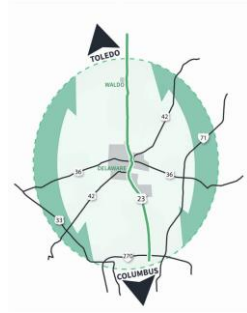


US Route 23 funding goes forward

By **GARY BUDZAK**



The U.S. 23 Corridor project will be receiving \$15 million in funding for development, the Ohio Department of Transportation announced this week.

U.S. Route 23 is among the 27 projects across the state the Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC) approved from ODOT's Major New Capacity Program over the next four years. The \$321.9 million includes \$167.4 million for development and \$224.5 million for construction. There were 31 projects that were considered by the TRAC.

The U.S. 23 Corridor project will receive \$7.5 million in fiscal year 2024 and \$7.5 million in fiscal year 2025 for "preliminary engineering activities to implement roadway improvements" from Waldo to Delaware, ODOT said. This will include detailed design in 2024 and right-of-way acquisition in 2025. As of yet, no money has been committed to fiscal year 2026, which would possibly be when construction would start.

As Gazette readers know, the 23 Corridor project has taken a few twists and turns.

According to Route 23 Connect, the Delaware Regional Connection Study page on the ODOT website, "the study is shifting its focus to planning and implementing a series of stand-alone improvement projects along the existing U.S. 23 corridor between Waldo and Interstate-270. The next phase of the study will inform an action plan that recommends and prioritizes specific projects along U.S. 23 to provide safer and more efficient travel, including increased travel time reliability for through traffic."

The U.S. 23 Corridor is considered a Tier II project, meaning it is recommended for development activities before becoming available for construction (Tier I) in an upcoming four-year period. A third tier of projects is more long-range in nature. The TRAC (consisting of state-appointed members) operates on an annual application cycle, and its nine members vote on the program list for the tiers.

"In keeping with Governor Mike DeWine's vision, transportation is connecting all regions of Ohio to a prosperous future," said ODOT Director Jack Marchbanks in a news release. Marchbanks chairs the TRAC.

Four other central Ohio projects of note are in line for development commitments:

- I-270 and I-71 (Franklin County) \$2 million for detailed design activities to implement ramp/interstate improvements,
- U.S. 23 and state Route 762 (Pickaway County) \$8 million for preliminary engineering and detailed designed activities for a new interchange,
- S.R. 13 (Knox County) \$3.3 million for right-of-way activities to implement relocation of S.R. 13,
- U.S. 33 Corridor (Refugee Road in Franklin County to Fairfield County Line) \$19 million for preliminary engineering activities to implement roadway improvements and a new interchange at Bixby Road.

In other ODOT news, the agency is seeking public comments on its 2024-2027 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. Comments can be made online (www.transportation.ohio.gov), by email or postal mail through April 10.