

Trenton claims land for future

\$2.8M buy to fund Ohio 63 extension

By MEGHAN CROSBY
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TRENTON — The city of Trenton is putting its money where its mouth is to encourage future economic growth in the area.

City Council last month approved the purchase of 184 acres of land along Wayne-Madison and Kennel Roads.

The \$2.8 million purchase — \$15,000 per acre — is intended to support the city's new, 20-year comprehensive plan, which focuses on commercial and industrial growth.

The crux of that plan is a proposed extension of Ohio 63 westward, a development that has long been touted by city leaders as the best way to spur growth and reduce residents' tax burden.

Trenton City Manager Patrick Titterington said the city is serious about protecting the corridor from developments that could block the future road's route.

That happened before.

In 2004 the city failed to purchase land for the original extension route.

The original route has since been blocked by continuing development of Monroe's Colonial Manor subdivision.

With the recent land purchase, city leaders are preserving right of way for the extension so that doesn't happen again.

Failure to purchase ground two years ago has added at least \$10 million more to the project, said Butler County Commissioner Michael Fox.

"The state became impatient. It sent a signal that we didn't have our act together," Fox said.

Last year, the state rescinded \$27 million it had dedicated to the project.

Titterington and Fox are optimistic that funding will be recommitted.

The decision also delayed the beginning of construction and jeopardized state funding, Fox said.

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"There's no question construction would have already begun."

The land purchase is the second major step Trenton has taken towards the project.

In January, the city entered into a contract with the Butler County Transportation Improvement District to raise money for

the project.

The intergovernmental agreement allows Trenton to use money generated from Residential Incentive Districts (RIDS) to fund the Ohio 63 extension.

The city expects to raise \$12 million for the project over 30 years, Titterington said.

Trenton is the only municipality that has committed funds to the project, estimated to cost about \$100 million.

Fox called Trenton's purchase "extraordinarily visionary" and said it will benefit the city beyond preserving the right of way.

"Once the project is built the price of that land will go up to \$30,000 an acre in no time," he said. "They will be able to sell that land and finance the project with profits."

The city of Monroe is supportive of the project but will not commit funds to it, said city manager Bill Brock.

"We've never done anything to block it," he said. "It doesn't do anything for Monroe but generate more traffic. But we understand the regional impact of it."

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