



Mike DeWine, Governor
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor
Anne M. Vogel, Director

February 8, 2023

Limited Environmental Review and Finding of No Significant Impact

**City of Columbus – Franklin County
Linden Area Stormwater Improvements Phase 2
Loan number: CS390274-0296**

The attached Limited Environmental Review (LER) is for a stormwater management project in Columbus which the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency intends to finance through its Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) below-market interest rate revolving loan program. The LER describes the project, its costs, and expected environmental benefits. Making available this LER fulfills Ohio EPA's environmental review and public notice requirements for this loan program.

Ohio EPA analyzes environmental effects of proposed projects as part of its WPCLF program review and approval process. We have concluded that the proposed project should not result in significant adverse environmental impacts. This project's relatively narrow scope and lack of environmental impacts qualifies it for the LER rather than a more comprehensive Environmental Assessment. More information can be obtained by calling or writing the person named at the end of the attached LER.

Upon issuance of this Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) determination, award of funds may proceed without further environmental review or public comment unless new information shows that environmental conditions of the proposed project have changed significantly.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Courtright, Assistant Chief
Division of Environmental and Financial Assistance

Attachment

LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Project Identification

Project: City of Columbus Linden Area Stormwater Improvements Phase 2

Applicant: Columbus Department of Public Utilities
910 Dublin Road, 4th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Loan Number: CS390274-0296

Project Summary

The City of Columbus in Franklin County is requesting \$2,620,000 from the Ohio Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF) for a Linden area stormwater management project to mitigate street and yard flooding and reduce roadside drainage problems at locations within or near the Linden area.

History & Existing Conditions

The storm sewer systems in the Linden area are undersized and insufficient in number resulting in 660 documented water-in-basement (WIB) complaints, and inadequate storm sewer conveyance capacity.

Project Description

The goal of the project is to provide stormwater system improvements in rear yards and along streets where flooding and standing water have been reported by residents. This project addresses stormwater flooding by installing new, and larger sized storm sewers to provide increased conveyance capacities for each project location and repairing stormwater infrastructure. The project area is comprised of five separate locations shown in figures 1 through 5. For rear yards, alignments were selected to minimize the number of easements that need to be acquired.

Implementation

In 2005, Columbus passed an ordinance to create a Clean River Fee to recover costs of construction for stormwater projects. This charge was assessed based on each property's measured impervious surface area. Since 2005, Columbus City Council has approved across-the-board rate increases, including the Clean River Fee, which allows the city to continue to address these projects.

The City of Columbus is requesting a \$2,620,000 low-interest loan from the WPCLF for this project. Columbus qualifies for a standard 2.93% loan rate. This will save the city approximately \$410,949 for a 20-year loan compared to the market rate, which is currently at 4.18%. Interest rates are set monthly and may change for the requested loan award.

Projected residential sewer bills with are expected to be approximately \$867/year, which is approximately 1.6% of median household income (MHI) of Columbus, or \$53,745. This annual bill is higher than the statewide average of \$749.

Public Participation

Due to the extent of the project area, notices and questionnaires were sent to the affected properties in lieu of having a series of public meetings. The questionnaire requested more specific input on flooding issues that possibly had not been noted by the city. Questions on the form included the location and frequency of the flooding, an interpretation of the cause of the flooding, and whether the resident was the owner of the subject property. A total of 366 questionnaires were mailed out with self-addressed return envelopes to encourage a larger number of responses. Of these, 36 were returned completed.

Ohio EPA will also publicize the project at the following website: <https://epa.ohio.gov/divisions-and-offices/environmental-financial-assistance/announcements>

Conclusion

The proposed project meets the criteria for a Limited Environmental Review (LER); namely, it is an action within an existing public wastewater distribution system, which involves improvements to existing infrastructure. Furthermore, the project meets the other qualifying criteria for an LER; specifically, the proposed project:

Will have no effect on high-value environmental resources and have no significant environmental effect that will require specific impact mitigation because there are no high-value environmental resources present.

Is cost effective as it involves seeking replacements to the existing storm water sewer system and new storm sewers instead of large, expensive collection basins to improve the overall stormwater management process and minimize backups in local basements and street flooding.

Is not a controversial action because the project is addressing a stormwater problem that is causing costly property and environmental damage. Fixing stormwater infrastructure will address this problem. Ohio EPA is unaware of any specific opposition to or controversy about this project.

Does not create a new, or relocate an existing discharge to surface or ground waters, and will not result in substantial increases in the volume of discharge or the loading of pollutants from an existing source or from new facilities to receiving waters because the project addresses current stormwater flows and not otherwise impacting discharges.

Will not provide capacity to serve a population substantially greater than the existing population because the project addresses the existing population.

Contact information

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Figure 1. Emerald Avenue: experiences roadside flooding



Figure 2. Framingham Circle: erosion at four existing storm sewer outfalls



Figure 3. Ganson Drive: experienced intersection flooding



Figure 4. Karl Road/Walmar Drive: experiences rear yard flooding



Figure 5. Medina Avenue: experiences rear yard flooding