



CARRIE COCHRAN/JOURNALNEWS

Heavy vehicle traffic on Bypass Ohio 4 has local transportation officials pushing for a plan to widen the road. They held a meeting with residents Tuesday night to get their thoughts on the plan.

TID discusses Bypass Ohio 4

Topic: Widening road to accommodate heavier traffic in future

By CHRIS DUMOND
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FAIRFIELD — Long before Bypass Ohio 4 was built through Fairfield Township and before Butler County's booming development, longtime resident Joan Zelner said she could remember the days when she could ride a horse between Princeton and Tylersville roads.

Local transportation officials say if something isn't done to improve the car-clogged bypass soon, the horse might not be a bad way to go.

The Butler County Transportation Improvement District Board of Trustees will soon apply to the Ohio Department of Transportation for funding for a \$32.7 million project to widen the road to four lanes along its entire length and to six lanes between Symmes and Tylersville roads.

As part of the state's requirements for funding, the TID and engineering consultants M-E Companies held a session Tuesday night to get public feedback on the plan.

"I travel down that road all the time, but the congestion has gotten to the point where I take side roads instead now," said Zelner, who lives off Princeton Road.

She approves of the widening project, but wants to see access along the road restricted. There's no point in widening the road if commercial developers are allowed to put driveways on the bypass, she said.

Without the upgrades, Mike Ciotola, the project manager with M-E, said every intersection along the route will fail state standards for traffic flow by 2030.

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Talk centers on widening road

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On an average day, he said, about 19,500 vehicles use the route — too many for the two-lane road built in the late 1960s. The congestion contributed to 237 wrecks between 1999 and 2003, between three and eight times the average for similar roadways in Ohio. More than 65 percent of those, he said, were rear-end wrecks typical in rush hour.

The widening project could cut the number of wrecks by more than a third. Even with the improvements, he said, engineers may need to consider full-blown interchanges at some of the interchanges by 2030, when the road is projected to handle 6,500 more vehicles each day.

Bob Burke lives north of Tylersville Road on the bypass. If the money is available, Burke said, the sooner the road is widened, the better. The traffic isn't all bad, though, he said.

"Growth creates opportunities," he said. "It means more income taxes and more businesses moving in, which in the long run will help reduce the burden on me as a taxpayer."

Not all who came to the meeting were sold on the idea. Maheville resident Norm Wright said regional transportation money would be better spent on building a bypass between the junction of Interstates 275 and 74 and Interstate 75.

At least half of the money for the Bypass Ohio 4 widening, though, is expected to come from sources within the county. Fairfield, Hamilton, Fairfield Township and the Butler County commissioners have committed \$10 million to the project. TTD Director John Fomner said he is talking to those governments to find another \$6 million to cover the local split.

Last year's application for state money landed in a secondary tier, making state funding unlikely until 2010 or 2011. Because of that, Fomner said, the TTD has suggested building half the project, from Tylersville Road south to Dixie Highway, with local funding in order to get started sooner.

The TTD's latest bid for state transportation dollars will be submitted by May 6, though officials said it is unlikely they will know if the project will move up in priority.