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Article published Nov 6, 2007

## Cherry Valley/16 needs an answer

We thought we were getting a thoroughfare with the widening of Ohio 161/37. But with a further delay in changes to the Cherry Valley Road-Ohio 16 intersection, we might be getting a funnel.

This intersection will be the only traffic light between Dayton Road and Columbus. All the traffic that backs up at the intersection will likely get much worse as traffic increases after the widening.

The problem is money and time. To be sure, a Cherry Valley Road-Ohio 16 interchange with connecting roads and bridges will be costly. But the state has mandated construction on what it calls Tier I projects must be under way before any Tier II projects can move up the ladder.

Guess which tier the interchange is stuck in.

Moreover, since the interchange now looks to be years down the road, further planning, with the help of \$1.8 million in federal funds, won't be done either. Since such work has a limited "shelf life," it might be a waste to spend it now only to have the project delayed further and require a new study.

We're all for saving tax dollars. But we are going to have quite a problem at this intersection in 2009 when the Ohio 37/161 expressway opens.

The delays are a big part of it. But safety also is a concern, and it's been so for a while.

"Almost 50 percent of the collisions at that intersection are rear-end," Matt Hill, of the Licking County Area Transportation Study, told the Ohio Department of Transportation in 2005. "The collisions are so far back from the light because the motorist does not anticipate traffic stopping so far from the intersection."

Earlier that year, Hill told the Licking County commissioners that the intersection, with no changes, "About 2011, ... is projected to be an F, a failure."

We understand Gov. Ted Strickland is stepping into this as the new governor. But ODOT and other former state leaders lobbied hard to separate funding for the expressway and interchange projects to allow for quicker construction of the former.

That's happened, but the promise to keep Cherry Valley on the fast track appears to be abandoned.

It's apparent something has to be done -- even if only a temporary measure -- that coincides with the widening of Ohio 37/161. If not, there will be little celebration when it's completed. Traffic congestion will bring howls of poor planning and hamper the economic good the widening will do for the area.

We urge state, county and city officials to do all they can to devise a plan that will at least fill in the gap until the interchange can get under way.

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