

Corridor group: One number, please

Asking ODOT to establish consistent numbering system

By **PAUL GIANNAMORE**
Business editor

NASHPORT — Drivers may one day in the near future hop on state Route 161 at the Ohio end of the Veterans Memorial Bridge and follow that route number all the way to I-270 northeast of Columbus.

The Columbus-Pittsburgh Corridor Committee on Friday passed a resolution during its quarterly meet-

ing, held at the Longaberger Golf Club, to ask the Ohio Department of Transportation to establish a consistent numbering system for the corridor.

Currently to tell a driver to follow the corridor from Steubenville to I-270 would mean telling the driver to follow U.S. Route 22 west to U.S. Route 250 at Cadiz, then to west U.S. Route 36 at New Comerstown, then state Route 16 west from Coshocton to a segment of state Route 37 west of Granville, then onto

state Route 161 west to I-270.

Rick Platt, director of the Licking County Port Authority and a former director of Jefferson County's Progress Alliance economic development agency, said it doesn't make sense to talk of a half dozen route numbers in a 120-mile corridor.

Platt said he has told the plant manager for Bayer Corp. in Licking County to use the corridor to get to the Bayer center at Pittsburgh, but it's hard to describe the route because of all the different high-

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way numbers. He said without actually making a turn off the pavement at I-270 and state Route 161 at Columbus, a driver is put on several different-numbered routes.

The corridor committee is working toward getting highway projects completed to make an expressway joining segments of already completed four-lane highway from the New Albany area near Columbus to the Ohio River at Steubenville. Members said it will be up to ODOT, but consensus seemed to favor looking into using the state Route 161 designation for the entire length of the corridor, because 161 ends west of Granville.

Licking County Commissioner Doug Smith said the multiple highway route numbers can be life-threatening in presenting confusion in dispatching emergency services already in Licking County. He said the corridor is called the Route 161 corridor in Licking County when economic development

issues are discussed.

The group also decided to start looking into what kind of legislative action would be needed for an official name for the highway route. A tourism group that has formed along with the corridor committee is already working on using a motto, "There's more to explore on the Corridor: Columbus-Pittsburgh Corridor."

Harrison County Commissioner Barb Pincola asked if the marketing name would matter if it's not adopted in West Virginia or Pennsylvania. Committee co-chairman T.J. Justice, director of the Coshocton County Port Authority, noted there is precedent in Ohio for both using a route designation and a highway name for a highway that crosses most of Ohio but continues beyond the West Virginia border without the same name. He said Ohio Route 32 is called the Appalachian Highway in southern Ohio and takes drivers into West Virginia on U.S. Route 50.

Regardless of the high-

way's name, projects still need to be done to complete the four-lane expressway, including building about 28 miles through Harrison County that would replace the current U.S. Route 250 that winds along through Tappan Lake on the way from Cadiz to New Comerstown.

An impact study being done for the Ohio Department of Transportation is

scheduled to be completed by June 2010, according to Tom Stratton of ODOT District 11. He said there are a number of issues already identified along a mile-wide corridor that could include the eventual highway route between Tappan and Clendenning lakes, including more than 100 cemeteries. He noted the mile-wide area is not the final path of the

highway but would include potential paths for the route to take. When asked by corridor co-chairman David Brenner, a Licking County businessman, if the issues around Tappan are insurmountable, Stratton said there are a number of "red flags" through the area, but he did not say a route couldn't be developed.

The committee will

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choose new officers during its next meeting, scheduled for Oct. 23 at Ravens Glen Winery in West Lafayette. Justice and Ed Looman, director of Progress Alliance, are slated to be voted on as co-chairmen for a two-year term.

(Giannamore can be contacted at pgiannamore@heraldstaronline.com.)