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Posted: 8:00 a.m. Sunday, March 9, 2014

SPECIAL REPORT: FAIRFIELD INFRASTRUCTURE

## Fairfield in between major road projects

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By Eric Robinette

Staff Writer

**FAIRFIELD** — Fairfield finds itself in between major road projects, having helped complete the widening of the Ohio 4 Bypass and of Seward Road in recent years, and with the revamp of the Ohio 4/Holden/Gilmore Intersection next year.

For 2014, that leaves the finishing touches on Gilmore/Winton Road interchange at Interstate 275 and a trio of other road projects that are smaller in scale, said City Engineer Ben Mann.

Modifications to Exit 39, the South Gilmore/Winton Road interchange at I-275 are a joint project among the city of Fairfield, the Ohio Department of Transportation, and the city of Forest Park. The project is nearly complete, according to Mann.

It entailed:

- northbound bridge widening
- southbound widening of South Gilmore Road from north of Kolb Drive to the I-275 westbound ramp
- northbound South Gilmore Road widening from the I-275 interchange to Mack Road

Paid for primarily by grant finding, the \$10.3 million project is due for completion this summer.

“The final decorative fence and arch across the bridge on both the east and the west side is to be finished by June. There’s still a few minor punch-list items, but that’s about all that’s left,” Mann said.

For motorists, the end result means “a lot of capacity in the northbound direction, so that’s helped the a.m. traffic a lot,” Mann said. “For southbound, we weren’t able to do quite as many improvements to capacity, but we re-did every signal, so we’ve got all new signals and new signal timing. That’s helped with coordination of the flow of traffic.”

### Winton/ Ross/Seward road improvements

This is a widening, repair and resurfacing project because the existing pavement is past its useful life, according to the city website.

The project will include:

- 2.5 miles of Winton from John Gray to Ohio 4
- ½ mile of Ross from Mack to Woodridge
- 1 mile of Seward from Ohio 4 to Port Union

Average daily traffic is more than 10,000 vehicles per day on Winton, nearly 7,000 on Ross, and approximately 8,200 on Seward. Motorists should expect no significant delays for much of this project, though lane closures will be necessary for some of the work, according to the city.

These projects were taken together as one to be able to secure funding, Mann said.

“They were the exact same kind of projects in three locations, so we lumped them together for engineering purposes,” he said. The \$1.5 million project is slated to be finished by the end of 2014.

### Ross Road/Danbury Road to Kenn Road

This project will widen the southbound lane of Ross Road from Kenn Road at Springdale to Danbury Road. It includes tree removal as well as curb and gutter, storm sewer, and sidewalk work.

Ross Road at Kenn Road will closed for 30 days during the summer months, and \$100,000 in funding is anticipated from the Ohio Public Works Commission. The total estimated cost is \$150,000 and is due to be completed in 2014.

### Pleasant Avenue improvements

Pleasant Avenue will be widened to accommodate a lengthened southbound left turn lane and a center turn late between John Gray Road and Augusta Boulevard. Work includes storm sewer improvements, utility adjustments, guardrail improvements, pavement overlay and new pavement markings. This project will be administered by ODOT and is funded 90 percent by an ODOT safety grant, according to the city. It's also expected to be completed by the end of this year.

All this serves as prelude to the city's next major project, slated for 2015 through 2016: The Holden Boulevard/South Gilmore Road/Ohio 4 intersection improvement near Fairfield High School. That has been one of the city's most accident-prone intersections, with the \$1.5 million project slated to add more turn lanes, upgrade traffic signals and to widen the intersection as a whole. As it stands, it's prone to backups.

"That project will be an additional lane from the high school through to South Gilmore. Right now, there's only one lane crossing Route 4 from the high school. This will give us two, and we're also going to do a realignment of that intersection ... that's going to be a a major project with big impacts to traffic," Mann said.

Tim Bachman, the city's director of development, said these projects, especially the large ones, go beyond simple infrastructure upkeep.

"With regard to Gilmore and I-275 and (the widening of) Seward Road, those introduce capacity to new business. They introduce capacity to existing business and their employees. Different businesses (on Seward) were delighted to have a dual left turn so their trucks weren't in the way of the back-and-forth of traffic," Bachman said.

## JOURNAL-NEWS SPECIAL REPORT

The Journal-News continues its six-week long special series taking a closer look at infrastructure projects planned throughout Butler County this year.

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