

September 15, 2004

Honorable Michael Coleman
Office of the Mayor, City of Columbus
90 West Broad Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Mayor Coleman:

The Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) appreciates the opportunity to review the current ballot proposal by the City of Columbus for capital improvement bond authority. The OEC staff has reviewed the proposal and we are pleased to announce that the Board of Directors of the OEC voted on September 11, 2004 to endorse the Columbus bond package. The Board requested that the OEC offer the following recommendations to you urging a Green Infrastructure approach to the implementation of the capital improvement projects relating to stormwater, water supply, sewer, and parks issues:

- ◆ The City of Columbus has a unique opportunity to be a leader on the promotion of “Green Infrastructure” to solve the water resource issues that the City faces. By directing significant amounts of the bond funds towards projects that protect and restore our rivers, headwater streams, wetlands, floodplains, ravines, and ground water, the City can demonstrate that strong environmental policies can go hand in hand with sound engineering and good public policy.
- ◆ The City should not adopt solutions to storm water and sewer issues that use the City’s smaller creeks and ravines as major storm water conduits. These large volumes of water to existing streams will change their natural flows and, ultimately, their physical integrity. Reducing large peak flows, frequencies, and durations will have beneficial impacts on stream habitat and biology.
- ◆ While some large-scale engineering projects will be necessary to deal with sewer overflows and the large amounts of wastewater, we believe that the City should fund alternative storm water technologies as well, such as on-lot retention of rainfall to allow the recharge of ground water while reducing off-lot discharge of storm water.

- ◆ Distribution of funds to contractors should be ranked by environmental criteria, such as:
 - The use of off-road diesel equipment that meet 2010 Clean Air Act standards for diesel emissions. These emissions pose serious health hazards for children and the elderly.
 - Records of environmental compliance. Contractors with a clean environmental compliance history should get preferential consideration.

- ◆ Capital improvement funds related to new growth in the City should be directed towards smart growth projects. Ohio's Blue Ribbon Panel on Balanced Growth has recommendations on local land use and transportation policies that would help Columbus' capital improvement projects be better for the environment.

- ◆ The funds for park projects should include river-based greenways and bikeways, with an emphasis on those lands that will protect floodplains and riparian corridors in perpetuity. These projects can enhance community green space, improve air and water quality, and raise citizens' quality of life.

- ◆ All project planning should continue to have public involvement. For example, planning for up-ground reservoirs above O'Shaughnessy Dam should involve community representatives such as the Scioto River Valley Federation, the Upper Scioto Watershed Project, and the Delaware Soil and Water Conservation District.

We hope that the bond package successfully passes this November and that you will carry out the projects in a progressive, environmentally conscious manner that becomes a role model for other Ohio cities and towns. On behalf of our Board of Directors, our over 3,000 individual members and 125 group members, and our dedicated staff, thank you for sharing the plans for the bond with the OEC—we're happy to be able to offer our endorsement and encouragement.

Best regards,

Vicki Deisner
Executive Director

John Marshall
President, Board of Directors

Cc: Greg Davies, Public Utilities Department
Steve Campbell, Office of the Mayor