

Thursday, December 13, 2007

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**LIBERTY TWP.** — A road construction project expected to create more than 10,000 new jobs and open more than 600 acres of land to development in Butler County will begin today with a groundbreaking ceremony.

Business and government officials predict the \$50 million Liberty Interchange project along Interstate 75 and Ohio 129 will create economic development in Liberty Twp. seen in the Union Centre Boulevard area just south in West Chester Twp.

The first phase of the project will extend Cox Road from Hamilton-Mason Road north to the Green Crest Golf Course.

The project's three other phases include widening Hamilton-Mason Road between Cox Road and Butler-Warren Road to the east, construction of on and off ramps at Hamilton-Mason Road and I-75, and widening of Hamilton-Mason Road between I-75 and Cincinnati-Dayton Road to the west.

The new interchange will add to the area's reputation as an epicenter between Cincinnati and Dayton, said Joe Hinson, president and CEO of the West Chester Chamber Alliance.

"Just like Union Centre Boulevard is the gateway to the north for businesses and travelers coming from Cincinnati, this will become the gateway to the south for those coming from the Dayton market," Hinson said.

Former legislator and county commissioner Mike Fox said he is excited about the project, but it's about 10 years later than desired. Fox said an interchange could have been incorporated into original plans for Ohio 129 for an additional \$3 million or \$4 million.

Fox said the Liberty Interchange's expected impact is already starting, beginning with the construction of the \$83 million Children's Hospital Liberty Campus. "You're going to create another growth engine for the county," Fox said.

Commercial growth around the interchange bodes well for the bottom line of all Liberty residents, officials said. "The growth means values of property around the interchange will go up, which will obviously increase the tax bases," Rogers said. "That will help spread the taxes and reduce the tax burden on residents."

In 2004, Liberty Twp. trustees approved 11 residential improvement districts, which are tax diversion programs used to pay for infrastructure improvements in the developing area.

Residents at the time expressed reservations that the diverted taxes could mean services such as police and fire protection could be hurt. However, Liberty Twp. Trustee President Christine Maticic said the positive impact of the RIDs outweighs any perceived short-term loss.

Lengthy convoluted routes could be a thing of the past once Ohio 129 on and off ramps are constructed at Hamilton-Mason Road. The ramps will be the second stage of the Liberty Interchange project, scheduled to break ground Thursday, Dec. 13, 2007.

