

Toll-Free Better Bridge Solution

February 9, 2010

Boiling a Frog: Time to 'Jump' to a Toll-Free Better Bridge Solution

By Steve Wiser, AIA

How did we as a community arrive at this point? We are about to build two bridges and quadruple the size of spaghetti junction. This \$4.1 billion dollar monster will be paid by tolls on the bridges. Only the Chicago region and Louisville will be the only inland cities with tolls. St. Louis, Cincinnati, Memphis, Pittsburgh, etc., do not have tolls.

Have we lost all perspective on how this will negatively harm our community's growth? This drastic situation did not occur overnight. It's been a slow, steady 50 year process that has resulted in this worst case scenario.

Costs have skyrocketed almost 2,000 percent since the initial projection of \$200 million was made for the east end bridge in 1990. The tunnel alone has soared 300% in just the last three years.

If today, without all this past history, a task force recommended a \$4.1 billion dollar, two bridge, massive overhaul of spaghetti junction, toll-funded proposal, both governors would respond: 'are you NUTS!?! You want to divide our two states with tolls? Go back and find a more realistic solution!'

So, its surprising no one in a leadership position says 'whoa, let's take a step back. Is this really the best way to create cross-river connections?'

No one wants any more delays or increased costs. In fact, folks want the bridges built faster, at a lower cost, with no tolls. The reason given for this lock-step approach to this bewildering scheme is that it's the only solution both states can agree on. And, the 'Record of Decision' (ROD) by the federal highway department can't be revised.

Well, a simple 'Google' search reveals that changes happen on RODs all the time, so that doesn't seem to be a major roadblock. Certainly the costs and schedule for this project have constantly spiraled upward without any leader complaining that these ballooning excesses are harmful to the project's implementation.

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Steve Wiser, AIA

WiserAIA@Hotmail.com www.WiserDesigns.com

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As to the only bi-state solution, well, Kentucky and Indiana work together routinely, without such drama, tolls, or complicated process, to build bridges across the Ohio River such as the recent Owensboro Natcher Bridge, and the upcoming Madison, Indiana Bridge.

So, in taking a cue from Gov. Daniels charge to the bridge authority to consider every option and approach this task in a business-like manner, and not government-like, I submit my proposal:

- Build the east end bridge without the tunnel
- Instead of the tunnel, relocate the Drumanard mansion, recreating the landscape, as the 'Olmsted Interpretative Center'
- Build two new 'local-access' bridges adjacent to the Clark and K & I bridges
- Build new access connector for I-71 and I-64 for the east downtown-med center-arena-waterfront districts
- Build an elevated 'busway' along the waterfront connecting these two new local-access bridges

My guestimate for this proposal would cost \$1.4 billion, saving \$2.7 billion (based on ORBP figures). It would spur economic development in west Louisville, east downtown, and southern Indiana.

This is doable within a 5 year timeframe, and without tolls. It also lessens the environmental footprint, and thus avoids an ROD complication. For more detailed information, click onto www.WiserDesigns.com/WiserDesigns

To continue on the current path will put at a great disadvantage our logistics-based economy and overall quality of life.

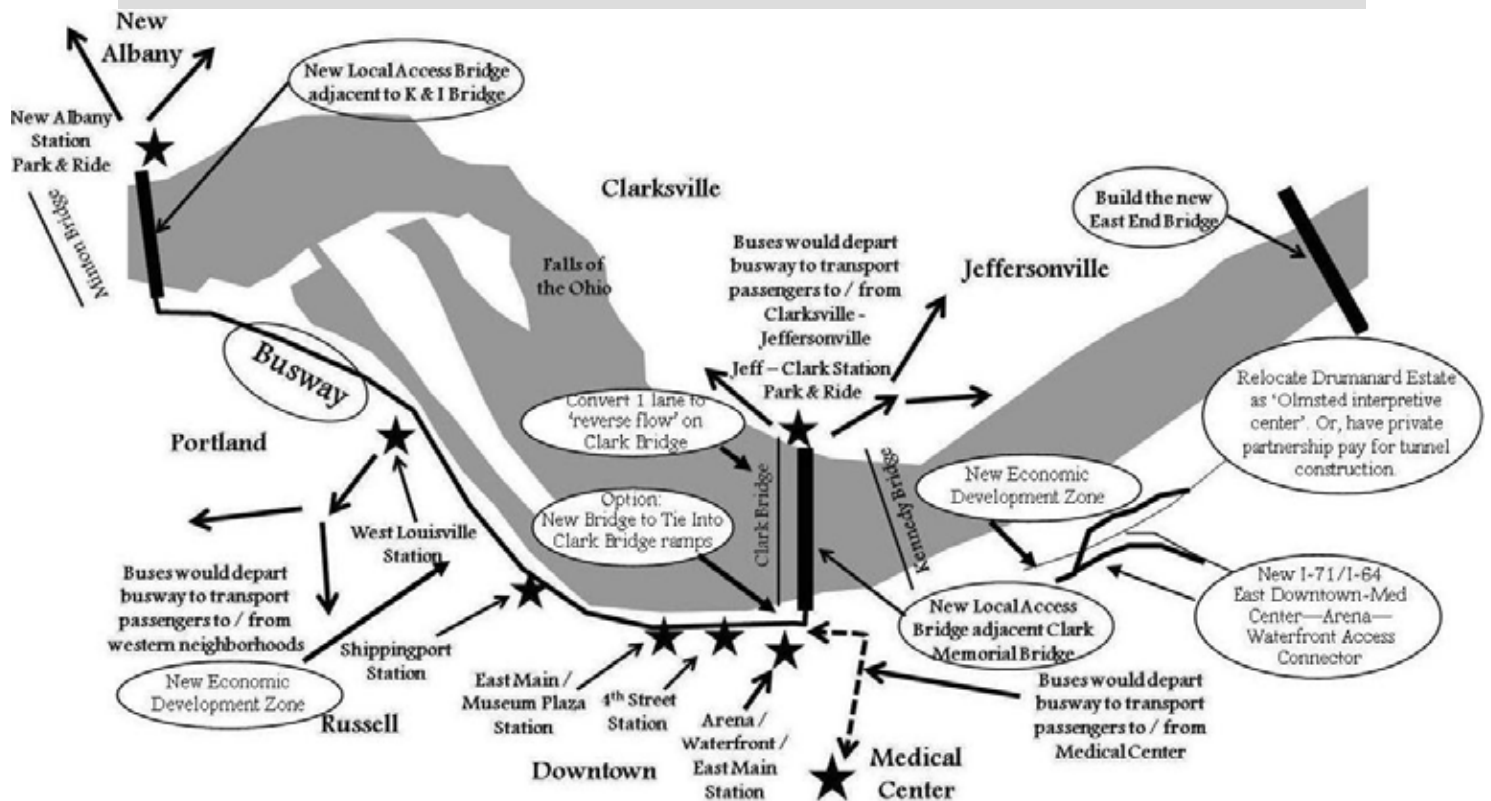
Most are familiar with the tale of 'how to boil a frog': slowly turn up the heat so the frog does not jump out. Hopefully, there is still time to alter this growth-threatening, extreme makeover and 'jump out' to a more reasonable, beneficial bridge solution which makes our metro community a much better place in which to live.

(Steve Wiser, AIA, is a local architect who has been an active participant in civic urban design issues for 30 years, and has in-depth experience in designing complicated circulation and infrastructure systems. His email address is WiserAIA@Hotmail.com and website is www.WiserDesigns.com)

Scroll Down for 6 More Pages of Details on this Alternative Bridge Solution

Steve Wiser, AIA
WiserAIA@Hotmail.com www.WiserDesigns.com

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Above is the overall “Alternative Bridge Proposal”

On the following pages are graphics that better detail how this proposal will function and implemented.

Scroll down for more details!

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How can this alternative bridge proposal be completed in 5 years and cost only \$1.4 Billion? Here's how, starting in 2010:

Schedule:

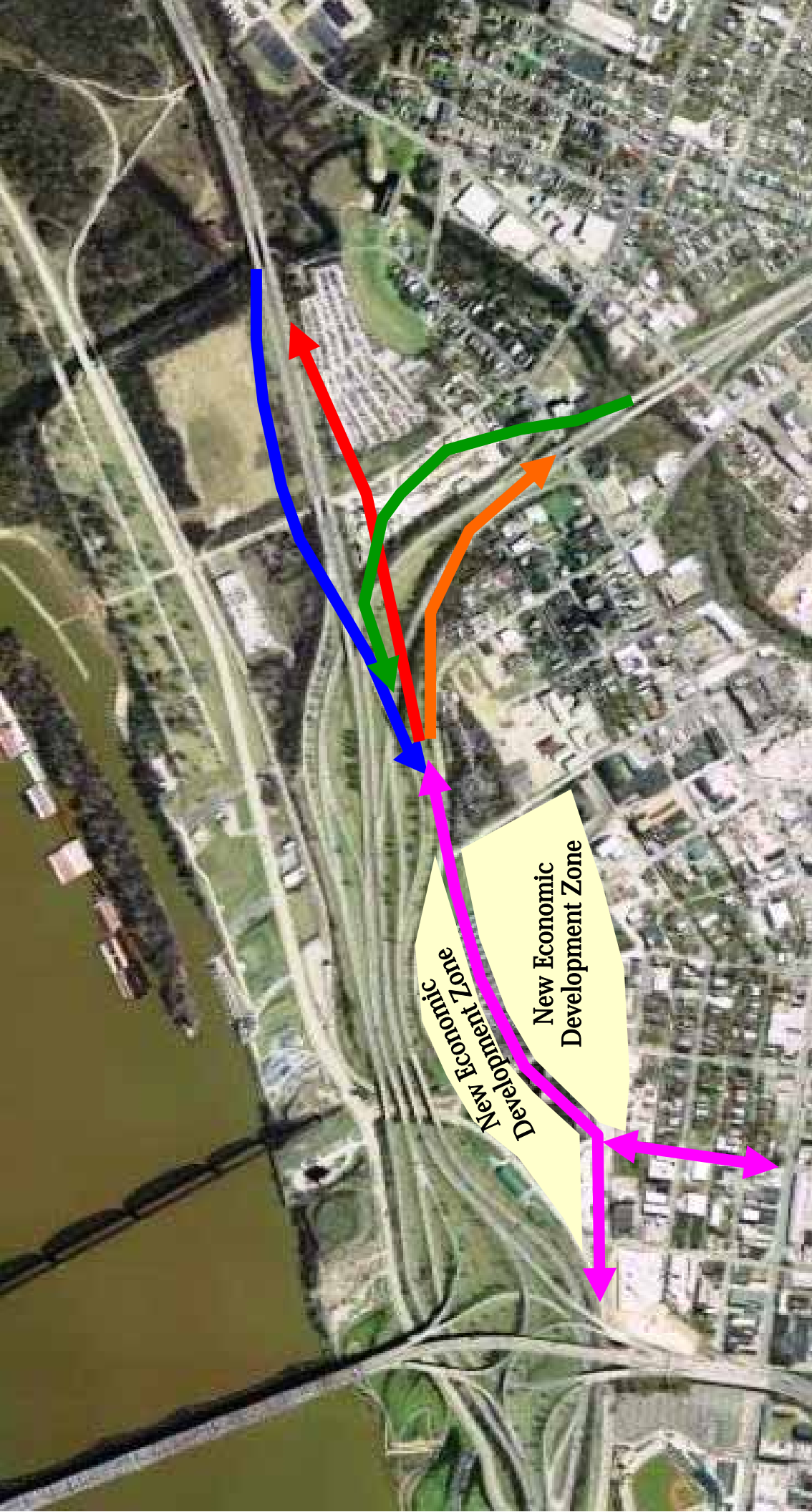
- Within 5 years, the east end bridge can be built.
- Not building the tunnel under the Drumanard Estate saves considerable time. The mansion can be relocated, and grounds recreated, as the Olmsted Interpretive Center by 2015. Buildings are regularly picked up and moved. Jeffersonville Indiana has moved several buildings recently, and a church was moved in southwest Louisville. In Texas, a large hotel was moved.
- The two new local access bridges can be implemented within 5 years. By positioning adjacent to existing bridges (Clark and K & I), the access ramp infrastructure already in place. Also, the structural supports are established thereby avoiding navigational complications with the Corps of Engineers.
- The Interstate Connector (I-64/I-71 and East Downtown / Medical Center / Arena / Waterfront) would take up to 5 years to build. All of the properties in the path of this roadway are large industrial tracts which should pose minimal acquisition issues.
- As to the "Record of Decision" (ROD), the environmental footprint of this alternative proposal is smaller than the more massive ORBP. RODs are routinely altered and this should not pose any delay.

Costs:

- The current ORBP cost is \$4.1 Billion, of which \$2.7 Billion is for the new I-65 bridge and quadrupling the size of spaghetti junction. Not building these components saves \$2.7 billion.
- East end bridge costs \$1.15 billion
- Not building the tunnel saves \$260 million
- Relocating the Drumanard estate and creating the Olmsted Interpretive Center would cost up to \$20 million
- \$240 million to building: 2 local access bridges; new interstate connector; and busway.
- TIF: Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to be used in the two new economic development zones (Shippingport and East Downtown) would provide additional funding for this construction.
- Another funding source could be public-private partnership on the tunnel. If the residents of this high-income zip code (highest in this region) really want to bury the interstate, then they should fund this part of the costs. If this was being built anywhere else in the state (or country for that matter), there would be no tunnel.
- No tolls would be required






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WiserAIA@Hotmail.com www.WiserDesigns.com



New I-71 & I-64 Access Connector for East Downtown—Medical Center—Arena—Waterfront

New interstate 'connector' access from Interstates 71 and 64 which would remove traffic from spaghetti junction, which then would eliminate need to rework spaghetti junction. This proposal will open up new economic development zone on east downtown.

-  6 Lane connector access way from the Interstate ramps to the East Downtown / Medical Center Districts
-  Ramp to Eastbound I-64
-  Ramp to Northbound I-71
-  Ramp from southbound I-71
-  Ramp from westbound I-64

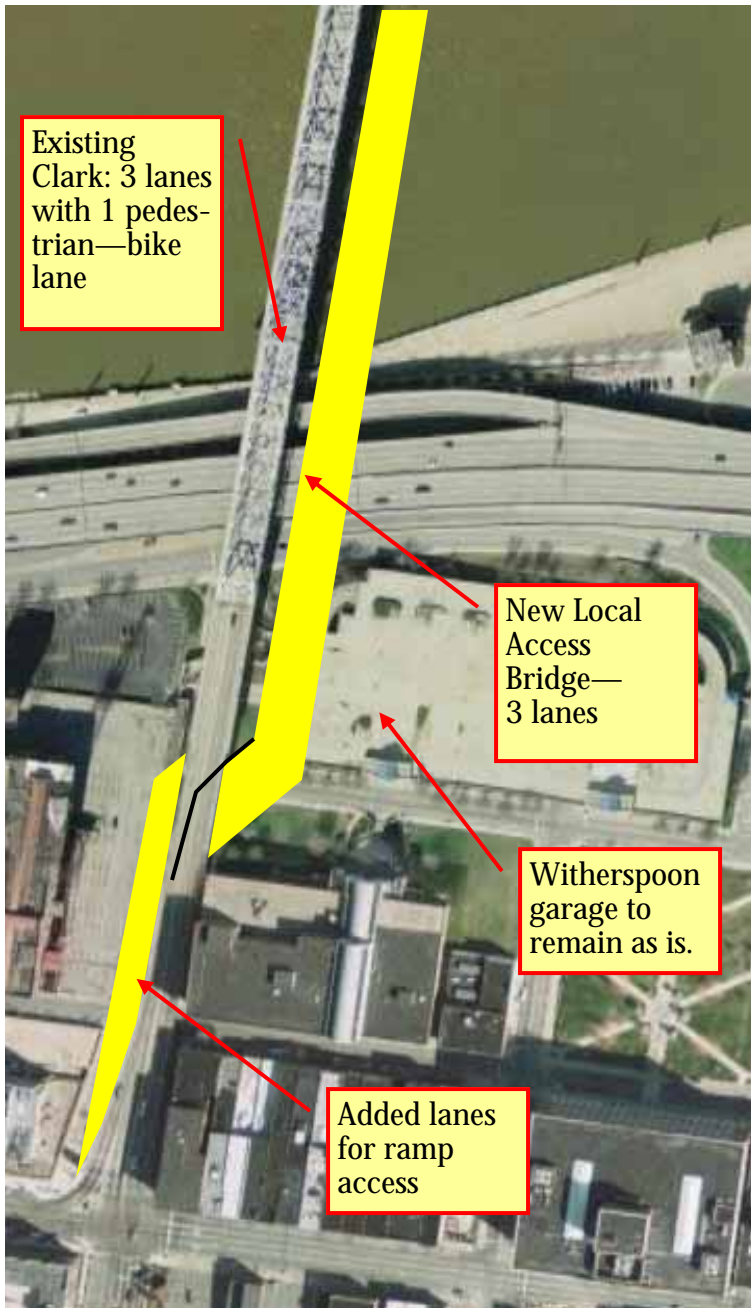
Scroll down for more details!

For more information, click on www.WiserDesigns.com/WiserDesigns

New Local Access Bridge parallel to the Clark Memorial

Provided below and next page are 2 possible options to adding a new local access bridge parallel to the Clark Memorial Bridge. This is how it would connect on the KENTUCKY side.

Below each option is a text description



“Shared Access Ramp” Option

- This option would ‘tie-into’ the existing access ramp at Second Street.
- New Bridge would have 3 traffic lanes and the existing Clark would have 3 lanes.
- One existing lane on the Clark would be converted to pedestrian-bike only.
- The entry ramp would be widened by adding more lane space on the western edge.
- Reverse follow lanes would also be used which would permit 4 traffic lanes in/out at rush hour.



“First Street Access Ramp” Option

- New Bridge to contain 3 traffic lanes
- Witherspoon Garage would need to be reworked to accommodate the ramp.
- Reverse flow lanes to also be used to allow 4 lanes in-out during rush hour.

Scroll down for more details!

This is how it would connect on the INDIANA side.
Below each option is a text description



“Tie-Into Existing Ramp” Option

- This option would ‘tie-into’ the existing access ramp
- New Bridge would have 3 traffic lanes and the existing Clark would have 3 lanes.
- One existing lane on the Clark would be converted to pedestrian-bike only.
- Reverse follow lanes would also be used which would permit 4 traffic lanes in/out at rush hour.

“New Access Ramp” Option

- New access ramps to be built to access both the existing Clark Memorial Bridge and the new local access bridge
- Reverse flow lanes to also be used to allow 4 lanes in-out during rush hour.

Scroll down for more details!

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If you like this proposal, then here's what you should do next:

Contact the Governors of Kentucky and Indiana.
Below is their contact info:

Governor Steve Beshear
700 Capitol Avenue, Suite 100
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Honorable Mitch Daniels
Office of the Governor
Statehouse
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2797

And let them know that you do not want tolls on the bridges and
for them to seek a more reasonable cross-river solution!