

## Two highway projects show progress

By Gary Budzak – June 13, 2026



SUNBURY — If you've driven on Interstate 71 in Delaware County in the past couple months, you've noticed steady progress on two projects near the Sunbury/Delaware exit.

"The Sunbury Parkway project will construct a combined interchange along I-71 south of existing U.S. 36/SR 37," ODOT spokeswoman Hannah Salem told The Gazette in a recent email. "The project will also construct a new 4.3 mile east-west roadway, Sunbury Parkway, extending from Africa Road at U.S. 36/SR 37 to West Cherry St. in the city of Sunbury. The phase currently under construction involves building a new bridge over I-71, adding several new ramp connections, and extending Wilson Road to tie into the new roadway. Bridge beams have already been set for the new structure over I-71, and crews are now constructing the ramp lanes that will serve both interchanges. The project is expected to be completed in Fall 2027."

The project is currently in the first of seven phases. This first phase is the partial interchange described above. Phase B will finish the western part of the interchange. The subsequent phases will involve connecting the parkway.

The \$31.9 million interchange expansion engaged Delaware County, the City of Sunbury, and neighboring Berkshire and Berlin Townships to "to reduce congestion and improve the safety and operation of U.S. 36/SR 37 through the I-71 interchange," said ODOT's overview. "The project will support future growth and improve east-west connectivity across Delaware County."

Just beyond the parkway, two currently closed rest areas are now enclosed.

"The Delaware rest areas are on schedule for completion in fall of 2026," Salem said. "The rest areas closed during fall of 2025 and take about a year to complete. The updated facilities will feature native Ohio plants, enhanced landscaping, tourism information, and expanded parking for vehicles and trucks."

In 2023, “Gov. Mike DeWine announced that Ohio will receive 36 refreshed and reimagined rest areas by the end of 2026,” said the ODOT website. “Our rest areas welcome our visitors and residents alike to relax and explore facilities and immersive experiences that embrace our pride in the Buckeye State. Facilities will include native Ohio plants and landscaping, dog trails, Ohio music, rocking chairs, and a Storybook Trail outside.”

The Preble County Welcome Center, opened in 2019, “is the model for Ohio’s future rest area projects,” ODOT said.