

Officials dedicate Liberty Way Interchange

By Dave Greber, Staff Writer
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Even as final construction details were underway just a few hundred yards away, officials from Liberty and West Chester townships, Butler County and the state of Ohio lauded each other's efforts, Wednesday, Oct. 7, in the unveiling of the Liberty Way Interchange.

It's an important step for the future — described by some as “a milestone” — that will immediately open up approximately 600 acres of local land for commercial development.

Although the dedication was conducted Wednesday, the nearly \$43 million locally-funded Liberty Way Interchange is slated to open to vehicular traffic sometime between Oct. 14-17, weather permitting, according to officials from the Butler County Transportation Improvement District. That's still months ahead of schedule — early estimates placed the opening for the spring of 2010 — as construction crews finish adding a top coat to the existing pavement along Liberty Way. Smaller details, such as landscaping, are to be completed next spring.

While part of the project extended Cox Road from Hamilton-Mason Road north to the Green Crest Golf Course, the interchange's major work consisted of constructing on-and-off ramps at Liberty Way — formerly Hamilton-Mason Road — and Interstate 75, as well as widening Liberty Way between I-75 and Cincinnati-Dayton Road to the west.

The project's financing is split three ways, with Liberty Twp. responsible for 49 percent of the funding, the county's TID for 36 percent and West Chester Twp. for 15 percent.

Sen. Gary Cates, one of the speakers Wednesday to the county crowd of notable locals, said he remembers the interchange area as a series of cul-de-sacs and stop signs.

“Little did we know,” Cates said, adding interchange architects should think of the project as one of the few unique opportunities in the state.

“While this may be a chance for people to pat each other on the back and give each other credit, we really should be thankful for the bounty that’s before us,” he said. “Certainly, other parts of the state would love to have one of these, and we seem to have these types of events all the time.”

West Chester Trustee President Catherine Stoker compared the opening of the Liberty Way Interchange to Union Centre Boulevard, an exit just a few miles south on Interstate 75 that has added thousands of jobs and nearly a billion dollars of development in just over a decade.

“It’s important not only because of the jobs, but because of the sheer increase in local commercial development,” Stoker said.

In addition to miles of new roads, parcels surrounding the interchange are already zoned for amenities like a hotel, medical facility, office space and a lifestyle center, the plans for which fell victim to the economy last year when the estimated \$500 million project was shelved indefinitely.