

Journal News

SATURDAY, JULY 23, 2005

TID tries to revive Ohio 63 plan

Price tag for extension may hit \$119M by 2012

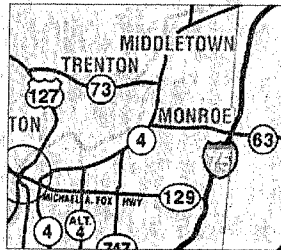
By **CHRIS DUMOND**
BUTLER COUNTY BUREAU

HAMILTON — Butler County Transportation Improvement District trustees met Friday morning to discuss strategies for again moving forward on the Ohio 63 extension project.

John Fonner, the TID director, said he called Friday's special session to get input from the board before the matter comes up before Butler County commissioners next week. There has been little movement on the plan to extend Ohio 63 from Ohio 4 to U.S. 127 since Monroe pulled their support for the project in 2003 and the state withdrew a \$27.7 million funding commitment.

According to Bill Triick, TID member and president of the Chamber of Commerce serving Middletown, Monroe and Trenton, all the cities are again on board with the project. Transportation officials also are exploring the use of tax increment financing as well as a federal loan program that may give

Ohio 63 extension plan revisited



The Butler County Transportation Improvement District is trying to revive a plan to extend Ohio 63 after recent setbacks. If completed, the project would extend Ohio 63 from Ohio 4 to U.S. 127.

Source: Butler County Engineer's Office

local governments a five-year head start on the project.

Hamilton city councilman and TID member Ed Shelton said it's important that the TID pledge long-term support for the project.

"As long as we get our infrastructure projects in place in this county, we will continue to be a leader in economic development," Shelton said.

County Engineer Greg Wilkens, also a TID member, said the best use of the TID may be in organizing the stakeholders and creating a financing plan with the construction management left to his office.

The extension project has long been on the county's wish list in hopes of opening thousands of acres west of the Great Miami River to development and to fulfill a promise made to Miller Brewing Co. in Trenton 25 years ago to extend the road.

A big price tag and the challenge of building the state highway across the river have been stumbling blocks.

Wilkens said the price tag for the project will likely increase substantially by the time any federal money is available for the project. Based on a 2002 estimate and three percent annual inflation, the entire project may cost as much as \$119 million in 2012, he said.

The first leg of the project, extending 63 to Wayne-Madison Road and the Miller plant there, could be as much as \$71 million, he said.

Contact **Chris Dumond** at (513) 820-2025, or e-mail him at cdumond@coxohio.com.