The easternmost team in the Western Conference may finally get its wish. Since the possibility of realignment started to look more and more likely, the Blue Jackets were adamant in their desire to participate in the Eastern Conference, both to lessen travel and help with attendance when the closest teams to Columbus were in town. It appears that the Jackets will be moving to the Eastern Conference if a new proposal is agreed to by the NHL Board of Governors and the NHL Players' Association.

The proposed realignment plan will create two imbalanced conferences, with 16 teams in the Eastern Conference and 14 teams in the Western Conference. The teams would then be split into two equal divisions within the conference. The proposed divisions are as follows:

East #1: Boston, Buffalo, Detroit, Florida, Montreal, Ottawa, Tampa Bay, Toronto

East #2: Carolina, Columbus, New Jersey, New York Islanders, New York Rangers, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Washington

West #1: Chicago, Colorado, Dallas, Minnesota, Nashville, St. Louis, Winnipeg

West #2: Anaheim, Calgary, Edmonton, Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Jose, Vancouver

Details are still being hammered out regarding playoff format and the composition of the schedule. Various proposals include wild card teams and a “1 v. 4, 2 v. 3” format within the division. The American Hockey League, the NHL’s top minor league, used to have an imbalanced division, in which the fifth place team in that division would make the playoffs if they had more points than the fourth place team in the other division. Their playoffs also began as an interdivision series and then the two division champs would square off in the conference final. This is a concept that the NHL could adopt to allow a fifth place team with more points to beat out the fourth place team in the other division.

As far as the schedule goes, the expectation is that every team will play a home and away series against each team outside of its conference. For the Eastern Conference, that would be 28 games. For the West, that would be 32 games. The schedule will be heavily focused on interdivision play. The teams will play three games against each non-division, same conference opponent, accounting for 24 games for the East and 21 games for the West, with one flex game to make 22 to balance the schedule out. The rest of the schedule would be played against divisional foes.

In any event, with the exception of the Detroit-Columbus rivalry taking on less importance with the two teams in different divisions, this plan has to excite the Blue Jackets’ front office, at least from a cost-saving perspective. From a competitive balance standpoint, the new division the Blue Jackets would be entering looks exceptionally difficult to compete in. All of the divisions look pretty balanced top to bottom in strength, but, as of now, the Jackets appear to be entering the most competitive one.

The realignment plan looks like it will take effect for next season, assuming it doesn’t face any opposition. It’s doubtful that the NHLPA will have any issue with this new format. It makes a lot of sense from a travel perspective and will lessen the 82-game grind. Any issues from the NHL Board of Governors will probably be nitpicky in nature and should be easily addressed.

The NHL looks destined for this facelift, with room for expansion/relocation in the Western Conference.

As for the Blue Jackets this season, things aren't getting any better anytime soon. James Wisniewski is out indefinitely with a broken bone in his foot. Jack Johnson is dealing with a shoulder injury. Artem Anisimov has a concussion. Brandon Dubinsky has a sprained knee. All four players missed Tuesday night's game against Dallas. Derick Brassard left during the game with a shoulder injury.

The losses continue to mount, as the Blue Jackets have won just five of their 20 games. They are tied for 24th in goals scored, thanks to Tuesday's four-goal outburst, and are now four points worse than anybody else in the Western Conference.

New GM Jarmo Kekäläinen has gotten to look at his team and has introduced himself to every other GM in the league, so the lines of communication are definitely open as teams head towards the trading period for this season. With plenty of injuries, Kekäläinen and the rest of the front office will have some nice samples of information on the younger guys in the organization to see who may be a keeper and who isn't.

They are what most people thought they would be. They work hard, they compete well, and they lack the skill it takes to win games. There's no shame in their effort most nights, they just don't have enough offense to score goals.

It'll be a long couple of months until the end of the season, but with the Kekäläinen and Davidson hires, there's a light at the end of the tunnel.

A brief update on the Lake Erie Monsters, who continue to struggle. They picked up just their second win in February on Tuesday night. They have lost five games this month in a shootout. The schedule is threatening to become a problem. The Monsters hold the #3 seed in the Western Conference because they lead the North Division, but have played 56 games, which are five more than some teams in the conference, including Toronto, who only trails in the division by a point.

The Monsters are in the middle of the pack in goals scored, but have allowed the second-most goals in the Western Conference. They'll have to bear down defensively over the final 20 games to have a chance to make the playoffs.