

The Westerville to Arena District (WAD) Bikeway

The proposed Westerville to Arena District (WAD) Bikeway would utilize the former Mount Vernon Railroad right-of-way from Cooper Park, just south of Westerville, to the Arena District. This 11.5 mile stretch would become a serious commuter route for bicyclists and users of other forms of non-motorized transportation. This right-of-way is perfect for this application because of several reasons:

- it already exists;
- it is very straight and level;
- it is consistent with all the area plans for the neighborhoods through which it traverses;
- it bisects a large, relatively low-income section of the city;
- it mimics the local highway system in its ability to easily move people to and from downtown Columbus;
- it intersects with numerous COTA bus routes; and
- it provides a transit spine from which many spurs can be built to the numerous schools, recreation centers, parks, etc. that lie within two miles of this corridor.

Known in its hey-day as the Cleveland, Akron & Columbus Railroad, the Mt. Vernon ROW was in continuous use from 1873 until the 1960's. In the 1980's the rails were taken up from 17th Ave. north to Westerville, but the bridge abutments and support beams remain in place. The rail bed is still in fine condition. All that needs to be done to convert it to a bikeway is remove all the overgrowth and pave it.

In 1998 Conrail sold all its rights to the seven-mile segment from Cooper Park to 17th Ave for \$700,000 to Consolidated Utilities Railroad Corporation, whose business address matches that of Clark D. Baltzell, the presumed owner or part-owner. In speaking with Mr. Baltzell, it is clear he hoped to resell the property for the purpose of light rail at a substantial profit. When COTA approached him about purchasing it for light rail, he reportedly wanted \$20 million. This amount is clearly speculative and unrealistic.

Before time and money is spent on design and engineering, the land much be purchased. After that, money can be allocated for design and construction.

In addition to the formal application, please find attached:

- [a map of the route](#),
- [photographs](#),
- [inventory of bridges and culverts](#),
- [proposed crossings of major cross-streets](#),
- [proposed downtown connector](#),
- [per capita income maps of the area](#),
- [parcel ownership maps](#),
- [letters of endorsement](#), and
- CD with [Google Earth map](#), complete slide presentation and a file of this application.