project has been worked on in phases, beginning with work on the northern and southern ends of the corridor, and is now arriving at the central portion, running through Lockland.

Mr. Herzog provided historical context, referencing early advocacy efforts led by former Councilman Jim O'Reilly to preserve the Galbraith Road exit. Those efforts succeeded and helped shape the project's current direction. More recently, discussion shifted to the Reading Lockland exit (Exit #12) for southbound traffic, which was proposed to be relocated to Millsdale Avenue. There were longstanding concerns, dating back to Mr. O'Reilly's tenure, about highway traffic exiting at Millsdale and flowing through East Mills into Wyoming, potentially overwhelming the residential area with congestion, speeders, and large vehicles like semi-trucks.

In response to those concerns, public input sessions were held several years ago. The City encouraged residents to provide feedback on a set of five exit design options presented by ODOT. Three of those options prevented highway traffic from entering Millsdale/East Mills. The community advocated strongly for these more protective designs, and ODOT ultimately chose one of them.

Recently, however, the project reemerged in the public eye when Lockland objected to the previously selected design. This triggered renewed discussions, and Lockland managed to present alternative solutions. Meanwhile, Mr. Hornsby submitted a proposal for a roundabout design at the Millsdale exit, which has now become one of the formal alternatives under consideration.

Mr. Hornsby reflected on the length of his involvement, noting it was his third Committee of the Whole meeting on the subject over a span of seven years. He and Mr. Herzog emphasized how valuable persistent advocacy can be, given that the roundabout was originally a grassroots suggestion. Mr. Hornsby praised ODOT for now incorporating that design into the alternatives.

Mr. Herzog shared his screen to walk through the latest ODOT public input website, which includes two updated alternatives for the Millsdale (now being renamed Wayne Avenue) interchange. He explained both alternatives protect the residential streets by preventing traffic from flowing down Millsdale/East Mills.

The first option provides turning access from southbound I-75 to Wayne Avenue, then allowing drivers to turn either north or south on Wayne. Importantly, traffic cannot turn from Millsdale onto the ramp to Galbraith, preserving the integrity of the residential zone. Ms. Monich and Mr. Hornsby reiterated that the key concern was preventing semi-truck traffic and speeders from using East Mills as a cut-through, which could have significantly disrupted the neighborhood.

The second option, which includes Mr. Hornsby's suggested roundabout, integrates it at this interchange. Mr. Herzog strongly supported this alternative, citing the inherent safety benefits of roundabouts, including fewer and less severe accidents, and the calming effect it would have on traffic along Anthony Wayne Avenue. He explained that the roundabout also eliminates the long, uninterrupted stretch between red lights that currently encourages speeding. Both options prohibit southbound I-75 traffic from exiting onto Millsdale.

Mr. Hornsby elaborated on the design's origin, noting the Federal Highway Administration had initially pushed for a full-access roundabout, but that design would have violated ODOT's residential protection principles by allowing highway traffic directly onto Millsdale. Community input successfully dissuaded that approach.

The roundabout alternative would require demolition of a currently vacant and unsightly property—formerly a house of worship—on the corner. Ms. Peebles inquired about the neighboring properties, and Mr. Herzog confirmed the adjacent buildings are a mix of residential units and apartments. He added that a well-landscaped roundabout could improve the area's appearance and buffer the highway's visual impact.

Mr. Driehaus commented that, in addition to slowing traffic, the roundabout would significantly reduce thru-traffic onto Millsdale/East Mills, preserving the character and safety of Wyoming's residential streets. Ms. Monich added that from a practical standpoint, drivers could use an alternate nearby street to access the roundabout and proceed north or south as needed.

Mr. Hornsby noted that the roundabout would encourage drivers, especially from Wyoming, to use more appropriate gateway routes rather than cutting through East

Mills or Burns Avenue. He believes the change would benefit Hartwell and other surrounding neighborhoods.

Mr. Herzog emphasized that both designs currently on the table protect Millsdale, which the City has highlighted on its website. However, the roundabout is preferred for its pedestrian safety and traffic management benefits.

The conversation then turned to the Galbraith Road exit. The group reviewed three design alternatives for the Galbraith Road exit. Mr. Herzog explained that although these are marked as “no change” in design, minor adjustments have been made. Notably, the Galbraith Road exit remains preserved in all alternatives and has been moved to the right side of I-75.

Alternate 1 maintains the current connector structure but requires drivers to access Galbraith before continuing to I-75. Alternate 2 introduces a new underpass, allowing drivers from Millsdale/Wayne to go directly to Ronald Reagan Highway without stopping at Galbraith. Alternate 2B shifts a signal light slightly and impacts a portion of the McCluskey Chevrolet dealership. Alternate 2C consolidates traffic movement through a large intersection, reducing the number of signals but increasing complexity at one node.

Mr. Hornsby highlighted that the original Galbraith configuration offered Wyoming residents more direct access to southbound I-75. Now, the new design introduces more traffic lights, increasing travel time. However, Alternate 2C may offer a slightly better flow by eliminating one light.

Mr. Herzog encouraged members and residents to provide comments on ODOT’s website by the July 9 deadline. He reminded the group that while public input is influential, ODOT’s decision-making isn’t purely based on popular vote but also on technical feasibility and design improvement suggestions.

Mr. Hornsby closed that portion of the discussion by urging residents to think holistically about the network—considering how the Wayne Avenue interchange and Galbraith options work together—and to provide thoughtful feedback based on their day-to-day experience.

In closing, Ms. Robles asked whether there would be opportunities for Wyoming to partner with neighboring communities to promote local branding along the new corridor, referencing Evendale’s investment in overpass signage. Mr. Herzog acknowledged the idea and suggested that any such effort include cooperation from Reading and Lockland to improve prospects.

Ms. Monich and Mr. Driehaus supported the idea of a collaborative overpass aesthetic that enhances each community’s identity without appearing self-promotional or exclusive. Mr. Herzog confirmed he would bring up the idea in future ODOT discussions,

noting that signage decisions come later in the design process but could be influenced with early planning and potential funding.

The meeting adjourned with a reminder that construction is tentatively scheduled to begin in 2030, leaving time for additional feedback, planning, and engagement with ODOT. Mr. Herzog committed to remaining available for further questions and updates.

Executive Session

The meeting adjourned to Executive Session at 6:43 p.m. under Section 121.03(b)(2) of the Codified Ordinances for the City of Wyoming to Consider the Sale of a Public Property and Under Section 121.03(b)(1) to Consider the Evaluation of a Public Official. Executive Session ended at 7:10 p.m.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Herzog announced that work on the remaining streets designated for replacement under the Phase One Street Reconstruction Project will commence tomorrow. He requested the community's patience and understanding as the project progresses.

Adjourn

With no further agenda items to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debby Martin, Executive Assistant

Melissa Monich, Mayor