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Group hopes corridor project on road to fruition

BY KATHIE DICKERSON • STAFF WRITER • MARCH 14, 2009

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WEST LAFAYETTE - As they begin the second year of a formal committee, the Columbus-Pittsburgh Corridor heard some news that made them believe completion of some of their tasks may be accomplished someday.

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The group met Friday at Raven's Glenn Winery and Restaurant near West Lafayette.

"The Licking County Economic Stimulus Task Force, composed of both elected officials and private individuals, has recommended the Cherry Valley exchange be a top priority for stimulus money," said David Brenner, corridor committee co-chair and vice president of administration of White Oak Partners, a Granville [business](#).

The focus of the group since it formed late in 2007, is to push forward the completion of a 160-mile stretch of highway that would directly connect Columbus and Pittsburgh.

The Ohio 16-Cherry Valley Road intersection is one focus, as well as a 10-mile stretch of Ohio 16 from Ohio 60 to Coshocton; a 28-mile stretch from Newcomerstown to Cadiz; and Ohio 22 near Cadiz needs part of it completed to four-lane.

Ohio Department of Transportation representatives informed the group a study is underway to move forward on the improvements from Newcomerstown to Cadiz. Part of that includes exploring the feasibility of a toll road, something the committee discussed at its last meeting.

Reports back from the seven counties involved seemed to be that a toll would be ok as long as it was only on new roads and was not a hardship on [businesses](#).

Bill Habig, board chairman with Transportation Matters, addressed the committee Friday.

A new organization, Transportation Matters, is working statewide to bring extra funding to transportation for Ohio.

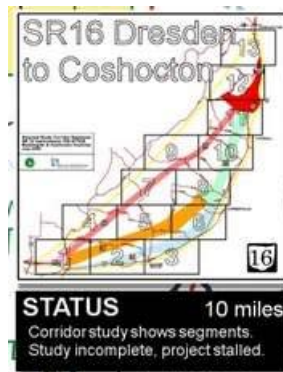
"We need state [money](#), private money and local money to actually get the job done," he said. "One of the problems we face is the gas tax falling short as cars get more efficient. We need to develop sustaining revenue sources, including a diverse and expanded set of funding ideas."

One that is being implemented - a Transportation Initiative Authority - Habig recommended the group express an interest in right away.

Part of ODOT's new [budget](#) includes setting up four trial TIAs around the state, he said.

Forming a Transportation Initiative Authority would allow local governments to partner on important roadway, public transit, passenger rail and other transportation projects.

Co-chairman T.J. Justice, executive director of the Coshocton Port Authority, recommended the group get an



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expression of interest in being a trial TIA to the state as soon as possible.

Goals of Transportation Matters are to promote advocacy, partnership and education.

"My concern has been and continues to be that Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati get all the attention, and if we can join for \$250 and have voice I think it would be worthwhile," said Jerry Nolder, executive director of the Zanesville-Muskingum County Port Authority.

The group voted to join Transportation Matters.

The group also heard from Sandy Mapel, director of the Licking County Area Transportation Study.

Road projects will be moving ahead in Ohio, as half of the state's money for transportation has to be spent by June 30, she said.

"With inflation being so high, there are a lot of projects out there that were put on hold, but are ready to go," she said. "There are also some simple projects, like resurfacing, that can be done."

Justice also presented a spreadsheet report being prepared by a work program at the Coshocton County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.


In it various counties along the corridor have submitted information about tourism, industry and available property.

The group set its next meeting date for Friday, April 17, in Steubenville, with the exact location to be announced.

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