

# Four lanes, no jangled nerve cells

I have seen the alternative to I-70 and it is good.

It also can be better.

I hesitate to describe the route I took to Indianapolis for this year's Brickyard 400 because the last thing I want is for the clot of bad drivers to move from the Interstates to the back roads, but here it is.

Take U.S. 22 to U.S. 250 at Cadiz. Take 250 over to U.S. Route 36. Go through Coschocton on 36 and eventually pick up Ohio Route 16. Follow 16, much of which is already four lanes, to Ohio 116, which is a nice expressway bypass of Newark that takes us to I-270 and the uncivilized world of Interstates again.

For those who care, I get back on U.S. Route 40 at Richmond, Ind., and follow that to I-465 at Indianapolis.

All in all, it turns a five-hour Interstate fright trip into a six-or-so hour trip that is largely enjoyable, and survivable.

My real reason for taking the Ohio portion of this route (I started taking 40 through Indiana years ago to miss I-70 construction traffic jams), was attached to local development efforts. And it's not my route anyway.

Rick Platt of Alliance 2000 has been trying to get the state interested in finishing a four-lane highway corridor that needs the completion of a portion of Ohio Route 16 over to U.S. Route 36 at Coschocton. That would provide an almost-complete four-lane alternative to the area.



**PAUL  
GIANNAMORE**

The Longaberger Co., makers of fine baskets, fabrics and home decor, have paid largely for the extension of state Route 16's expressway to the back-door of the company's main factory at Frazeyburg. The highway, incidentally, passes by the office building designed to look like a basket that serves as Longaberger's headquarters at Newark.

Anyway, the four-lane highways of Ohio open up the state to many opportunities and scenic vistas.

But, frankly, right now, they are a bit jumbled.

You can take Route 30 as a four-lane highway from Canton to Mansfield. You can take Route 116 from Columbus to east of Newark and then take 16 to Longaberger's.

Route 22 connects Steubenville and Cadiz for now.

There has to be a way to make the U.S. and state highway network work for drivers. The Interstates are the home of semi trucks and, from my experience, lousy sport-utility-vehicle and minivan drivers. They're not safe, nor are they fun family travel highways anymore.

Alternatives are almost available except for a few miles here and there.

For that reason alone, I find it hard not to support the extension of Route 16 and the elimination of the need to drive on two-lane roads between here and Columbus except around Tappan Lake, and while avoiding I-70.

Incidentally, don't let anyone tell you truckers aren't already using Route 250 as a two-lane road. Driving home in last Sunday evening's lightning storm, I had to dodge about one oncoming semi every minute or so. So the commerce connection for our area can be completed with a few miles more of highway in the middle of the state.

We've built Route 22 and completing it all the way to Cambridge as a four-lane highway would be decades off, if it ever gets the state's interest at all.

But a four-lane that is finished all but several miles might be the access answer that would connect us to Columbus, Interstate notwithstanding.

It's up to our area to keep the state interested. That's a tough sell when the voters are mostly in Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati. But there is more to Ohio than that.

And if the state becomes interested, perhaps a new route number can be worked up that would allow vehicles to follow one route over these highways between Columbus and Steubenville.

(Giannamore, a resident of Toronto, is news editor of the Herald-Star.)