



Civic Engagement Comment Summary Report

Project: Stabilize Riverbank at High
Priority Areas along Towpath Trail
and Valley Railway

PMIS Number: 224822

Prepared for: National Park Service

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1. INTRODUCTION

The project involves bank stabilization activities along eight sections of the Cuyahoga River within Summit and Cuyahoga Counties, to protect portions of two linear historic districts affected by the migration of the river channel: 1) the Valley Railway Historic District (Valley Railway) which includes the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad (CVSR); and 2) the Ohio and Erie Canal Historic District (Ohio and Erie Canal) which includes the Towpath Trail, a portion of which is a National Historic Landmark (NHL).

The bank stabilization sites include:

- CVSR MP 64.1
- Towpath Fitzwater (STA 610)
- Towpath Buckeye (STA 710)
- CVSR MP 59.3
- Towpath Mudcatcher (STA 758)
- Towpath Station Road South (STA 805)
- Towpath MM 20 South (STA 940)
- Peninsula Connector (STA 1130)

2. PRE-NEPA CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY SUMMARY

The National Park Service (NPS), Cuyahoga Valley National Park (Park), conducted a pre-National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) civic engagement process to obtain public feedback. The primary purpose of the civic engagement process was to gather public sentiment on the proposed action to help inform future project decisions, as practicable. The pre-NEPA civic engagement activities are described under separate cover, in the Stakeholder Outreach Strategy dated October 7, 2021.

As part of civic outreach activities, the Park's public information office posted project related information and a request for comment via the Park's social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram). The posts briefly introduced the project, included a graphic summarizing project purpose and need, provided a link to the project website (the ArcGIS StoryMap page, published December 10, 2021), and indicated the Park is seeking public input by January 10, 2022. The posts were published on December 10, 2021, December 15, 2021, and January 4, 2022.

A total of sixty-four (64) correspondences from sixty-three (63) individuals were received via the comment form on the project website between December 10, 2021, and January 10, 2022. An additional fifty-four (54) correspondences from approximately forty-seven (47) individuals were received on the social media posts between December 10, 2021, and January 10, 2022. The purpose of the Civic Engagement Comment Summary Report is to summarize the comments received within the open public comment period.

3. ANALYSIS PROCESS

3.1 Terms Used

The primary terms used during the analysis are defined below:

Correspondence: the entire document received from the public, which can consist of one or more comments.

Comment: a portion of the text within a correspondence that addresses a single subject. The comment could include information such as expression of support or opposition, an opinion relating to project design, or a project-related question.

Code: a grouping of comments centered on a common topic or subject matter. Each code was further characterized by a series of topic statements.

Topic Statement: clarifying statement that more clearly group specific issues raised by the comments within each code; intended to sub-classify the comments within each code.

3.2 Process Summary

An analysis process as described herein was used to compile and organize similar public sentiments into a format that can be used by the NPS and the Park. The analysis process aimed to identify the issues raised, viewpoints communicated, and suggestions provided by the public, based on the correspondence received. Correspondence received via the project website (i.e., StoryMap comment form) and correspondence received on the social media posts were evaluated separately due to the apparent difference in content and detail between the two correspondence types.

First, each item of correspondence received during the open public comment period was read, and each separate comment, or single subject, within the correspondence was identified. Next, comments received from the various correspondences that shared a common theme or sentiment were grouped. To categorize the similar comments received, each comment group (organized by theme or sentiment) was assigned a specific “code” to 1) identify the general content of a comment; and to 2) group similar issues, views, and suggestions. The coding structure was derived from the comments received. In order to provide additional detail on codes, the comments were further divided into topic statements in an attempt to clarify comment intent.

Although the analysis process attempts to capture the full range of public sentiment, the analysis is not exhaustive. This report is intended to be a summary of the different issues, views, and suggestions expressed in the correspondences received.

4. COMMENT SUMMARY

4.1 Content Analysis for Correspondence Received via the Website Comment Form

The content analysis presented in Section 4.1 summarizes the sixty-four (64) correspondences received via the project website comment summary form during the 30-day comment period. The 64 correspondences contained a total of 106 comments (i.e., single subjects or individual topics). Comments were categorized into six (6) codes based on topics. **Table 1** summarizes the numbers and types of comments received, organized by code.

Table 1. Website Comment Form General Content Summary

Code	Code Description	Number of Comments	Percent of All Comments
DS	Design Suggestion	39	37%
EI	Education and Interpretation	3	3%
MI	Miscellaneous - comments without a common theme	8	7.5%
PO	Project Opposition	7	6.5%
PQ	Project Question	12	11%
PS	Project Support	37	35%
TOTAL		106	100%

The comments within each Code were divided into topic statements, to provide clarifying context to the comments. **Table 2** lists the topic statements derived from each code and the number of comments associated with each topic statement. To illustrate weight of comments, the topic statements that represent approximately five percent or greater of total comments are in bold. **Attachment A** contains a comprehensive table listing the code, topic statement, and each associated comment. **Attachment B** contains the original correspondences.

Table 2. Website Comment Form Topic Statements

Code	Topic Statement	Number of Comments
DS - Design Suggestions	DS-1: Keep design 'natural,' (e.g., use natural channel design, conserve trees, allow meandering, incorporate native plants, limit rock)	13
	DS-2: Include river access for kayaks, anglers in design	5
	DS-3: Consider moving conflicting infrastructure as part of bank stabilization activities	3
	DS-4: Prioritize CVSR sites and historic/arch sites, use intensive measures to stabilize bank at CVSR	3
	DS-5: Use gabion baskets or large boulder as part of design	2
	DS-6: Improve/maintain Towpath Trail surface as part of project	2
	DS-7: Include measures to allow safe river passage in design	2
	DS-8: Construct temporary detours for the Towpath Trail during construction	1
	DS-9: Evaluate depth of soldier piles use a high factor of safety	1
	DS-10: Add a subterranean geogrid to design	1
	DS-11: Use live stakes above rock revetment, not within rock crevice	1
	DS-12: Include bendway weir structures in design	1
	DS-13: Straighten/reroute river to control meandering	1
	DS-14: Lower flood level/velocity as part of design if practical	1
	DS-15: Repurpose old Xmas trees to stabilize banks	1
	DS-16: Use beavers to provide dams	1
	DS Total	39
EI – Education and Interpretation	EI-1: Organize volunteers to help with plant installation	2
	EI-2: Install educational signage relating to project	1
	EI Total	3

Table 2 is continued on next page

Table 2. Website Comment Form Topic Statements (continued)

Code	Topic Statement	Number of Comments
MI – Misc.	MI-1: Evaluate reason for erosion (e.g., increased development, commercial fertilizers)	2
	MI-2: Consider how narrowing river at Peninsula will affect future floods at Lock 29	1
	MI-3: Do not remove Gorge Dam as it slows water coming into CVNP	1
	MI-4: Prohibit dikes that run the length of river	1
	MI-5: ODOT/Ohio Turnpike Commission should pay for restoration due to past disturbance	1
	MI-6: Request to discuss with CVNP PM	1
	MI-7: Flooding at wooden platform at Station Road CVSR station	1
	MI Total	8
PO – Project Opposition	PO-1: Leave river alone, no development on river	3
	PO-2: Move the trail instead of bank stabilization	2
	PO-3: Move or close the railroad instead of bank stabilization	2
	PO Total	7
PQ – Project Questions	PQ-1: Was effect of increase in water flow a design selection criterion, and can alternate design (e.g., increased meanders, engineered riffles) mitigate flow speed?	3
	PQ-2: Is removing invasive plants (e.g., Japanese knotweed) helpful or harmful in reducing erosion?	2
	PQ-3: Are any other bank stabilization projects occurring?	1
	PQ-4: What are the horizontal supports in the H-piles at Peninsula Connector?	1
	PQ-5: Would clearing log jams help reduce erosion?	1
	PQ-6: Can diverting floodwaters into old canalway help?	1
	PQ-7: How is design anticipating climate variability and increased rainfall?	1
	PQ-8: How is design accounting for increase in development in watershed?	1
	PQ-9: Is there something that can be done along the bank between Mud-Catcher to CVSR MP 59.3 since it is close to the Towpath Trail?	1
	PQ Total	12
PS – Project Support	PS-1: Support project purpose/need	20
	PS-2: Support proposed stabilization measures	11
	PS-3: Appreciate website and/or public engagement	4
	PS-4: Support stabilization measures to protect CVSR	1
	PS-5: Do whatever is best professional solution, do not bow to public pressure	1
	PS Total	37

4.2 Content Analysis for Correspondence Received via Social Media Posts

The content analysis presented in Section 4.2 summarizes the fifty-four (54) correspondences received via the social media post (on Facebook, Instagram) during the 30-day open comment period. The 54 correspondences contained a total of sixty (60) comments (i.e., single subjects or individual topics). Comments were categorized into six (6) codes based on topics. **Table 3** summarizes the numbers and types of comments received, organized by code.

Table 3. Social Media Posts General Content Summary

Code	Code Description	Number of Comments	Percent of All Comments
DS	Design Suggestion	20	33%
MI	Miscellaneous – comments without a common theme	12	20%
OS	Out of Scope – comments that do not pertain to project purpose or proposed measures	13	19%
PO	Project Opposition	7	11%
PQ	Project Question	4	11%
PS	Project Support	4	6%
TOTAL		60	100%

The comments within each code were divided into topic statements, to provide clarifying context to the comments. **Table 4** lists the topic statements derived from each code and the number of comments associated with each topic statement. To illustrate weight of comments, the topic statements that represent five percent or greater of total comments are in bold. **Attachment A** contains a comprehensive table listing the code, topic statement, and each associated comment. **Attachment B** contains the original correspondences.

Table 4. Social Media Comment Topic Statements

Code	Topic Statement	Number of Comments
DS - Design Suggestions	DS-1: Keep design 'natural,' including plants and trees for bank stabilization	4
	DS-2: Use gabion baskets, stone, and/or stream barbs	3
	DS-3: Include kayak access, particularly at Lock 29/Peninsula	3
	DS-4: Use old cars to line riverbank to prevent erosion	2
	DS-5: Use geogrid living walls	1
	DS-6: Prohibit geotextile or rock from becoming visible overtime	1
	DS-7: Consider climate change and increased flows	1
	DS-8: Use the adjacent canal to prevent erosion	1
	DS-9: Wait until Gorge Dam is removed to begin project	1
	DS-10: Improve bank by Akron Peninsula Road next to golf course	1
	DS-11: Consider moving infrastructure in conjunction with bank stabilization	1
	DS-12: Build man-made waves	1
	DS Total	20

Table 4 is continued on next page

Table 4. Social Media Comment Topic Statements (continued)

Code	Topic Statement	Number of Comments
MI – Misc.	MI-1: Civil engineer and/or hydrologist should determine solution	3
	MI-2: Water follows path of least resistance	2
	MI-3: Install kayak access at Boston Mills visitor center	1
	MI-4: Install kayak access on canal	1
	MI-5: Do not install kayak access on canal	1
	MI-6: River first, trail second	1
	MI-7: Clean up canal to make it commercially viable	1
	MI-8: Ask Rangers not to tell users to stack rocks since design is stacking rocks	1
	MI-9: Charge Park admission fee and use funds to pay for project	1
	MI Total	12
OS – Out of Scope	OS-1: Comment on social media format	3
	OS-2: @ mention to share social media post	3
	OS-3: It's called Crooked River for a reason	1
	OS-4: User memory of river	1
	OS-5 through OS-9: Out of scope social media discussion	5
	PO Total	13
PO – Project Opposition	PO-1: Move the Towpath Trail instead of bank stabilization	4
	PO-2: Let river find its own course	2
	PO-3: Move the railroad instead of bank stabilization	1
	PO Total	7
PQ – Project Questions	PQ-1: Do rivers naturally straighten to minimize energy usage?	1
	PQ-2: How will this impact visitor experience and surrounding areas, in plain language?	1
	PQ-3: Are volunteers needed for the project?	1
	PQ-4: Use of retaining walls?	1
	PQ Total	4
PS – Project Support	PS-1: Support for the project and protecting Towpath Trail	4
	PS Total	4

5. CONCLUSION

The majority of comments submitted via the project website pertained to design suggestions (37 percent of all comments) followed by project support (35 percent of all comments). The most repeated topics received via the project website were (in order of number of comments received): 1) support for the project purpose or need, 2) a desire to use natural methods of bank stabilization, 3) support for the proposed bank stabilization measures, and 4) the suggestion to include river access for kayakers and/or anglers in the design.

The majority of comments submitted via the social media pertained to design suggestions (33 percent of all comments) followed by miscellaneous comments (i.e., those that did not have a common theme, 20 percent of all comments), and then by out of scope comments (i.e., those that did not pertain to the project purpose/need or proposed activities, 19 percent of all comments). The most repeated project-related topics

received via the social media posts were (4 comments each): 1) a desire to use natural methods of bank stabilization, 2) proposing to move the Towpath Trail instead of bank stabilization measures, and 3) support for the project and protecting the Towpath Trail; followed by (3 comments each) 4) recommending the use of gabion baskets, stone, and/or stream barbs in the design, 5) incorporating kayak access in the design, particularly at Lock 29/Peninsula, and 6) the suggestion that a civil engineer and/or hydrologist should determine the bank stabilization design solution.