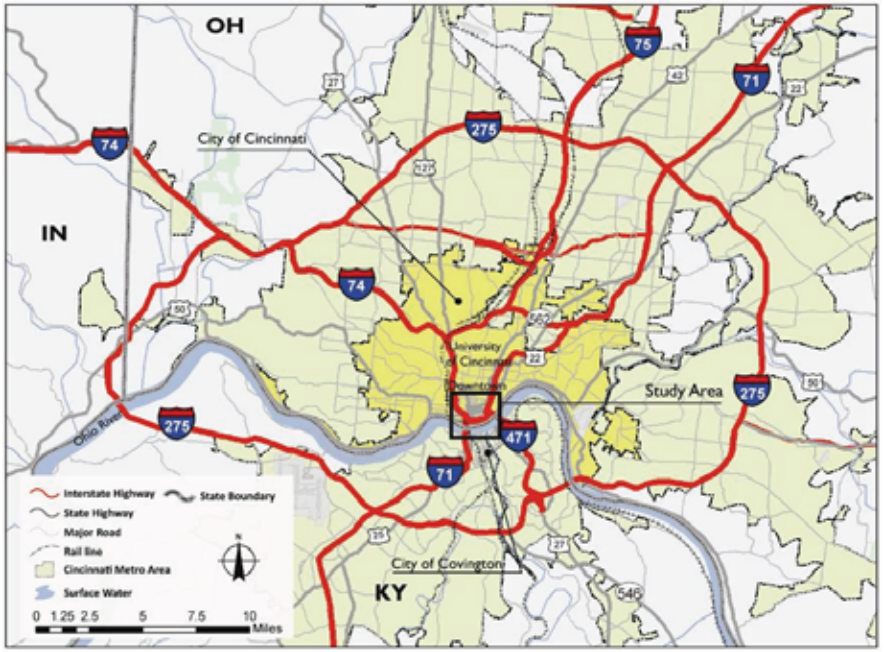
Fort Washington Way, I-71

	I-71	I-81
Project Type	reconfiguration of a depressed highway	existing elevated highway - TBD
Interstate Highway?	yes (I-71)	yes
Through Traffic?	yes	yes
Vehicles /day	130,000	100,000
Project Length	1.3 miles	1.4 mi.
Context	downtown: Ohio River waterfront	downtown
City	cincinnati, OH	Syracuse, NY
Population	288,000	140,658
Timeline	planning and design 1995-1997; construction 1997 -2000	unknown
Cost/Cost per mile	$146 million (2004$)/$112 million per mile	unknown

Regional Context



Project Location

The Fort Washington Way is the section of I-71 that passes between downtown Cincinnati and the Ohio River waterfront. In the 1990s, the existing highway provided two through lanes in each direction, with numerous auxiliary lanes and ramps. The through lanes were depressed, and there were several existing overpasses. Traffic volumes exceeded capacity, and the numerous ramps and weaving maneuvers required made it both unsafe and congested for travelers. In addition, the wide right-of-way occupied by the highway and the access ramps created a major barrier between the waterfront and downtown Cincinnati.

The improvements included widening the highway to four through lanes in each direction and the elimination of several exits and entrances to simplify and improve traffic flow. The total right-of-way width was substantially reduced by defining the highway edge using vertical retaining walls rather than sloped embankments. The

additional space was reclaimed as a riverfront park, with new venues for the city's professional sports teams. There are now five streets crossing the highway, which have broad sidewalks and landscaping. These provide a significantly improved pedestrian environment and safe access to the riverfront park. The street connections also help restore connectivity between the riverfront park and the downtown street network, which has improved traffic congestion after sports events.

What was the decision-making process?

The project was initiated in 1995 as a Major Investment Study (MIS) by the Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana Council of Governments (OKI), the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). A highly collaborative process explored 25 different alternatives, which were evaluated for their effects on pedestrian access, land use, riverfront redevelopment opportunities, and local street network access, in addition to conventional highway performance measures. Five alternatives were selected for further study, and eventually the final design was developed through a cooperative effort between the City of Cincinnati, OKI, ODOT and other stakeholders. The project schedule was highly compressed, with the project largely completed by the end of 2000, only five years after initiation.

What were the outcomes?

This project is considered highly successful, in terms of the collaborative process, the relatively streamlined schedule from start to finish, and the benefits that the project has brought to the city. The process was marked by high degrees of cooperation and motivation among the key stakeholders, including the Ohio DOT, Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, the OKI Council of Governments, the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority, City of Cincinnati, and Hamilton County. The state of Kentucky participated in the funding, even though the project was entirely within the borders of Ohio. The project is considered a major catalyst for significant investment in other developments, including several downtown buildings, the sports stadiums, and the riverfront park.

Before (left) and After (right) the Fort Washington Way Improvements

Wider footprint, with fewer through lanes *More through lanes, but narrower footprint*

Source: David Sailors, with permission.

Are there parallels to *The I-81 Challenge*?

This project involved a high volume interstate highway in a major urban area. A primary difference from I-81 is that the existing I-71 lanes were depressed. Ultimately, this project can be viewed as an enhancement to the corridor to reduce its negative impacts rather than a complete redesign of the corridor. The project included some major reconfiguration and reduction of access points, as well as

widening. The need for major realignment of the lanes was avoided, since the project capitalized on the fact that the lanes were already below the street grade level.

What can we learn from this project?

Traffic Circulation and Urban Mobility: This project focused on improving and adapting the existing highway to reduce its impact and be more compatible with riverfront redevelopment. The project also simplified downtown access points to improve the freeway function and included improvements to parallel surface streets.

Economic Development/Urban Design: The project was initiated with twin goals of improving the traffic flow and facilitating the redevelopment and recreational use of the riverfront. The results have been very successful, with widely perceived benefits to the city.

Public Process: This project benefited from an effective stakeholder involvement process, which allowed all the relevant agencies to participate and work together to assure rapid implementation of the project. Because the project was integrated with economic development and improved riverfront access, it enjoyed much broader support than would have been likely if it were merely a freeway expansion.

For More Information:

http://americancityandcounty.com/mag/government_road_rehab_reintroduces/

http://www.pbworld.com/news_events/publications/network/issue_59/5

1999 Redevelopment Plan showing a future cap on the I-71 Corridor
*Source: **http://www.cincinnati-transit.net/fww.html***