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Committee Discusses Progress of Columbus to Pittsburgh Corridor

KEYWORD

Friday, April 25, 2008 5:16 PM
Lauren Bindley



The Committee Met at the Longaberger Golf Club



Rick Platt & David Brenner



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The Columbus to Pittsburgh Corridor Committee met Friday morning at the Longaberger Golf Club to discuss the corridor's recent progress.

Rick Platt, Executive Director of the Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority and a member of the committee, says



they have been actively involved with the project for quite some time.

"We have a committee of seven counties that has been coming together now for going on a year. Actually, it is a group that spun off of one that has been around for ten years. It is talking about how we keep the key projects that remain to be completed along the 160-mile corridor going. All together, 75% of the corridor is already complete. Most people already know it is there, but many don't think of it as a corridor concept. So, really what we are doing is coming together and saying, 'let's get all of our forces together as counties behind those four key projects to get them done and moving forward.'"

Co-Chair of the committee David Brenner says the projects are in various stages.

"The four key projects have been identified and they are in various stages of development, meaning there are 14 steps needed to enhance or improve a particular highway. Some of these are in stage one, two or three, typically. We have one that has not even gotten to the table just yet, but we are optimistic that all four will reach that point."

Platt explains where the funding is coming from.

"Like all around Ohio, we have always relied on gas tax revenue from both the federal and state gas tax sources. So, part of this effort is 'how do we make sure that we have the force to make sure we are on the list.' There are so many demands on ODOT's funding from around the state. Our message, I think, as a group is, 'don't forget about the suburban and rural parts of Ohio.' The urban pieces of this corridor are already done. It's now time to connect those pieces."

Brenner says all of the hard work will pay off in the end.

"It will result in a four-lane, limited access highway between Columbus and Pittsburgh. We think that it is a really important economic development tool for central Ohio. It will also relieve some congestion and traffic on Interstate 70 and it will cut down on the mileage traveled between the two cities. We think overall it will create jobs and business opportunities along this corridor that has enjoyed limited development."

Platt agrees and says the corridor will be a great thing for Licking County.

"This gives us a cutting edge in terms of being not only part of the I-70 corridor that has been around for many years, but now being part of another corridor that really truly connects two trade markets, Columbus and Pittsburgh. We have the ability to provide jobs and industrial development opportunities on a corridor between those two cities."

Brenner adds that the committee is in it for the long haul.



Newark, OH

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- **Spaghetti Dinner**

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"Our commitment is to stay engaged on this steering committee until such time as the last yard of concrete is poured. So, simply because I might get something completed in Licking County is not license for me to leave the table. I need to be as committed to efforts around Steubenville, or elsewhere in the state."

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