

Bypass project to cost more

Expenses for widening plan jump \$6 million

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HAMILTON — Butler County Transportation Improvement District trustees likely will have to pass the collection plate around again if they want to see Bypass Ohio 4 widened.

Trustees learned at their Monday morning meeting that the cost of widening of the bypass to four lanes and to six lanes between Symmes and Tylersville roads has grown from an estimated \$26.7 million to more than \$32.7 million.

The new estimate was released as the TID prepares to apply for state funding for the project again this year. Last year's application landed in a secondary tier, making state funding unlikely until 2010 or 2011, despite what Trustee Don Dixon called an unprecedented commitment in local funding.

Though local governments were supposed to fund half of what was then a \$27 million project, Butler County commissioners, Fairfield Township trustees and council members from the cities of Fairfield and Hamilton pledged just \$10 million. Though the state isn't asking for any more local money, the TID now will have to find an additional \$6 million under a new plan to move the project forward.

Because it's likely state funding to widen the congested road will come in later than TID trustees would like, they have suggested using local money to widen the bypass south of Tylersville Road at a cost of about \$16 million, then using state funding later to finish the northern end of the project.

Bypass Widening will cost \$6M more

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Dixon, however, said he's frustrated with the strategy. Even though the road is a state highway, he said, local governments were willing to help pay for it. Because that effort wasn't rewarded and because the project could be delayed anyway, why not let the state pay for the entire project, he asked.

"Because it will never get done," TID Trustee and County Engineer Greg Wilkens responded. "It will be 30 years from now and you'll still have a two-lane facility."

After the disappointment over the state's ranking of the project,

Dixon said he's not sure what reaction the TID will get from local governments when it comes asking for more money.

"I'm afraid they might balk," he said.

At Wilkens suggestion, TID Director John Fonner said he will consider applying to the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments for funding to fill the gap.

Trustees also voted to pay consultants M-E Companies nearly \$1.4 million more for engineering plans and environmental studies, but only if local governments agree to reimburse the extra expenses.

The TID has scheduled a public meeting about the project at 5 p.m. April 26 at the Fairfield Public Works building on North Gilmore Road.

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