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The mission of The Earth Day Coalition is to conserve, protect and restore the Earth promoting a dynamic environmental agenda with the people of Northeast Ohio. Est.1990

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Testimony of Chris Trepal
January 28, 2000

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

1 I urge the DoE to reject the Yucca Mountain site as unsuitable, and to cease the historic massive plan to transport the most dangerous and radioactive waste through the heart of our community and the backyards of over 50 million people nationwide.

2 Accidents will happen - DoE expects and predicts accidents yearly. This is an unacceptable risk. Transportation routes are designed for commerce and to link heavily populated areas of major cities. They are not designed for radioactive waste transport.

Despite regulations that require avoidance of densely populated regions when transporting high level radioactive waste, the generic proposed railroad and highway routes will transport the most deadly radioactive waste. I live ten houses from the railroad tracks and minutes from I-90. My community struggles each day with current rail safety concerns, dirt, noise and delays. Lakewood has more at grade crossings per mile than any city in the country. Playgrounds abut the rail lines. Walkers and bikers in my town wait to cross the tracks a few feet from passing trains. Schools and hospitals are less than 1/2 mile from the tracks. I travel I-90 many times each day with increasing congestion, and traffic jams that are more frequent and severe.

DoE's proposal to transport these wastes through my community is a health and safety liability. Although the DOE has not made solid commitments to specific routes or volumes it is very clear that northern Ohio is a key transportation route for moving wastes across the country to Nevada and that is not acceptable.

3... RAILROAD:
In 1998 there were 136 train-car accidents with 13 fatalities in Ohio. Ohio is the state with the densest population per square miles to railroad miles. Ohio's rail lines carry more traffic that those of 46 other states. According to RailWatch, there is a train accident/incident every ninety minutes, and a derailment in which hazardous materials are released occurs on the average every two weeks. Vital rail safety technology such as traffic control mechanism date back to the 1930's.

3 cont. In 1986 there was high speed impact railway accident, derailment and fire involving multiple chemicals at Miamisburg; in 1989 there was a derailment and fire in Akron. Those are very close to home. Doe must evaluate these Ohio real-life accident conditions in relationship to the casks that will carry radioactive wastes.

80% of the nation's public railroad crossings remain unprotected by lights and gates. Ohio leads the nation in the number of grade crossings with neither lights or gates. However, over 50% of accidents in Ohio occur at crossings with lights and gates. What does all this mean when you send nuclear waste through my neighborhood?

10 The 1985 DoE report says that an accident involving one rail cask carrying this high level radioactive waste could result in the release of material to the environment costing $620 million if it occurred in a rural setting and up to $9.5 billion in an
8 urban area. What will such a clean up cost in my hometown? It is not acceptable that DoE has averaged risks over 50 million people.

4 When is DoE going to release the funds for training and equipment for emergency training for my community? When will hospitals and personnel be trained and equipped to handle radiation victims? Who will pay for evacuation and emergency
5 planning? Will my property be devalued because of close proximity to nuclear waste transportation routes? When are we going to hear all the details not included in the EIS?

6 HIGHWAYS:
A recent study from the Texas Transportation Institute of traffic in Greater Cleveland and 67 other metropolitan areas found that traffic jams are getting more frequent and severe. In 1997, 50% of traffic was congested. Freeways are also more crowded. The number of miles traveled daily on freeways rose 66.5% from 1982 to 1997. (clipping enclosed) DoE must account for non-accident exposures that will become routine when casks are trapped in heavy traffic with other vehicles for long time periods.

9 Between 1957 and 1964 there were 11 transportation accidents/incidents involving nuclear fuel shipments that resulted in radioactive releases including both leaking rail and truck casks. Between 1971 and 1990 there were 6 accidents and 47 incidents involving nuclear fuel with no releases. Because the amount of waste shipped in the first full year of operations at Yucca Mountain alone will exceed the total amount shipped during the past 30 years, we can expect and DoE has predicted accidents.
PERRY PLANT:
7... In addition to concerns about packaging degradation, we must raise concerns about degraded fuel. DoE must study the fuel from the Perry plant and other nuclear power plants that have fuel rods leaking radioactivity. According to some scientists, this leaking fuel poses a serious threat to public safety and violates the operating licenses. Although it is a violation of federal regulations and a severe health risk for nuclear plants to continue operating with known fuel damage, the plants continue to operate with leaking reactor cores. This leaking fuel has been attributed to debris

7 cont. fretting or to undetected manufacturing defects-the fuel has pin point holes, bad end cap welds and axial cracks. GE believes that the root cause of the failures is undetected manufacturing defects, possibly exacerbated by the Perry operating practice of using control rod movement rather than flow control for minor power adjustments. What is going to happen when this fuel hits the road? DoE should evaluate fuel for undetected defects.

Battle against traffic jams shifts to side roads that feed freeways

By JAMES F. SWEENEY
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

Red light. Green light. Red light. Green light.

During rush hour on Rockside Rd. in Independence, it really doesn't make much difference.

Traffic inches toward the Interstate 77 interchange.

Not only is Rockside clogged, but the side streets that feed it also are backed up into the parking lots of the office buildings.

Erich Jacobsen, a driver for Bonnie Speed Delivery Inc., hates rush hour on Rockside so much that he will backtrack to State Rd. and get on I-480 to avoid the jam.

"It's actually quicker," he said.

Rockside is one of the most congested surface streets in Northeast Ohio, but there are others that haunt commuters: Chagrin Blvd. in Beachwood, Ohio 18 west of Akron, Ohio 57 in Elyria and Ohio 306 in Mentor.

While interstates still produce some of the worst traffic in the region, it's the struggle to reach the freeways that is becoming increasingly difficult for commuters.

- Clevelanders are spending a lot more time tied up in traffic. 8-A

"Driving is terrible. Every little side street has picked up volume," said Bob Ryan, director of Donald Martens & Sons Ambulance Service.

There is no one reason a trip to the next suburb can turn into an expedition.

For starters, more cars are on the road. There were 10.5 million cars registered in Ohio in 1989 and 11.2 million in 1997.

In addition, suburban sprawl has scattered homes, stores and jobs.

SEE TRAFFIC/8-A

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Road congestion spreads to side streets

TRAFFIC FROM 1-A

The traditional spoke-and-hub commuting pattern in which most workers headed to downtown Cleveland or Akron has changed greatly.

While downtowns are still the most popular commuter destinations, there are newer, large employment centers in such places as Mentor, Twinsburg, Independence and Fairlawn. And that means more traffic on surface streets.

Roads haven't kept up with the growth.

Streets that were perfectly fine for a city of 20,000 can be overwhelmed when that city grows to 35,000 residents and adds stores that attract people from out of the area.

"Transportation projects aren't quite as fast as developers," said William E. Murphy, planning administrator for the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study.

And the congestion is likely to get worse, he said.

Though planners have drawn up blueprints to improve many of the most congested streets, including Pleasant Valley Rd. in Parma and Ohio 43 in Portage County, plans sometimes gather dust for decades waiting for funding.

"There's never enough money," Murphy said. "If you asked every transportation planner, they'd say there's never enough money."

In some cases, what's lacking is the political will or cooperation between communities.

Trustees in Geauga County's Chester Township have been talking about widening Mayfield Rd. (U.S. 322) since before County Engineer Robert Phillips moved there in the early 1970s.

Last year, they voted again not to pursue federal money for the job, exasperating Phillips.

Blueprints seldom call for adding lanes, which is expensive, sometimes controversial — and ultimately futile, according to many transportation planners.

"If you take the traffic and figure out how many lanes the arterials would have to be, there just isn't the room to provide free-flowing traffic. And even if you did have free-flowing traffic, it would just attract more traffic," said Ronald Eckner, director of transportation for the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, the transportation planning group for Cuyahoga, Lake, Lorain, Medina and Geauga counties.

Instead, engineers speed traffic along by installing new signals, widening intersections and berms and adding turn lanes.

In addition, road sensors can detect traffic volume and adjust signals accordingly.

Planners like Medina County Engineer David Miller know it's not just the roads. It's the driveways.

"The curb cuts are what kill you, and they're also what cause accidents," he said.

A road might be wide enough to handle a steady flow of vehicles, but line the road with fast-food restaurants, shops and housing developments, and the flow becomes herky-jerky, with people exiting and entering the stream. If it becomes busy enough, a traffic light is added at almost every intersection. Mayfield Rd. in Mayfield Heights is a good example.

One way to combat that is to build service or marginal roads that parallel the main drag. These allow access to businesses and reduce the number of intersections with the main road.

Planners also are encouraging businesses to share a single entrance off a main road and link parking lots so that traffic flow will have fewer interruptions.

Planners also recommend greater use of public transportation; flex-time commuting; better land-use planning to reduce travel; and intelligent transportation system components like electronic billboards advising of traffic jams.

Measures like these, while not as dramatic as new or wider roads, are going to be used more and more to combat congestion because, as NOACA's Eckner said, "You can't build your way out of it."

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Region's traffic arteries hardening, study finds

By JAMES F. SWEENEY
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

Greater Clevelanders are driving more but might be enjoying it less.

That conclusion can be drawn from a recent Texas Transportation Institute study of traffic in Greater Cleveland and 67 other metropolitan areas in the United States. Among the findings:

- The average driver in Greater Cleveland spent an extra 20 hours a year behind the wheel in 1997 due to congestion. That was up from two hours in 1982.
- The delays cost each driver $345 in 1997, an estimate based on the cost of fuel burned by vehicles sitting in traffic and the value drivers place on travel time.
- Traffic jams are getting more frequent and severe. In 1982, 20 percent of freeway travel was congested. That figure rose to 55 percent in 1997.

Thirty percent of travel on arterial streets was congested in 1982. It was 65 percent in 1997.

- Speed is falling. The average speed on freeways during rush hour fell from 58 mph in 1982 to 51 mph in 1997. Arterials slowed down as well, from 34 mph in 1982 to 30 in 1997.
- Roads are more crowded. The number of miles traveled daily on freeways by all vehicles rose 66.5 percent from 1982 to 1997. During the same period, the miles of freeway lanes rose only 19.5 percent.

That means the number of miles driven per freeway mile of lane jumped from 10,000 to 13,940.

And it's not just the freeways that are more crowded.

Congestion on main surface streets or arterials, such as Rockside Rd. and SOM Center Rd., also has gotten worse.

The number of miles driven per day on arterials per mile of lane grew from 5,110 in 1982 to 6,380 in 1997, an increase of 25 percent.

While its freeways and main surface streets are getting more crowded, Greater Cleveland is still a relatively easy area in which to get from Point A to Point B without spending hours stuck behind the wheel.

"Traffic itself I haven't found to be a major problem," said Bill Donnelly, who has driven an Americab taxi for six years. After further consideration, he added, "It's kind of goofy at times."

Despite worsening conditions, local drivers shouldn't complain within earshot of commuters from Los Angeles, Atlanta or Washington, D.C., who would regard the Inner Belt as a high-speed lane.

Of 68 metropolitan areas in the study, Cleveland ranks no worse than 38th in any of the mobility categories, better than Cincinnati and Columbus.

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5