

Regional highway group taking shape

Columbus-Pittsburgh Corridor Committee ready to put on pressure

By **PAUL GIANNAMORE**

Business editor

NEWCOMERSTOWN — Economic development representatives, county commissioners, business leaders and others from a seven-county region stretching from Franklin County to Jefferson County are pushing ahead with efforts to have a four-lane highway connect-

ing Columbus to Pittsburgh built.

The Columbus-Pittsburgh Corridor Committee met at the Hampton Inn off I-77 Friday morning with about 35 people in attendance. The group heard much about the Ohio Department of Transportation's interpretation of the state budget and its impact on projects that aren't in the construction phase.

The group wants a highway

stretching from Columbus to U.S. Route 22 to provide a more direct link to Pittsburgh than exists today with congested Interstate 70 and I-79.

Rick Platt, executive director of the Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority, a former director of Jefferson County's Progress Alliance economic development group, said of the 160 miles, about

40 miles remain to be completed.

Representatives from along the corridor stressed the economic development needs the highway could meet.

The corridor involves state Route 161 from I-270 to state Route 16 at Newark and over to U.S. Route 36 near Coshocton. Route 36 goes

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