

# South Hamilton Crossing to be named after local historian Jim Blount

- Mike Rutledge

Staff Writer

4:43 p.m Thursday, June 22, 2017 [Hamilton](#)



Share



Hamilton City Council wants to name South Hamilton Crossing after Jim Blount, former Journal-News editor and a Butler County historian. GREG LYNCH / STAFF

HAMILTON

Jim Blount is likely the Butler County resident most aware of how long drivers and leaders pushed for the South Hamilton Crossing overpass and roadway that finally are being built.

With the \$18 million road construction work known as the South Hamilton Crossing project pleasantly ahead of schedule, members of Hamilton City Council plan to name the finished project in honor of Blount. After all, not only did he write about it in history columns, but as a volunteer chairman for 16 years of the Butler County Transportation Improvement District (and member since 1994), he helped make the project happen.

### **MORE: South Hamilton Crossing project '100 years' overdue**

Something close to “Jim Blount South Hamilton Crossing Overpass,” Mayor Pat Moeller said.

Blount and his wife of 58½ years, Jackie, plan to attend the meeting Wednesday when the council makes that name — or another one close to it — official.

When Moeller and Vice Mayor Carla Fiehrer made plans to visit Blount last weekend, Jackie suspected what might be afoot, but she said her husband, a Hamilton native and Hamilton High School graduate (Class of 1953) had no idea.

“He just started bawling,” Jackie Blount said. “This is like the biggest honor ever. It had never crossed his mind. Ever.”

The boy who grew up in the city’s Fordson Heights neighborhood said he was very touched.

“Unexpected — very appreciated, but unexpected. Kind of humbling,” Jim Blount said. He has been low-energy lately because he is battling multiple myeloma, a form of cancer that he said is expected to go into remission.

“I think it’s well deserved,” Jackie Blount said. “This is a very big deal for him.”

Prior to the naming of the crossing for him, he said his greatest thrill was signing the bonds that financed creation of the Ohio 129 link between Interstate 75 and Hamilton.

“That was something I appreciated very much,” he said.

For at least 106 years, beginning in 1911, Hamiltonians have called, off and on, for the project, which in its current form will better link Ohio 4 with the area that now includes the Miami University Hamilton campus, Vora Technology Park and the city’s West Side. This is accomplished via an overpass above railroad tracks.

### **MORE: Pedicabs coming to Hamilton**

“Jim Blount is truly Mr. Hamilton for a lot of reasons,” Moeller said. “Not only is he the official city historian, but when you consider he has a history of reporting about things going on in Hamilton, through his career as an editor, but you add to that his contributions to transportation in the city of Hamilton — his leadership in the Ohio 129 connector, and of course his leadership in the South Hamilton Crossing project.”

### **RELATED: South Hamilton Crossing ahead of schedule**

“It’s not just naming it after him because of the work he did on South Hamilton Crossing, it’s truly like a lifetime achievement award for what he’s done for Hamilton,” Moeller added.

Property purchases, roadway design and related costs will put South Hamilton Crossing's price tag in the upper-\$20 millions, David Spinney, executive director of the Butler County Transportation Improvement District, which is managing the work, has said.

Blount said one thing "that hasn't been a problem in recent years was the deaths there" at the railroad crossings because of the sharp angle with the roadway, rather than a rail intersection with a 90-degree angle with the roadways. The overpass will make traffic safer.

Also, the crossing will give police, firefighters and paramedics a more reliable way to get across the city during emergencies, especially when trains block the crossing, Blount said.

Blount received degrees in history from the University of Cincinnati (bachelors, 1958) and Miami University (masters, 1964), before becoming a teacher in Hamilton, while working part-time for the Journal-News, where he ultimately became editor from 1971-1986. While at the newspaper, he also taught journalism at Miami University part-time.

After he left the newspaper, he went back to teaching eight more years for Hamilton City Schools. He is a father of two (one deceased), has two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Here are just a few of Blount's past accomplishments:

- He was the leading advocate for the Alexander Hamilton statue in the High Street median downtown.
- He also advocated for the low-level dam south of the downtown, which made the river a more beautiful waterway, rather than one that at some times of the year was only a few feet wide, and "a disaster to look at," he said.
- He was the force behind most of the state historical markers downtown, as well as the Butler County Medal of Honor display at the government services building, as well as the Butler County Police Memorial.
- He was Hamilton Citizen of the Year for 2005.
- He was Hamilton City Schools Teacher of the Year for 1991-1992.
- He wrote a book, newspaper articles, and also created television programs during the early 1990s about the 100th anniversary of Champion Paper, and also worked on projects about the 100th anniversary of the Great Miami River flood.
- He chaired the airport committee during the 1980s, which made the facility a public airport when it was about to be divided into warehouses.
- He's been on local transportation committees since 1984, except a year or two when there was no committee, helping create the High Street railroad underpass east of Martin Luther King Boulevard.
- In a regional role, he was press-box announcer and team record-keeper for the Cincinnati Bengals for 41 seasons, and has a plaque on his wall noting he was an "original Bengal."
- From 1988 to 2009, he wrote a weekly Journal-News column. Since then, he has written columns that have appeared on the Lane Libraries' website. He has given frequent talks throughout the years for the library system.