

\$32M project kicks off

New interchange, Sunbury Parkway in works

By Gary Budzak - July 31, 2025

Berkshire Twp. — Years in the making, the City of Sunbury and other partners have finally broken ground on the Sunbury Parkway project, in a ceremony taking place Thursday.

Sunbury Parkway is a \$31.9 million Ohio Department of Transportation project to build a new exit 4,000 feet to the south of U.S. Route 36/state Route 37 interchange, with a new bridge and new ramps connecting to South Wilson Road behind the Tanger Outlet Mall and the future parkway. ODOT said this design will be “similar to the configuration at Gemini/ Polaris Parkway” as a combined interchange.

This would be the first of seven phases, with the completed parkway providing an east-west regional route between Africa Road to Sunbury.

“Existing U.S. 36/SR 37 would be realigned and ‘T’ into the new Sunbury Parkway at Africa Road on the west end and West Cherry Street on the east end,” ODOT said in its project description.

The hope is to alleviate the current congestion commuters face exiting from Interstate 71, especially heading north, when at times traffic comes to a stop for those attempting to swap lanes.

ODOT has had two prior projects to improve safety at the interchange: one in 2013 and another in 2016. In the meantime, the area has continued to grow, and Sunbury has gone from being a village to a new city.

In February, a Finding of No Significant Impact (known in engineering circles by the fun acronym FONSI) for the project area was determined by ODOT’s Office of Environmental Studies. The conclusion of the FONSI document stated: “The implementation of the Proposed Action will result in insignificant impacts, including to residential and commercial property owners, ecological resources including wetlands, streams and threatened and endangered species, floodplains, farmland, drinking water resources and traffic noise.

“Based upon ODOT’s review and consideration of the analysis and evaluation contained in the 2017 Environmental Assessment and current EA Reevaluation for this project, and after careful consideration of all social, economic, and environmental factors, including input from the public involvement process, ODOT hereby issues this Finding of no Significant Impact for the Improved Interchange at I-71 and Routes 36/37 and Proposed Sunbury Parkway, and therefore, the development of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.”

The FONSI, along with other approvals, has cleared a path for the interchange expansion to commence.

Flash forward to Thursday's photo opportunity, where Sunbury Mayor Joseph St. John, the Delaware County Board of Commissioners and other officials, donned hardhats and lifted dirt with shiny shovels.

Afterwards, the city posted on Facebook July 24: "Mayor St. John represented the City of Sunbury at today's groundbreaking ceremony for the new Sunbury Parkway interchange on I-71. This major infrastructure project has been in the works for nearly two decades and made possible by a partnership with the State of Ohio, ODOT District 6, Delaware County, City of Sunbury, local property owners, and many others. As Mayor St. John said at the ceremony, this is more than a roadway project, it is a bold step forward that advances our goals of creating a more connected, accessible, and vibrant community. It will set the stage for long-term economic prosperity and is a symbol of progress for a city that is ready to lead. Stay tuned for more updates on the Sunbury Parkway project as this long-inspired vision becomes a reality."

Delaware County said in a press release that other stakeholders in the parkway project included Berkshire and Berlin townships, and the Berkshire Landing New Community Authority.

Barb Lewis, president of the Delaware County Board of Commissioners, said in the release, "We all realize that this project will do more than alleviate slowdowns. This new interchange and the added east-west connection it affords will surely spur further economic development in the area, and it would not have been possible without the partnerships on display today."

County Engineer Chris Bauserman said, "It's hard to overstate how much this project means for the growth and development of Delaware County and the central Ohio region. Future travelers who will benefit from this project may never know of the years of hard work, coordination and persistence it took to make this possible."

ODOT's Project Phasing Map shows the following plan over the next decade:

- Phase A: Partial interchange (2025). Wilson Road Extension built as part of Phase A.
- Phase B: Finish interchange west side (2027).
- Phase C: 5-lane parkway west (2027).
- Phase D: 3-lane parkway east to Galena (2032).
- Phase E: 2-lane parkway east of Galena (2033). Full-width bridge built as part of Phase 3 (between Domigan and Galena roads).
- Phase F: 5-lane parkway east (2035).
- Phase G: 7-lane parkway west (2035).