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## **Proposed Cherry Valley interchange still a decade away Gaps remain in Columbus-Pittsburgh corridor**

By KENT MALLET

Advocate Reporter

HANOVER -- The proposed Ohio 16 interchange at Cherry Valley Road, supported by the Columbus-Pittsburgh Corridor Committee and local officials, still might be a decade away.

Sandy Mapel, director of the Licking County Area Transportation Study, said the organization's preliminary long-range planning document estimates construction for 2016-20.

The estimate also assumes the use of nontraditional funds to supplement or replace state and federal appropriations, which have been shrinking in recent years for Ohio Department of Transportation projects.

The seven-county Columbus-Pittsburgh Corridor Committee met Friday at Longaberger Golf Club, near Hanover, to discuss its goal of completing a 160-mile, four-lane, limited-access highway connecting the two major Midwest cities.

Newark's City Council will begin Monday night to consider a resolution of support for the Cherry Valley Road interchange, which would avoid taking traffic 13 miles along a limited-access divided highway from New Albany to Granville into a congested intersection with a traffic signal at Cherry Valley Road.

Granville's Village Council already has approved the resolution. The goal is to secure a \$2 million federal earmark, which requires a \$455,000 local match.

T.J. Justice, director of the Coshocton Port Authority, said a shift in philosophy at ODOT has jeopardized completion of the corridor.

"The old philosophy was every one of the projects, they continued with planning, and that's what has stopped," Justice said. "If we don't push to have each of these stages continued, they never will get built."

The interchange at Cherry Valley Road is one of five sections of the corridor which are not yet a four-lane, limited-access highway. The others are:

- New Albany to Granville on Ohio 161/37, to be completed in December 2009;
- A 10-mile stretch on Ohio 16 from Ohio 60 to Coshocton, now estimated to cost \$200 million, on state's Tier 2 project list;
- A 28-mile stretch from Newcomerstown to Cadiz on U.S. 36 and U.S. 250, or a new route, not on state's project list;
- About two miles just east of Cadiz on U.S. 22, with no studies started.

Rick Platt, executive director of the Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority told committee members about his recent testimony in front of the Ohio Senate's Highways and Transportation Committee. Platt encouraged spending funds outside of the state's three major urban centers of Columbus, Cleveland and Cincinnati.

"Seven counties, including two of the nation's strong economic markets -- Columbus and Pittsburgh -- along with urban and rural communities along the corridor route benefit from finishing the last 25 percent of the corridor for, even by the most pessimistic estimates, for less than doing just one of two miles of the projects in Columbus or Cleveland," Platt told the senate committee.

State Sen. Joy Padgett, R-Coshocton, said the state's rural areas are being left out of the planning process for road projects. She demonstrated her point with a map showing where members of a state transportation task force live.

"If you are any part of rural Ohio, you are not part of this task force," Padgett said. "It's nothing to do with political parties, but

everything to do with regional politics."

Scott Varner, an ODOT spokesman, said Padgett's allegation makes assumptions about the 55 members of the Ohio 21st Century Transportation Priorities Task Force.

"While their offices may be in Columbus, their mind-set is to represent Ohioans from across the state," Varner said. "An example is the Farm Bureau. Simply because their office is in Columbus doesn't mean they come to the table with just a Columbus viewpoint."

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