

# Bill paves way for Oxford connector

Federal transit act includes \$14M for Ohio 73-732 link

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**HAMILTON** — Butler County got the green light for the Oxford connector Friday thanks to the two-year delayed federal highway and transit funding bill, which is on its

way to the president's desk.

On top of \$4 million in federal funds already appropriated for the project, the bill earmarks an additional \$14 million to build a connector road between Ohio 73 and Ohio 732, along with other intersection improvements in Oxford.

"What this \$14 million does is it makes the connector road a real project," said David Efland, community development director for

Oxford. "It's going to be built; that is what it means to me. It's going to ensure safety on our roadways and it's going to have a big positive impact on our economic development efforts."

The legislation, which could mean 29 percent more in funding for Ohio roads, is also good news for the state and region.

"We are getting \$320 million more annually over the previous bill's spending levels," said Andrew

Gall, chief of staff for the Ohio Department of Transportation. "This will provide us the ability over the next six years to know that we have adequate funding for local projects."

If signed by the president, the \$286.4 billion legislation will replace a six-year, \$218 million program that expired in 2003. Since then, there have been several extensions while Congress and the administration went back and forth

over the size of new program.

Beyond Butler County, the bill earmarks \$10 million for the Brent Spence Bridge and \$8.5 million to replace the Edward N. Waldvogel Viaduct in Cincinnati. In Warren County, \$2 million could be used to construct an interchange at Interstate 75 and Ohio 22 near the Middletown Regional Hospital.

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### Oxford connector to get \$14 million

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With an estimated \$20 million price tag, the Oxford connector project is a lot closer to getting off the ground after it was downgraded as a funding priority a year ago by ODOT, Efland said. After losing the competition with other interstate projects that seemed to take priority, the federal route proved more successful, he said.

The federal aid will likely require a 20 percent local match, which will first be used for preliminary

engineering and environmental studies for the connector routes, Efland said.

The project, which will connect Ohio 73 and U.S. 27 to the west and Ohio 732 and U.S. 27 to the east, will help reroute truck traffic around Oxford and Miami University and reduce the high rate of traffic accidents.

The connector is just one part of a larger \$93 million project outlined in the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments's Northwest Butler Transportation Study in 2003. Some of the federal aid will support intersection upgrades included in the study along U.S. 27, Ohio 129, 732, 73, and 177.

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