

# County could lure \$5M from state

By Chris Dumond  
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**LIBERTY TOWNSHIP** — The state's new Job Ready Sites program could bring up to \$5 million to the Liberty Interchange Project if a local proposal is successful. Butler County Transportation Improvement District officials said they're developing an application to help offset the cost of what has otherwise been proposed as a locally-funded project.

The Ohio Job Ready Sites program was approved last fall as part of a \$2 billion public works and economic

development bond issue. Over the next seven years, the state is expected to disburse \$150 million in connection with the program.

Under the Job Ready Sites program, the state wants to develop large-scale sites to entice manufacturers, sites to bring in office and retail projects and so-called "smart" office sites equipped with the latest communications technology.

TID Director John Fonner said there are plenty of places he could find to spend \$5 million, the maximum allowable grant, in what has become a \$50 million highway project.

"I'm trying to work out whether we

could use it for land acquisition or whether we would use it to help incentivize an office park or a research user," Fonner said. "We have plenty of infrastructure costs, that's for sure."

The Liberty Interchange would connect Hamilton-Mason Road with Interstate 75, widen Hamilton-Mason Road and extend Cox Road north to the Green Crest Golf Course.

Under the Job Ready Sites program, project applications are first sent to the local public works district integrating committee. Then, the top three projects from each district are forwarded to the Ohio Department of Development

for further consideration.

Butler County is part of the 10th district, which also includes Warren, Clermont and Clinton counties. The district is expected to make its recommendation by early September with the final grant announcement for 2006 coming on Nov. 1.

District Liaison Lori Libby said there's interest from economic development officials across the district, but she's not aware of any applications submitted thus far.

For more information about the program, go to [www.odod.state.oh.us/edd/obd/jrs](http://www.odod.state.oh.us/edd/obd/jrs)