

State should boost money for Ohio 747

Hamilton Journal

One of the major unfinished road projects in Butler County is the expansion of Ohio 747 to five lanes between Interstate 275 and the Michael A. Fox Highway.

This important project has been in the works for several years and is only partially completed. However, an apparent funding hang-up involving the Ohio Department of Transportation could complicate and delay the rest of the work.

Phase one of the Ohio 747 widening, from I-275 north to Smith Road, was finished in the fall of 2000. But phases two and three have yet to begin.

Phase two involves Smith Road north to Tylersville Road, while phase three extends from Tylersville to Princeton Road. They are of particular importance because these sections of Ohio 747 serve some of the fastest-growing parts of Butler County.

The Butler County Engineer's Office had hoped to start work on phase two early next spring, with work to be completed within a year. The Butler County Transportation Improvement District was to follow the next year with phase three.

But ODOT has indicated that it won't provide the 20 percent of funding that local officials originally thought would be available for the \$6.4 million second phase. Because of other priorities across the State, ODOT now appears willing to fund only 12 percent, according to local officials.

As a result, the Engineer's Office will have to find another \$800,000 of local funding for Ohio 747. Officials have indicated that they can come up with the funds.

While the funding hang-up apparently won't imperil completion of the Ohio 747 widening, it may slow down the construction timetable. It may also cause local officials to use for Ohio 747 that could have been used for other projects.

Ohio 747 is one of the most heavily traveled roads in the northern part of Greater Cincinnati, and it will only be getting busier as development continues in West Chester, Liberty and Fairfield Townships. The widening project is vital to the county and the region, and the state should pay the 20 percent match that local officials had been expecting.