

# Bypass project funding short

ODOT is providing less than anticipated for engineering phase.

By Tim Tresslar  
Staff Writer

HAMILTON — Local communities likely will have to shoulder a larger share of the engineering costs for the proposed Bypass Ohio 4 widening as the state grapples with limited funds for transportation improvements.



John Fonner  
Director of  
Butler TID

Engineering for the proposed project will carry an estimated \$2.7 million price tag, said John Fonner, director of the Butler County Transportation Improvement District. Local officials had hoped the Ohio Department of Transportation would kick in about \$1.3 million for that phase, but now anticipate receiving less than that, Fonner said after Monday's TID meeting.

During the next two to three months, local officials will be working with ODOT to determine how much it can provide for the engineering of the \$32 million widening project, Fonner said.

"I think going into the fall, we'll really know where we stand," he said.

ODOT's Transportation Review Advisory Council doles out funding for major improvement projects

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# Bypass Communities must pay more

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such as the bypass widening. But the council has too many projects vying for too little money, said Scott Varner, an ODOT spokesman.

In addition, the legislature has required the council to fund first tier projects — those close to construction with identified funding sources, Varner said. During the next five years, the agency faces a \$1.5 billion deficit as it pays for projects at that stage.

Fonner said a loss of state and federal money wouldn't derail the project but could force local communities to pay a bigger share of engineering fees and also lengthen the time the project will take.

"It's not unusual for projects like this to get done in phases over a multi-year period," he said.

TID officials also hope to receive ODOT approval by August for a preliminary engineering report for Bypass Ohio 4, Fonner said. The report needs the state's OK before engineering consultants, M-E Companies, can begin design work, Fonner said.

Also at Monday's TID meeting, the board approved a measure calling for the agency to buy six parcels of property needed for the Liberty Interchange project. The total for the acquisitions can't exceed \$7.1 million.

Fonner said the purchases should close within two weeks, giving the county about 70 percent of the right of way needed for the project.

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