

ODOT has few highway projects for area this year

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COX NEWS SERVICE

MONROE — There's good news for Warren and Butler county drivers in dealing with orange barrels this year.

Ohio Department of Transportation officials Tuesday announced the 2006 Ohio road construction projects. They include several that will impact driving into Cincinnati or Kentucky using Interstate 75 and Interstate 275 in Hamilton County, but only two projects will impact driving in Warren and Butler counties.

"It's a big season for Hamilton County and northern Kentucky, though (U.S.) 22 and 3 tends to be a large job," said ODOT spokeswoman Liz Lyons, referring to a \$45 million project to

widen Montgomery Road from Hamilton County into Warren County.

That road widening already has started just north of the city of Montgomery and will end nearly three miles north of the Warren/Hamilton county line. But widening in Warren County isn't slated to begin until fall 2008 and end in late 2009, officials said.

Meantime, one project to impact local driving is an \$8 million emergency replacement of the Ohio 63 bridge at I-75 in Warren County. The two- to three-year project is already under way and precedes by three years plans for an upgrade to the entire interchange because repairs to the bridge couldn't wait.

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"It's in desperate need of repairs and has had some crumbling debris fall from it," said Sharon Smigielski, an ODOT spokeswoman.

Two lanes of traffic in each direction, with left turn lanes, will be maintained along Ohio 63. Lane closures along I-75 will be announced as needed. The interchange upgrade will take another three years to complete, said Jon Milesky, an ODOT

project manager.

In Butler County, wrapping up this year is the replacement of the High-Main Bridge in the city of Hamilton. That project began in late 2004 and is set for completion this fall.

In all, officials said a total of \$1.4 billion for 88 construction projects will take place this year — up from \$1.3 billion in 2005, \$1.2 billion in 2004 and \$1.1 billion in 2003.

Of this year's \$1.4 billion, an estimated \$590 million is earmarked for Gov. Bob Taft's Jobs and Progress Plan.

Of the 88 projects either finishing up or commencing this construction season, 45 are for interstate improvements throughout

the state.

In southwest Ohio, that includes the repair and widening of I-275 and the continued resurfacing of Interstate 74.

Work to I-275 includes repair of 28 bridge structures. Also scheduled is the widening of that highway in Hamilton County from Winton Road to just east of Ohio 42 — a \$110 million project slated to begin in November, with completion in October 2009. Traffic will be maintained with single- and two-lane closures between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. during the work week.

Work on Interstate 74 runs from the Indiana state line to the city of Harrison. At least one lane of traffic is maintained.