

Interchange link to Liberty: "Director: Project in concept stage" **Pulse Journal**

The Butler County Transportation Improvement District is laying the groundwork for completion of an interchange that will allow motorists to enter Liberty Township from the Michael A. Fox Highway near Interstate 75.

The TID authorized management services on Monday for a justification study of the proposed highway interchange upgrade.

The project is being funded by local governments and calls for an upgrade to a full interchange of the Fox Highway, where it intersects with Interstate 75. It includes a connection to the proposed Cox Road Extension.

"This whole project is in the concept stage," said Michael Samoviski, TID Executive Director. The study addresses environmental concerns, traffic impacts to the area and to I-75, and examines the potential economic impact to surrounding communities.

During this same time, the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments expects to be winding down its own study regarding access issues in Butler and Warren counties. Those results are expected in January.

"Hopefully, they would have decided that the interchange modification is a worthwhile project," Samoviski said. Because the project is funded locally, the completion timeline is greatly altered, he said.

"We'll try to cut five or six years off by not waiting for federal and state funding," Samoviski said. "This way, we won't have to go through the (Transportation Review Advisory Council) process. The next cycle wouldn't be until 2006."

If all goes according to plan, project construction is expected to commence in time for the 2003 construction season, he said. "It should take sometime in the range of 12 months to complete," Samoviski said.

Because the project provides direct access to Liberty Township's new tax increment financing district, township Trustee Bob Shelley describes it as a critical link to attracting business. "I think it's important for the lifeblood of Liberty Township," he said.

"It's important that we complete the interchange and the Cox Road extension for the community so that people can afford to live here - to offset some of the cost of housing development in the township. It's vital for us, for the growth of the township."

Shelley said the new interchange will provide much needed relief for traffic congestion in the area, as well as the potential for economic prosperity. "I think it would help several problems - eliminate part of the traffic at Tylersville (Road) and at State Route 63," he said. "And it will allow for us a good foot to move forward on and have some growth, like at Union Centre Boulevard."