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Bypass 4 widening fails to make ODOT's top priority list

Status means funds could be hard to get

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Journal News

HAMILTON — Unanswered questions and a lack of a federal highway spending bill could keep Ohio from making the Bypass Ohio 4 widening project a top priority, transportation officials learned Monday.

Local transportation officials are working on a plan to improve traffic flow along the two-lane

bypass, which can back up for miles under today's conditions.

Those plans call for widening the entire bypass to four lanes with improvements to the inter-sections. An alternative plan calls for further widening the route to six lanes between Tylersville Road and Symmes Road.

However, Ohio Department of Transportation staffers did not recommend the project for funding at the priority level TTD board members would have liked, according to a report at Monday's Butler County Transportation

Improvement District meeting.

Diana Martin, the ODOT District 8 planning administrator, said staff recommended that the project be put on Tier 2 status with the state Transportation Review Advisory Council. Martin said Tier 2 projects are not recommended for funding before 2011.

"It's an important project," Martin said. "We'd like to see it continue. We just don't know what the future funding capacity is for development." John Fomner, the director

of the TTD, said Congress's failure to approve a transportation spending bill is one of the greatest obstacles confronting the project. Martin said ODOT staff also wanted to see more from the TTD in terms of a firmer project cost estimate and a decision on whether to go with the four-lane plan or the six-lane plan.

Fomner said Monday that private project manager ME Compaines reported early construction estimates of between \$25.5 million and \$27 million, depending

on how many lanes are built.

Butler County Engineer Greg Wilkens said ODOT representatives also have questioned the 2030 traffic estimates that call for the six-lane portion of the expansion, believing them to be too high. Martin said ODOT has not taken an official position on the matter.

If Fairfield, Fairfield Township and Hamilton continue to develop as planned, Wilkens said, the estimates won't be far off the mark.

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Bypass

Traffic concern for TTD officials

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TTD member Don Dixon said

that if the road isn't widened the county will be faced with a non-functioning traffic system.

Members of TRAC are scheduled to vote on the Bypass Ohio 4 project status at their Jan. 11 meeting.

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