

# Inner Belt bridge plan picked

Committee recommends most costly of three proposals to ODOT

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A broad-based committee chose the most expensive of three bridge concepts Thursday for the centerpiece of Ohio's Inner Belt project.

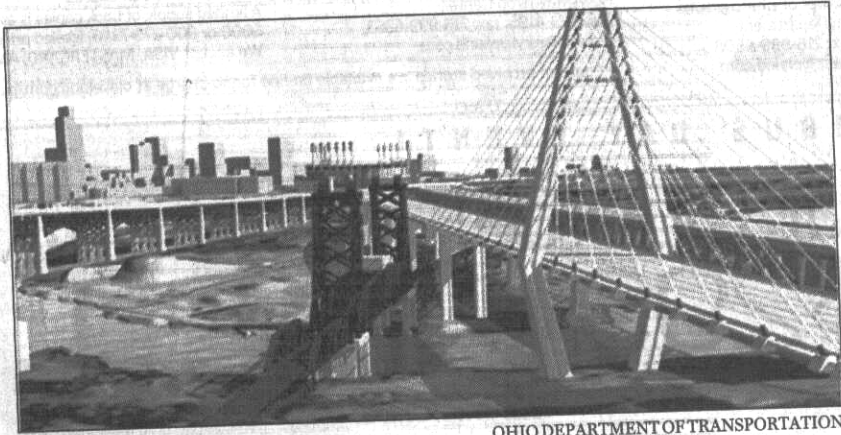
The group, composed of public officials and representatives of community development groups, recommended a single-tower cable-stayed bridge.

It is expected to cost \$334 million, 12 percent more than the Ohio Department of Transportation's budgeted \$297 million.

A soaring tower with cables radiating down to the roadway will be the most visible component of the massive Inner Belt rebuilding.

The entire project, which will last nearly a decade, will rework what is now the state's highest-accident area.

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OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

An artist's rendering of the single-tower cable-stayed bridge design selected for the Inner Belt project.

**Construction:**  
To begin in  
2009 and be  
finished about  
2013.

**Cost:** Estimated at \$334 million,  
12 percent over the budgeted  
\$297 million and the most  
expensive of three alternatives  
under consideration.

**Size:** Main span to  
be about 450 feet  
long, with a second  
span of about 300  
feet.

## BRIDGE

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### Most expensive option is chosen for span

Construction is to begin in 2009, with completion in 2013. The new span will carry westbound traffic from the Shoreway onto Interstate 90. The existing bridge will carry eastbound traffic.

The overall plan is expected to cost more than \$900 million and be finished around 2018. It will include realignment of the Inner Belt curve known more commonly as Deadman's Curve.

Additional plans call for closing or reshaping some ramps off the so-called trench that runs through the heart of the city, joining the Shoreway with Interstates 90, 71 and 77.

This is among the sources of controversy because community development groups, especially in the Midtown sector east of downtown, complain that reducing the number of access ramps will reduce access to the many businesses there.

Two other designs under consideration were a two-towered cable-stayed bridge costing a projected \$328 million and a steel tied-arch bridge that would cost an estimated \$315 million.

ODOT employees and contractors paid by the state abstained from voting, leaving the decision in the hands of 10 people who included representatives of the city of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, three community development groups and the Regional Transit Authority.

The conclusion was labeled a recommendation. ODOT will announce a final decision in December.

One committee member said the group did not pick a design, but a skeleton upon which a design would be based.

Ed Hauser, a community activist and frequent critic of the project, complained that the public was not given adequate opportunity to comment. Representatives of ODOT said a new schedule for public input would be drafted and publicized next week.

County Planning Director Paul Alsenas said any design should take into account that the new span will cross a river that defined the western boundary of the United States for eight years after the American Revolution. He said the rest of the process should invite greater public participation even beyond legal requirements.

Alsenas has been a critic of the bridge project and has said repeatedly that many aspects of it seemed to be preordained even before the hearings and recommendations have been drafted.

The state has used "iconic" and "signature" to describe its ambitions for the bridge design. With the choice of a cable-stayed span, Cleveland will get something similar to a bridge in Toledo, which is to be completed early next year.

Variations can be found all over the country, including one across the Mississippi at Alton, Ill., the subject of a PBS documentary.

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To watch a video  
of the new bridge  
cleveland.com/news