

JournalNews

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Bypass 4 widening may come in 5 chunks

Two-lane road one
of most wreck-prone,
congested in county

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HAMILTON — If one of the most clogged and wreck-prone roads in the county is ever to be widened, the Butler County Transportation Improvement District may have to take a Brussels sprouts approach to the project — one tiny bite at a time.

The TID also agreed at its Monday meeting to end a four-month freeze on engineering work on the Cox Road extension portion of the Liberty Interchange project.

Because the Bypass Ohio 4 project did not rank on the state's preliminary funding list this year, local transportation officials are looking for ways to widen more critical sections of the two-lane road before 2012. The route has between three and eight times the average number of wrecks as comparable roadways in Ohio, according to engineering consultant M-E Companies.

In January, TID trustees considered breaking the bypass project into three parts. Now they're considering doing it in five.

The first phase would widen the road around the Hamilton-Mason Road intersection from about 1,600 feet south of the intersection to about halfway between the intersection and the Ohio 129

interchange. The second phase would surround the Symmes Road intersection from just south of the Norfolk Southern railroad crossing to about a quarter mile south of the intersection.

M-E Companies Senior Vice President Jeff Koehn said it's possible the first two phases may be built simultaneously. The remaining three, though, could be built in any order depending on development, Koehn said.

Phase three would span the gap between the first two phases. Phase four would extend from the second phase to the southern terminus. Phase five would extend from the first phase to the northern terminus.

TID Director John Fonner said Hamilton, Fairfield and Fairfield Township are still negotiating how to best split the estimated \$2.4 million in engineering costs. The state has tentatively committed to half the cost up to \$1.2 million.

The three local jurisdictions are shooting for an agreement by the TID's next meeting on April 10.

As for the Cox Road extension, Fonner said agreements have been reached among property owners about the road's alignment north of Hamilton-Mason Road and how the extension costs will be split between them. The TID had suspended engineering work on the road alignment until such an agreement was reached.

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