

MONDAY, MAY 2, 2005

# TTD panel seeks funds from state

## Fairfield vice mayor suggests nominee for vacant county transportation board spot

By Candice Brooks  
Journal News

**FAIRFIELD** — The city of Fairfield is seeking to fill a vacant spot on a Butler County transportation board as the panel is attempting to secure funding for a \$32.7 million project to widen Bypass Ohio 4.

Fairfield Vice Mayor Steve Miller suggested Public Works Director Dave Bock fill the second Fairfield representative seat on the Butler County Transportation

Improvement District Board of Trustees left vacant with the death of Wendell Judd late last year.

"There are a lot of issues being considered right now, like the widening of Bypass 4," Miller said last week. "We felt it was probably time to get our other board appointment set on the TTD."

Bock, who oversees four divisions in the public works department, has vast knowledge about road improvement projects and will be another strong representative in addition



**Steve Miller**

to Don Hassler, Fairfield's other representative on the board, Miller said.

By Friday, the TTD will apply to the Ohio Department of Transportation for \$16 million to support the bypass project, said John Romner, executive director of the TTD.

With \$10 million already committed from partner cities, the TTD is seeking an additional \$6 million in local funds for the project. Fairfield and Hamilton

have committed \$2.5 million each toward the project, while the county commission has set aside \$3.5 million, with \$1 million on behalf of Fairfield Township. The township also has plans to contribute \$1.5 million.

Miller said he was concerned about increasing Fairfield's commitment if the county and the township may not be able to use a Tax Increment Financing district or a Resident Incentive District to fund the project as planned. Those plans may be nixed because of a tax reform amendment now in the Ohio Senate could eliminate those options. TIFs and

RIDs allow governments to set aside taxes generated from higher property values for infrastructure projects.

"In Fairfield, we are supportive of the Bypass (Ohio) 4 project, but my biggest concern right now is what is happening at the state level to get rid of TIFs and RIDs because that would impact the funding of the Bypass (Ohio) 4 project tremendously," Miller said. "I think we should wait to see what will happen at the state to know how that is going to affect the overall funding of this project."

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## Panel seeks state funds for bypass

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First Ward Councilman Mike Snyder agreed.

"I'm really not personally committed to moving forward with just our funds," Snyder said. The possible elimination of TIFs "would just change the landscape entirely. That is one big 500-pound gorilla that has to be tamed first. Until that is settled it is just a gleam in our eye because that has such a huge potential impact."

Snyder and Miller said they would both be open to discussing how Fairfield can help because the project would reduce traffic congestion on a road frequented by Fairfield residents. It also would improve Fairfield's marketability for industrial development with improved access in that portion of the First Ward. Most of Fairfield's remaining undeveloped land is zoned industrial and is concentrated on the eastern side of Ohio 4 and near Bypass Ohio 4.

Fonner said a delay may not be needed and could prevent the project from beginning.

"It's my understanding that the Senate is likely to tamper with that, and the House provisions are not likely to survive," Fonner said. "So, is there some risk? Yes. But, it's my understanding that the ability to create new RIDs will be taken away, but the state will leave the existing ones in place, which will not impact funding from the county or Fairfield Township."

Fonner has suggested moving forward with the project with local funds and beginning construction from the bypass intersection with Tylersville Road south to Ohio 4. Other sources for local funding, such as the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Council of Governments, are being sought, Fonner said.

"It would be a crucial mistake to not proceed with the project," Fonner said. "The further we are along, the more committed to the project we appear and it will improve our chances of getting state funding. If we stop now, I think it would kill our chances to get funding from the state."