

County's TID assists road projects

By [GARY BUDZAK](#) July 17, 2023



The Delaware County Transportation Improvement District (TID) met on June 14 in the Historic Courthouse, 91 N. Sandusky St. in Delaware.

According to the county, the TID “is an independent unit of government created in May 2018 by the Delaware County Board of Commissioners with the mission of facilitating transportation improvement projects throughout Delaware County and promoting intergovernmental cooperation on the planning and construction of roads and bridges and leveraging public-private partnerships to improve mobility in growing areas of Delaware County.”

Rob Riley, of the Delaware County Engineer's Office, discussed Home Road and Sawmill Parkway. Among the parkway's busier intersections in the county is at Home Road, near Olentangy Liberty High School in Liberty Township.

Riley said all but one small invoice for this project had been paid — “it's basically 99% done... pretty minimal work remaining.”

Since the one bill was outstanding at the time of the meeting, the TID could not approve a resolution of the Certificate of Completion for the Home Road and Sawmill Parkway improvements. However, it would do so at its next meeting.

“Good news, we will be significantly under budget on this project, so we'll have some money we need to return to the county road and bridge fund that was advanced,” Riley said.

The county's 2022 Road Construction Guide said the project widened Home Road to five lanes through the Sawmill Parkway intersection, with turn lanes added there and at Home and Liberty roads. A shared use path will be started this fall.

Riley said with regards to Sawmill Parkway phase G2, there have been discussions with the City of Delaware about the extension to Section Line Road. Riley said ODOT saw the value of the extension and is offering \$250,000 in grant funding as opposed to the TID's \$200,000 grant. The city is also getting \$1.875 million from the Department of Development towards the project, which includes the Sawmill Point Business Park. Utilities are there, it just requires a road pushed a little farther west for the access.

“The city, based on the last conversation I had with them, is committing to move ahead with that project and fund the balance,” Riley said. The TID assisted with a \$500,000 grant for the previous phase in 2022. “I think the city is committed to take it from this point on,” he said.

Riley also gave a status report on the Interstate 71 routes 36/37 interchange project. Riley said a recent first public hearing the Ohio Department of Transportation held on the project "was very well-attended." ODOT has been working on an environmental study update for over a year, he said. The study was originally approved in 2017 and should be available again to review this fall.

"The recommended alternatives are very similar to the ones that have been previously proposed," Riley said of the project. "The alignment of the interchange shifts slightly north. Fortunately, we've been discussing this for some time now and so our final design ... is completely consistent (with the alternatives)."

The Sunbury Parkway portion of the project has been aligned slightly differently on Wilson Road so as to avoid a transmission line, Riley said. "Secondly, where the road will cross Little Walnut Creek, that's been shifted south slightly for hydraulic reasons. It'll be a single bridge versus potentially two structures, and it won't create any additional flooding impacts upstream. It's more of a technical issue than a property issue."

It was noted that the Sunbury Parkway portion of the project is now being ODOT-driven. The original plan was for developers to build out the road as they needed but that never materialized. In addition, the eastern portion will be a later phase of the project, with I-71 to the west being phases a, b and c. That means there could be changes to who's responsible for the eastern portion down the road, so to speak.

The latest public comments will be reviewed to see if any changes are warranted, the TID was told.

"We are working ahead in an effort to shorten the timeline of the project," Riley said. Right-of-way plans are being finalized, for example, so acquisitions could possibly start this fall. "We are probably a good year or more ahead of where we would have been had the TID not stepped in towards final design."

Another quickly evolving project is improving South County Line Road at Route 62 (Johnstown Road) with the Licking County TID. This will address a traffic flow problem on SR 62 and two skewed intersections (including Beech Road) with Intel on the way. He admitted that there was a long way to go on that project.

"If you look at the southeast corner of the county, we really don't have very good connections to the regional highway network," Riley said. State Route 161 goes through Franklin and Licking counties, and can be reached by Sunbury Road, which goes through parts of Westerville.

"We should be interested in establishing County Line Road as a good north-south corridor getting to southeast Delaware County from 161 up all the way to (route) 37. It would free movement of all kinds of commerce," Riley said.

He said there are now quite a few projects involving Harlem Township due to the Intel effect.

"We've identified three intersections on County Line Road starting up at Route 37 — that's a skewed intersection, it's got some safety issues. The second is what Licking County calls their five points (including Center Village, Duncan Plains and Edwards roads). Finally, toward our southeast corner of the county at Fancher Road."

All three intersections are projected to see much more traffic, since some of the Intel employees will be from Delaware County. ODOT districts 5 and 6 are teaming up for funding applications.

Lastly, Riley mentioned Bale Kenyon Road in Orange Township. The TID is providing \$500,000 in assistance, with construction to be half completed this year. Utility conflicts will prevent the entire project from being completed in 2023. Bale Kenyon is currently closed 0.7 miles south of Lewis Center Road.

Potential economic development projects that could use TID help, such as Berlin Business Park and southern Harlem Township, were also discussed. It was noted that some township roads have an undue burden placed on them due to business traffic, and would they be better served as being converted into county roads. It was said that getting trustees on board would be needed.

Chris Bauserman, Delaware County Engineer, chairs the TID. County Administrator Tracie Davies is the vice chair, and Patrick Blayney, longtime engineer, serves on the TID. Seiji Kille serves as the secretary/treasurer. Officers remained unchanged at this organizational meeting.

Also present were Ohio Sen. Andrew Brenner who is on the Transportation Committee and gave a state budget update, and County Commissioner Gary Merrell.

The TID met previously on Jan. 11. Meetings in April and May, as well as on July 12, were cancelled. The TID next meets on Aug. 9. For more information, visit co.delaware.oh.us.