

Work starts on Liberty Interchange

By Eric Schwartzberg Staff Writer

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LIBERTY TWP. — Gathering for a groundbreaking ceremony Thursday morning, local, county and state leaders praised the local cooperation that helped make the \$42 million Liberty Interchange a reality.

Funded entirely by Liberty Twp., Butler County, West Chester Twp. and private property assessments, the project will extend Cox Road to the north by more than half a mile, widen Hamilton-Mason Road to five lanes between Cincinnati-Dayton and Butler-Warren roads and create a new Interstate 75 exit.

"This is a perfect example of regional vision and cooperation," said Liberty Twp. Trustee Patrick Hiltman. Because the project is "100 percent locally funded," it was able to break ground sooner than had federal funding been involved, said Liberty Twp. Trustee Christine Maticic.

That means a head start on opening hundreds of developable acres predicted to create 10,000 new jobs that will generate \$250 million in payroll by the time buildout occurs in 2026, officials said.

West Chester Twp. Trustee George Lang said some of his constituents questioned why the township would contribute to "those people up north."

"We are tied at the hip because of the school district," Lang said. "If Liberty fails and we succeed, it's going to drag our taxpayers down because of our commitment to (Lakota) school district."

Butler County Engineer Greg Wilkens said the interchange project would benefit not only Liberty and West Chester residents, but Hamilton, Fairfield, Fairfield Twp., and Warren County residents, as well.

"The jobs that are to be created here are going to be filled by the residents of those communities," Wilkens said. "Those same residents are going to come here eat, shop and enjoy the quality of life we've come to expect of Butler County."

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